Keys to Hurricane Safety

Before a Hurricane Threatens

☑ Know your home’s elevation above sea level.
This information is often available from county planning or zoning offices or from your insurance company. This information may also be available through Internet sources.

☑ Are you vulnerable to storm surge?
Coastal areas are susceptible to storm surge damage. Individuals in coastal areas should pay careful attention to local authorities regarding evacuation. Keep disaster supplies organized so that you can leave promptly.

☑ Is it safe for you to stay at home?
Have your home evaluated by a qualified building inspector and retrofit as needed. If you live near the shore or in a mobile home, plan to evacuate.

☑ Know the location of nearest shelter.
Emergency Management or Red Cross personnel can give you the location of the shelter nearest your home and explain what you should bring with you. Plan for your family’s safety. Know how to contact family members should the need arise.

☑ Plan a route to safety if you must leave.
Plan your escape route early. Research low points and flooding history of your route and plan an alternative. Avoid peak evacuation traffic by leaving early.

☑ Inventory your property.
A complete inventory of personal property will help in obtaining insurance settlements and/or tax deductions for losses.

The Disaster Handbook — National Edition
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
University of Florida
An inventory checklist can be obtained from many sources, including your insurance representative. Do not trust your memory. List descriptions and take pictures. Store these and other important insurance papers in waterproof containers at home or in your safety deposit box. You may wish to keep copies of your most important papers in both locations.

☑ Check insurance coverage.

Review your insurance policies and your coverage to avoid misunderstandings later. Take advantage of flood insurance. Separate policies are needed for protection against wind and flood damage, which people frequently do not realize until too late. Do not wait until a hurricane is approaching. By then it is too late. When a storm is heading to shore, insurance offices are too busy preparing for the emergency and won’t be able to respond to individual requests, and insurance cannot be obtained.

When a Watch is Issued

☑ Make Plans Early

Listen constantly to the radio or the TV. Monitor storm reports and keep a log of hurricane positions. Remember, evacuation routes sometimes can be closed up to 20 hours before landfall by wind gusting or storm surge flooding.

If you are considering moving to a shelter, refill needed prescriptions and make arrangements for your pets. Pets are not allowed in most public shelters. Locate pet-friendly shelters or motels before the storm.

If evacuation has not already been recommended, consider leaving the area early enough to avoid long hours on limited evacuation routes.

☑ Check Supplies

- Have a transistor radio with fresh batteries. A radio will be your most useful source of information. Have enough batteries to last several days. There may be no electricity.
- Flashlights, candles or lamps, and matches. Store matches in a waterproof container. Have enough lantern fuel for several days, and know how to use it safely.
- Full tank of gasoline. Never let your vehicle gas tank be less than half-full during hurricane season. Fill the tank as soon as a hurricane watch is posted. Remember, when there is no electricity, gas pumps won’t work.
- Canned goods and non-perishable foods. Store packaged foods which can be prepared without cooking and need no refrigeration. There may be no electricity or gas.
- Containers for drinking water. Have clean, air-tight containers to store sufficient drinking water for several days. The city supply will probably be interrupted or contaminated.
- Materials to protect glass openings. Have shutters or lumber to protect large windows and doors and masking tape for use on small windows.
- Materials for emergency repairs. Your insurance policy may cover the cost of materials used in temporary repairs, so keep all receipts (also will be helpful for income tax deductions).
When a Warning is Issued

✔ **Continue listening to radio or TV.**
   Continue to monitor hurricane position, intensity and expected landfall. If you live in a mobile home, check
tie-downs and leave immediately for a safer place. Mobile homes are not safe in hurricane force winds.

✔ **Prepare for high winds.**
   Brace your garage door. Lower antennas. Be prepared to make repairs. Anchor outside objects. Garbage cans,
awnings, loose garden tools, toys and other loose objects can become deadly missiles. Anchor them securely
or move them indoors.

✔ **Protect windows and other glass.**
   Board up or shutter large windows securely. Tape exposed glass to reduce shattering. Draw drapes across windows and
doors to protect against flying glass if shattering does occur.

✔ **Move boats on trailers close to house.**
   Fill boats with water to weight them down. Lash securely to trailer and use tie-downs to anchor the trailer to
the ground or house. Check mooring lines of boats in water. Leave the area immediately.

✔ **Store valuables and personal papers.**
   Put irreplaceable documents in waterproof containers and store in the highest possible spot. If you evacuate,
be sure to take them with you. It is also a good idea to keep copies of your most important papers in an off-
site location, such as a safe deposit box.

✔ **Prepare for storm surge, tornados and floods.**
   Storm surge, tornados and flash floods are the worst killers associated with a hurricane. During a tornado
warning, seek shelter inside, below ground level if possible, or in an interior hallway, closet or bathroom on
ground level. If outside, move away at right angles from the tornado; if escape is impossible, lie flat in a ditch
or low spot. The surge of ocean water plus flash flooding of streams and rivers due to torrential rains combine
to make drowning the greatest cause of hurricane deaths.

✔ **Check your survival supplies again.**

When You “Shelter in Place” at Your Home

✔ **Stay indoors, in an inside room away from doors and windows.**
   Stay away from windows and glass doors. Move furniture away from exposed doors and windows. Don’t go
outside in the brief calm during passage of the eye of the storm. The lull sometimes ends suddenly as winds
return from the opposite direction. Winds can increase in seconds to 75 mph or more.

✔ **Protect property.**
   Without taking unnecessary risks, protect your property from damage. Temporary repairs can reduce your
losses.
Stay tuned to media broadcasts.
Keep a radio or television tuned for information from official sources. Unexpected changes can sometimes call for last minute relocations.

Remain calm.
Your ability to meet emergencies will help others.

If You Must Evacuate

Know where you are going.
Leave early in daylight if possible. Move your most valuable possessions. Possessions that you can not take with you should be moved to higher points in your home.

Lock windows and doors.
Turn off gas, water and electricity in your home. Check to see that you have done everything possible to protect your property from damage and loss.

Do not travel farther than necessary.
Roads may become jammed. Do not let your stranded car become your coffin.

Take survival supplies with you.

- First-aid kit
- Canned or dried provisions, can opener, spoons, etc.
- Bottled water
- Extra prescriptions and medications for your family
- Spare eyeglasses, hearing aids and batteries, if needed
- Warm, protective clothing

Keep important papers with you at all times.

- Driver’s license and other identification
- Insurance policies
- Property inventory
- Medic-alert or device to convey special medical information
- Maps to your destination

Supplies for Shelters

- Take blankets or sleeping bags, flashlights, special dietary foods, infant needs and lightweight folding chairs.
- Register every person arriving with you at the shelter.
- Do not take pets, alcoholic beverages or weapons of any kind to shelters.
- Be prepared to offer assistance to shelter workers if necessary, and stress to all family members their obligations to keep the shelter clean and sanitary.
After the Hurricane

☑ If you are evacuated, delay your return until it is recommended or authorized by local authorities.

☑ Beware of outdoor hazards.
Watch out for loose or dangling power lines, and report them immediately to the proper authorities. Many lives are lost through electrocution.

☑ Walk or drive cautiously.
Debris-filled streets are dangerous. Snakes and poisonous insects will be a hazard. Washouts may weaken road and bridge structures which could collapse under vehicle weights.

☑ Guard against spoiled food.
Food may spoil if refrigerator power is off more than a few hours. Freezers will keep food several days if doors are not opened after power failure, but do not refreeze food once it begins to thaw.

☑ Do not use water until safe.
Use emergency supplies or boil water before drinking until official word is given that the water is safe. Report broken sewer or water mains to the proper authorities.

☑ Take extra precautions to prevent fire.
Lowered water pressure in city mains and the interruption of other services may make firefighting very difficult after a hurricane.

☑ Insurance
Insurance representatives will be on the scene immediately following a major disaster to speed up the handling of claims. Notify your insurance agent or broker of any losses, and leave word where you can be contacted.

☑ Take steps to protect property.
Make temporary repairs to protect property from further damage or looting. Use only reputable contractors (sometimes in the chaotic days following a disaster, unscrupulous operators prey on the unsuspecting). If possible, check contractors through the Better Business Bureau. Keep receipts for materials purchased.

☑ Be patient.
Hardship cases will be settled first by insurance representatives. Don’t assume your settlement will be the same as your neighbor’s. Policy forms differ and storm damage is often erratic. In a major catastrophe, the insurance industry will have emergency offices and extra manpower to expedite claim settlements and to speed recovery. Everyone cannot be first.

Responsibility for the clean-up falls to numerous local, state, and federal agencies. A local Emergency Management coordinator (the mayor, county judge or a designated representative) will be on hand to help residents in this effort.