



PROTECTING YOURSELF AND YOUR ORGANIZATION DURING HURRICANE SEASON



For those areas affected by hurricanes, storms are generally detected well before they reach hurricane status. When the track of the hurricane becomes evident, warnings are issued to the affected areas through radio, television, newspaper, and online sources. This allows plenty of time for residents and organizations to take appropriate actions. You and your organization must have a plan for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery from hurricanes and tropical storms.

KEY TERMS

- **Tropical Cyclone:** A union of clouds and thunderstorms rotating above tropical or subtropical waters
- **Tropical Depression:** A tropical cyclone with wind speeds of 38 mph or less
- **Tropical Storm:** A tropical cyclone with wind speeds between 39 mph to 73 mph
- **Hurricane:** A tropical cyclone with wind speeds over 74 mph
- **Storm Surge:** An abnormal rise in sea level as the result of a storm which can result in flooding
- **Storm Tide:** The actual level of sea water (normal tide + storm surge)
- **Hurricane Watch:** An announcement occurring 48 hours in advance that hurricane conditions are possible within the specified area
- **Hurricane Warning:** An announcement occurring 36 hours in advance that hurricane conditions are expected somewhere within the specified area
- **Tropical Storm Warning:** An announcement occurring 36 hours in advance that tropical storm conditions are expected somewhere within the specified area
- **Tropical Storm Watch:** An announcement occurring 48 hours in advance that tropical storm conditions are possible within the specified area

BEFORE A HURRICANE

- Build an emergency kit and make a family communications plan.

 Resource: [Home Safety Plan](#)

This kit should include:

- A checklist to follow in case of an emergency
 - Medications for you and your pets
 - Enough cash for at least one week
 - Important documents (ID, Passport, insurance cards, insurance policies, keys, housing documents).
- Ensure that batteries and flashlights are readily available and prepared for use.
- Ensure all cell phones and mobile devices are fully charged as you may not have power during a hurricane.
- Consider installing a generator for emergencies. If you own a generator, make sure it has fuel and is operational.
- Ensure you fill your vehicle and possibly a secondary source (gas can) with fuel.
- Know your surroundings.



BEFORE A HURRICANE (CONTINUED)

- Learn the elevation level of your property and whether the land is flood prone during storm surges or tidal flooding.
 - If you are located in a flood prone area, consider flood insurance protection.
 - Before every hurricane season, you should meet with your insurance carrier to discuss coverage.
 - Make sure any new equipment or valuables are added to your policy.
 - For more information and assistance, visit the [National Flood Insurance Program \(NFIP\) website](#).
 - Identify levees and dams in your area and determine whether they pose a hazard to your property.
 - Learn community hurricane evacuation routes and how to find higher ground.
 - Determine where you would go and how you would get there if you needed to evacuate.
- Make plans to secure your property.
 - Cover all windows.
 - Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection for windows.
 - A second option is to board up windows with 5/8" marine plywood, cut to fit and ready to install. Note: Tape does not prevent windows from breaking.
 - Identify whether or not your building has hurricane straps or clips to securely fasten your roof to the frame structure.
 - Newer construction is likely to have them due to building code. Older construction can have hurricane straps or clips retrofitted.
 - Be sure trees and shrubs around your property are well trimmed so they are more wind resistant.
 - Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
 - Determine how and where to secure your boat. Moor your boat if time permits.
 - Reinforce your garage doors; if wind enters a garage, it can cause dangerous and expensive structural damage.
 - Bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans, and anything else that cannot be tied down.
 - Consider building a [safe room](#).
- If in a high-rise building, identify areas to take shelter on or below the 10th floor.

DURING A HURRICANE

- Listen to the radio or TV for information.
- If you haven't already done so, secure your property, close storm shutters, and secure outdoor objects or bring them indoors.
- Turn off utilities if instructed to do so. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Avoid using the phone, except for serious emergencies.
- Fill the bathtub and other larger containers with water to ensure a supply of water for sanitary purpose such as cleaning and flushing toilets.
- Prepare to evacuate. You should evacuate if:
 - You are directed by local authorities to do so.
 - If you live in a mobile home or temporary structure.
 - If you live in a high-rise building.
 - If you live on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river, or on an island waterway.
- If you are unable to evacuate, go to your wind-safe room.
 - If you do not have one, follow these guidelines:
 - Stay indoors and away from windows and glass doors.
 - Close all interior doors.
 - Secure and brace external doors.
 - Keep curtains and blinds closed.
 - Do not be fooled if there is a lull; it could be the eye of the storm — winds will pick up again.
 - Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, or hallway on the lowest level.
 - Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.
 - Avoid elevators.



AFTER A HURRICANE

- Continue listening to a NOAA Weather Radio or the local news for the latest updates.
- Stay alert for extended rainfall and subsequent flooding even after the hurricane or tropical storm has ended.
- If you have become separated from your family, use your family communications plan.
- If you are unable to locate or contact your family, the American Red Cross offers reunification services.
 - Contact the local American Red Cross chapter where you are staying for information. Do not contact the chapter in the disaster area.
 - Contact the American Red Cross at 1-800-RED-CROSS (733-2767) or visit the [American Red Cross Safe and Well website](#).
- Drive only if necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges.
- If you must go out, watch for:
 - Fallen objects
 - Downed electrical wires
 - Weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks
- Keep away from loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately to the power company.
- If you evacuated, return to your home or business only when officials say it is safe.
 - Walk carefully around the outside of your home or business and check for loose power lines, gas leaks, and structural damage before entering.
 - If you have any doubts about safety, have your property inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before entering.
 - Stay out of any building if you smell gas, floodwaters remain around the building, or your home was damaged by fire and authorities have not declared it safe.
 - If entering a dark building:
 - Use battery-powered flashlights in the dark. The flashlight should be turned on outside before entering – the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.
 - Do NOT use candles until you are positive that there are no gas leaks.
 - Take pictures of damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance purposes. Immediately contact your insurance carrier.
 - Be aware of potential hazards including wild animals, especially poisonous snakes.
 - Use a stick to poke through debris.
 - Keep direct control of small children and pets.
 - Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
 - Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it is not contaminated.
 - Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
 - Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
 - NEVER use a generator inside or in enclosed structures as it can result in carbon monoxide poisoning.
- If you cannot return home, FEMA can assist with housing needs.
 - For immediate housing needs:
 - Download the FEMA App
 - Text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (example: SHELTER 12345)
 - For longer-term housing needs, FEMA offers several types of assistance, including services and grants to help people repair their homes and find replacement housing.