HURRICANES
BEFORE
DURING
AFTER
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FEDERAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH
EAP

BEFORE

While there is usually time to prepare before a hurricane's landfall, be sure you're ready with the basics long before hurricane season begins. Learn steps to fully prepare and protect yourself, your family, and property.

One of the critical steps for your safety is to trust local authorities and to follow their advice, such as evacuating before a hurricane hits. Deaths and injuries during a hurricane are usually caused by building damage from high winds, windborne debris, storm surge, and flooding to those who remain in unsafe areas during a storm. At a minimum, if you are unable to evacuate, seek higher ground to avoid flooding.

Before a hurricane occurs, your goal is to reduce the risk of damage to structures from winds and flooding. This includes strengthening the building's outer shell—including doors, windows, walls, and the roof—and removing or securing all objects and non-building structures, as well as clearing the outside areas around the building. To protect against potential flooding, waterproof basements and elevate critical utilities (such as electrical panels and heating systems). In flood-prone areas, consider elevating the entire structure.

You may want to consider purchasing flood insurance since it can provide financial coverage for the cost of repairs. Standard insurance policies do not cover flooding, including storm surge flooding, but flood insurance is available for homeowners, renters, and business owners through the National Flood Insurance Program. You may also be able to purchase insurance for wind damage.

To stay informed during an emergency, follow these steps:

- Monitor local weather reports.
- Find out if your community has a text or email alert system for emergency notifications. To find out, search the Internet with your town, city, or county name and the term "alerts."
- Consider buying a NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) All Hazards receiver, which receives broadcast alerts directly from the National Weather Service (NWS). Some NWR receivers are designed to work with external notification devices with visual and vibrating alerts for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. For more information on NWR receivers, visit: nws.noaa.gov/nwr.
- Think about how you will stay informed if there is a power outage. Have extra batteries for a battery-operated radio and your cell phone. Consider having a hand crank radio or cell-phone charger.

Plan an evacuation route, with a backup plan

- Find out and learn your community's hurricane evacuation plan and identify several escape routes from your location in case main roads are blocked. Include plans to evacuate people with disabilities and others with special needs, as well as pets, service animals, and livestock.
- Keep your car fueled and in good condition if you plan to evacuate with it. Make sure to keep emergency supplies and a change of clothes in your car.
- Make arrangements if you plan to share transportation. If you will need to use public transportation, including paratransit, contact your local government emergency management agency to ask how an evacuation will work, how you will get current information during an evacuation, the location of staging areas, and other information.
- If you will need to relocate for an extended period of time, identify a place away from home where you could go if you had to leave. Consider family or friends who live outside of the local area.
- If you expect to go to a shelter after evacuating, text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area.
- If you have pets and plan to go to a shelter, call to inquire whether the shelter can accommodate your pets. Shelters will accept service animals.

Practice

– Getting to your shelter. Find out if you have access to a FEMA safe room or an International Code Council (ICC) 500 storm shelter, or a small, interior, windowless room, such a bathroom or closet, on the lowest level not likely to flood.

– Communicating with family members.

  - Texting is often faster than calling.
  - Write important numbers down to keep in your wallet, in case your phone doesn't work (due to damage or a run-down battery).
  - Since it is sometimes easier to reach people outside of your area during an emergency, choose an out-of-town contact for all loved ones to call, or use social media.
  - Designate a place for everyone to meet after a hurricane.

– Using your first aid and emergency response skills. You can gain first aid skills and learn more about automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) by attending American Red Cross training classes. Visit **redcross.org/take-a-class** for information about classes in your area.

Five Ps of evacuation

Prepare a go bag with what you will immediately need in an emergency. To determine what to include in the go bag and other supplies, follow FEMA's five Ps of evacuation guidelines:

1. People: People and, if safely possible, pets and other animals, and livestock.
2. Prescriptions: Prescriptions with proper dosages; medications; medical equipment; batteries or power cords; eyeglasses; and hearing aids.
3. Papers: Paperwork, including important documents (hard copies and/or electronic copies saved on external hard drives or portable thumb drives). To determine what documentation to have ready, use the Emergency Financial First Aid Kit (EFFAK) at **ready.gov/financialpreparedness**. Keep the paperwork in a fireproof, waterproof box. If the files are stored electronically, keep a backup drive with the files in a fireproof, waterproof box or store them on a secure cloud-based service.
4. Personal needs: Personal needs, such as clothes, food, water, first aid kit, cash, phones, and chargers. Include items for children, individuals with limited English language capacities, people with disabilities and others with access needs
5. Priceless items: Items such as pictures, irreplaceable mementos, and other valuables.

Store supplies

Plan to have supplies on hand that you can use without power. Even if you are in an area that was not asked to evacuate, you may still lose power and the water supply to your home. Consider items you require for this situation. For a full list of supplies for your emergency supply kit, visit: **ready.gov/build-a-kit**.

Here are some suggestions to consider:

– Flashlight and radio, either hand-cranked or battery-powered, with extra batteries. Use flashlights instead of candles.

– At least one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days. A normally active person needs about three-quarts of fluid daily, from water and other beverages. Water is also needed for food preparation and sanitation.

– At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food for members of your household, including pet food and considerations for special dietary needs. Include a nonelectric can opener for canned food.

– First aid kit, medications, and medical supplies.

– Battery backup power for power-dependent mobility devices, oxygen, and other assistive technology needs.

– Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person, especially if you live in a cold-weather climate.

DURING

Despite the alarming nature of a hurricane's presence, knowing what to expect and staying informed until the storm passes can keep you safe.

Heed advice from local authorities during a hurricane and if possible, evacuate immediately. Fatalities and injuries caused by hurricanes are often the result of individuals remaining in unsafe locations during a storm. If authorities advise or order you to evacuate, do so immediately. Be sure to:

- Remember the five Ps of evacuation: people, prescriptions, papers, personal needs, and priceless items.
- Leave early to avoid delays caused by long lines, high winds, and flooding.
- Follow posted evacuation routes and do not try to take short cuts because they may be blocked. Stick to designated evacuation routes.

If you are in an area without an evacuation notice

- Take precautions to protect yourself and stay safe from the high winds and potential localized flooding.
- Stay indoors away from windows and glass doors. Flying debris from high winds is dangerous and can be deadly. If you are in a mobile home or temporary structure, move to a sturdy building.
- For protection in extremely high winds, go to a small, interior, windowless room, such as a bathroom or closet, on the lowest level that is not likely to flood.
- If you are in an area that is flooding (e.g., on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river, or on an island waterway), move to a location on higher ground before floodwaters prevent your ability to leave.
- If the power is out, use flashlights, not candles. Turn on a battery-operated or hand-cranked radio to get the latest emergency information. Stay tuned to alerts.

You may experience any of the following during a hurricane

- Long periods of very strong winds and heavy rains.
- If you are in a coastal area, you may experience a storm surge, which means that high winds are pushing seawater onto the shore. A storm surge combines with the ocean's tide to produce a storm-tide surge. Storm-tide surges have been registered as high as 35 feet above normal sea level and can cause significant flooding across a large area. This generally occurs over a short period, typically four to eight hours. In some areas, it may take much longer for the water to recede to its pre-storm level.
- Significant changes in air pressure during the storm can cause discomfort, and loud moaning, shrieking, and whistling sounds may occur because of the winds.
- Many of those in the center of the storm experience a false sense of security. After the center of the hurricane, also known as the eye, passes over, the storm will resume. Do not venture outside until emergency officials say it is safe.

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  - Some NWR receivers are designed to work with external notification devices with visual and vibrating alerts for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. For more information on NWR receivers, visit: **nws.noaa.gov/nwr**.
  - Think about the ways will you stay informed if there is a power outage. Have extra batteries for radios and cell phones.

AFTER

Hurricanes have the power to cause widespread devastation and can affect both coastal and inland areas. With the help of Federal Occupational Health, learn what to do in the aftermath of a hurricane.

If you were evacuated

- Return home only when authorities indicate that it is safe to do so.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Do not attempt to drive through flooded areas. Roads and bridges may have weakened and could collapse under the weight of a car.
- Be aware of downed trees, power lines, and fallen debris.

If you stayed in the area, or as you return

- Listen to official public information to get expert, informed advice as soon as it is available.
- If the storm damaged your home severely, you may only be able to enter when officials say it is safe to do so. Stay out of any building surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering flooded buildings. There may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations. Safety considerations include protecting yourself from electric shock, mold contamination, asbestos, and lead paint.
- Turn off electricity at the main breaker or fuse box. If you are unfamiliar with electricity or your home's electrical systems, contact your local power company or a qualified electrician to help ensure that your property is safe from electrical hazards after a flood.
- Check for loose boards and slippery floors.
- Use flashlights, not lanterns, torches, or matches, to examine buildings. Flammable gases may be inside and open flames may cause a fire or explosion.
- If you turned off your gas, ask a licensed professional to turn it back on.
- Carbon monoxide kills. Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machine only outdoors and away from windows so fumes do not get inside. The same goes for camping stoves. Fumes from charcoal are also deadly; cook with charcoal only outdoors. For more information, visit the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website on preventing carbon monoxide poisoning at emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/cofacts.asp.

Outdoor safety

- If you see floodwater on roads, walkways, bridges, and on the ground, do not to attempt to cross. The depth of the water is not always obvious, and the road bed may be washed out under the water. Moving water has tremendous power. Six inches of moving water has the potential to knock you off your feet, and a foot of water can sweep a vehicle—even a large SUV—off of the road. Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood dangers. For more information on floodwater hazards, visit the NWS Turn Around Don't Drown® program at tadd.weather.gov.
- Avoid wading in floodwater, which may be contaminated with oil, gasoline, or raw sewage.
- Watch for dangerous debris (e.g., broken glass, metal fragments), dead animals, or venomous snakes in floodwaters. Before walking through debris, use a stick to check for hidden dangers. Underground or downed power lines may electrically charge the water.
- Stay away from downed power lines and report them to 911 or the power company's emergency number.
- Stay away from damaged areas unless police, fire, or relief organizations request your assistance.

Communications

- Use local alerts, radios, and other local information sources, such as American Red Cross, to get information and advice as soon as it is available.
- Use text messaging or social media to communicate with family and friends.
- Telephones and cellular phone systems are often overwhelmed following a disaster, so use phones only for emergency calls.

Health and sanitation

- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community's water supply is safe to drink.
- Service damaged septic tanks and leaching systems as soon as possible. A damaged sewage system is a serious health hazard.
- Have wells checked for contamination from bacteria, chemicals, and other toxins.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage, bacteria, and chemicals. Be careful and wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) like gloves, safety glasses, and face masks. Follow five basic steps for post-flood building restoration, including:
  1. Air out
  2. Move out
  3. Tear out
  4. Clean out
  5. Dry out
- Seek professional services and/or guidance before attempting to repair flood-damaged property.
- Throw out any food items – including canned goods – that were not maintained at a proper temperature or had been exposed to floodwaters. Do not eat food from a flooded garden. When in doubt, throw it out.
- Remove and replace drywall or other paneling that was underwater. Use a moisture meter to make sure that the wood studs and framing are dry before replacing drywall. Mold growth in hidden places is a significant health hazard.

Insurance

- Photograph damage to your property and contact your insurance agent.
- Do what you can to prevent further damage (e.g., putting a tarp on a damaged roof) that insurance may not cover.

Care for loved ones

- Look for signs of depression or anxiety related to this experience, such as feeling physically and mentally drained; having difficulty making decisions or staying focused; becoming easily frustrated on a more frequent basis; feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely, or worried; or experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns.
- Seek help from local mental health providers, including the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), if you detect these signs in yourself or others.

Resources are available

Additional information and resources are available online, or you may call the EAP for help and support. Consultants are available any time, day or night to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

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HOURS A DAY

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-222-0364
(TTY: 1-888-262-7848)
FOH4You.com

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