



# Hurricane Safety: Before, During, and After

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## **Before a hurricane**

To prepare for a hurricane, you should take the following measures:

- Build an emergency kit and make a family communications plan.
- Know your surroundings.
- Learn the elevation level of your property and whether the land is flood-prone. This will help you know how your property will be affected when storm surge or tidal flooding are forecasted.
- Identify levees and dams in your area and determine whether they pose a hazard to you.
- 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 of your home's 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. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking.
- Install straps or additional clips to securely fasten your roof to the frame structure. This will reduce roof damage.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed so they are more wind resistant.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Reinforce your garage doors; if wind enters a garage it can cause dangerous and expensive structural damage.
- Plan to bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans and anything else that is not tied down.
- Determine how and where to secure your boat.
- Install a generator for emergencies.
- If in a high-rise building, be prepared to take shelter on or below the 10th floor.
- Consider building a safe room.

## **During a hurricane**

Hurricanes cause heavy rains that can cause extensive flood damage in coastal and inland areas. Everyone is at risk and should consider flood insurance protection. Flood insurance is the only way to financially protect your property or business from flood damage.

*What to do when a hurricane is six hours from arriving*

- If you're not in an area that is recommended for evacuation, plan to stay at home or where you are and let friends and family know where you are.
- Close storm shutters, and stay away from windows. Flying glass from broken windows could injure you.
- Turn your refrigerator or freezer to the coldest setting and open only when necessary. If you lose power, food will last longer. Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator to be able to check the food temperature when the power is restored.
- Turn on your TV/radio, or check your city/county website every 30 minutes in order to get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.

*What to do when a hurricane is six to 18 hours from arriving*

- Turn on your TV/radio, or check your city/county website every 30 minutes in order to get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- Charge your cell phone now so you will have a full battery in case you lose power.

*What to do when a hurricane is 18 to 36 hours from arriving*

- Bookmark your city or county website for quick access to storm updates and emergency instructions.
- Bring loose, lightweight objects inside that could become projectiles in high winds (for example, patio furniture, garbage cans); anchor objects that would be unsafe to bring inside (for example, propane tanks); and trim or remove trees close enough to fall on the building.
- Cover all of your home's windows. Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection for windows. A second option is to board up windows with 5/8" exterior grade or marine plywood, cut to fit and ready to install.

*What to do when a hurricane is 36 hours from arriving*

- Turn on your TV or radio in order to get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit. Include food and water sufficient for at least three days, medications, a flashlight, batteries, cash, and first aid supplies.
- Plan how to communicate with family members if you lose power. For example, you can call, text, email or use social media. Remember that during disasters, sending text messages is usually reliable and faster than making phone calls because phone lines are often overloaded.
- Review your evacuation plan with your family. You may have to leave quickly so plan ahead.
- Keep your car in good working condition, and keep the gas tank full; stock your vehicle with emergency supplies and a change of clothes.

**After a hurricane**

- Listen to local officials for updates and instructions.
- Check-in with family and friends by texting or using social media.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Watch out for debris and downed power lines.
- Avoid walking or driving through flood waters. Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down, and one foot of fast-moving water can sweep your vehicle away.
- Avoid flood water as it may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines and may hide dangerous debris or places where the ground is washed away.
- Photograph the damage to your property in order to assist in filing an insurance claim.
- Do what you can to prevent further damage to your property, (for example, putting a tarp on a damaged roof), as insurance may not cover additional damage that occurs after the storm.
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it's not contaminated.
- Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- Never use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.

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