

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A HURRICANE THE BASICS



Hurricanes are massive storm systems that form over the water and move toward land. Threats from hurricanes include high winds, heavy rainfall, storm surge, coastal and inland flooding, rip currents, and tornadoes. These storms can cause injuries and fatalities to people and animals. Hurricanes can destroy buildings and infrastructure along coastlines and cause significant damage several hundred miles inland from wind and flooding. Transportation, gas, power, communications, and other services may be disrupted.

KNOW YOUR RISK

Each year, many parts of the United States experience heavy rains, strong winds, floods, and coastal storm surges from tropical storms and hurricanes.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS

The National Weather Service (NWS), part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) issues hurricane watches and hurricane warnings, as well as several other hurricane-related alerts, such as extreme wind, flash floods, tornadoes, and floods. Tune in to important messages using your NOAA Weather Radio, AM/FM radio, or television.

- NWS issues a **tropical storm or hurricane watch** 48 hours before an area will experience the storm.
- NWS issues a **tropical storm or hurricane warning** 36 hours in advance of the storm.

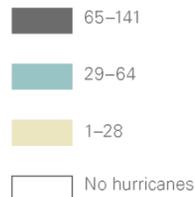
If the storm is likely to be highly dangerous for your area, state or local government officials may issue an **evacuation notice**. Evacuation orders may vary by state and community and range from voluntary to mandatory. When authorities issue a mandatory evacuation notice, leave the area immediately.

PROTECT YOURSELF

Fatalities and injuries caused by hurricanes are often the result of individuals remaining in unsafe locations during a storm. When a hurricane threatens your areas, the best action to protect yourself and your family is to evacuate. If authorities advise or order you to evacuate, do so immediately. Take steps now to be able to evacuate quickly and stay informed:

- Plan and practice how you would evacuate. Know what transportation and evacuation route you would use. Learn the “5 Ps of Evacuation”: People, Prescriptions, Papers, Personal Needs, and Priceless Items to help you plan and remember what to take. Store items in a place you can grab them quickly as you leave.
- Have cash on hand, in case the power goes out and ATMs fail. Keep at least a quarter tank of gas in your vehicle.
- Have a NOAA Weather Radio or an AM/FM radio that can be operated without electricity, using batteries (store extra) or a hand-crank, to stay informed. Sign up for local alerts to your cell phone and download smart phone apps.
- Set up a group text on your phone so you can communicate with family members and friends quickly. Write down important phone numbers and keep them in your wallet in case you cannot access the contact list in your phone.

Frequency of Hurricane & Tropical Storm Activity by County
Atlantic Data: 1851 – 2012 ~ Pacific Data: 1949 – 2012



- Store supplies you would need to live at home with no power. Even if you are in an area that is not asked to evacuate, you may still lose power and the water supply to your home for several days or even a couple of weeks. Identify a small, interior, windowless room in which to take protection from high winds when the storm passes.
- Learn or review first aid skills and keep a first aid kit in your home, vehicle, and workplace.
- Include considerations for access or functional needs, medical equipment, pets, or language needs in your plans.

PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY

Take action now to reduce the risk of damage to your property from wind and flooding.

- **Wind.** The best way to reduce the risk of damage to a structure from hurricane winds is to reinforce or strengthen the building, including doors, windows, walls, and roof. Also clear the outside areas around the building.
- **Flood.** Measures to protect against potential flooding include waterproofing basements and elevating critical utilities (e.g., electrical panels and heating systems). In flood-prone areas, consider elevating the entire structure.

PROTECT YOUR FINANCES

The impact of a disaster can be costly. Purchasing flood insurance provides financial protection for the cost of repairs due to flood damage. 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 in participating communities. A policy purchased today will take effect in 30 days, so act now. You may also be able to purchase insurance for wind. Take steps now to protect your financial investments and your personal information.

- Review, update, or purchase adequate insurance for your property.
- Take pictures or videos of the rooms in your home and any valuable belongings to keep copies with your insurance policy.
- Collect and protect your critical documents, including financial and legal documents, and medical information, so you will have them handy if you need to submit an insurance claim or apply for other assistance.

PROTECT YOURSELF AFTER A HURRICANE

A hurricane can cause extreme damage and make an area unsafe. Follow instructions from authorities for when you can return to the area. Do not attempt to drive through areas that are still flooded. Use extreme caution in and around your home after a hurricane. It may not be safe to live in your home until repairs have been made. Follow the recommendations from your local public health department.

- Personal safety considerations include protecting yourself from electric shock, mold contamination, asbestos, and lead paint.
 - Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or you are standing in water.
 - Clean and disinfect everything that got wet and throw away food that was not maintained at a proper temperature or was exposed to floodwaters.
- Carbon monoxide exhaust kills. Use a generator or other gasoline-powered machine **ONLY** outdoors and away from windows so the fumes do not get inside.
- Photograph or take a video of damage to your property and contact your insurance agent. Do what you can to prevent further damage that insurance may not cover (e.g., putting a tarp on a damaged roof).
- Seek help from local mental health providers if you detect signs of depression or anxiety in yourself or others.

FOR MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION, visit www.ready.gov/prepare, click on the hurricane image and then click on the “Be Smart. Know Your Hazard” icon to download the *How To Prepare for a Hurricane* guide. Discuss what you have done to prepare with your family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues and encourage them to take action.