

Hurricane Preparedness List

General Supplies

Use this list to help you collect items you'll need during and after a storm.

- **Pack a to-go bag**: This overnight bag should be easy to take with you if you have to evacuate in a hurry and should include a change of clothes, bottled water, flashlight and important documents.
- **Cash**: ATMs and credit card machines may not work for a while after the storm.
- **Battery-operated radio**: Make sure you have extra batteries too, so that you can keep up with news reports and alerts. Hand-crank radios work well, too.
- **Secure a two-week supply of prescription medicine**: Anyone on prescription medications, as well as pregnant women, should pack a two-week supply of their meds in a sealable plastic bag, clearly labeled. Include instructions for taking the medications, too.
- **Flashlight and lanterns**: Make sure you have a couple of flashlights, candles, matches, lanterns and other alternate sources of light.
- **Personal hygiene items**: It might be hard to get to the store to buy toilet paper, tissues, soap and other sanitary items after the storm.
- **Extra keys**: Having an extra set of keys in your kit is a good idea in case people get separated or if they're lost in a flood or the confusion.
- **Pet items**: Remember food, medicine and water for your pet, too.
- **Disinfectant**: You never know what mess you'll have after a storm.
- **Checklist**: This printable checklist can serve as a guide for your own personal checklist. Give one to each family member to personalize.
- **Extra batteries**: You'll need extra batteries for your radio, flashlights, and other items. Get these early before they all sell out.
- **Prepare early**: Emergency items sell out quickly at the stores, so stock up your kit before hurricane season even starts, and replenish food supplies every six months.

First Aid

These first aid items are a must for every household.

- **Antiseptic solution**: Keep this on hand to keep infections at bay.
- **Allergy medicine**: Storms can blow in all kinds of icky stuff that drive your allergies wild.
- **First aid instructions**: Print out instructions for the Heimlich, CPR and other basic aid in case you panic in an emergency.

- **Mosquito repellent**: If it floods — or even rains a lot — your area could have a serious and potentially dangerous mosquito problem.
- **Prescription glasses**: If you run out of contact solution or all the nastiness in the air after a storm irritates you, you'll have back-up glasses.
- **Adhesive tape**: You can use this to fasten bandages, hold large lacerations together and even splint broken bones.
- **Gauze, bandages and band-aids**: Even little cuts and scrapes need to be dressed, so have a range of bandages on hand.
- **Hand sanitizer**: Nothing compares to soap and water, but in a fix, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol will help.
- **Sunscreen**: If you have to evacuate, take sunscreen with you in case you get stuck on the highway.

Repair and Maintenance

Here you'll find hacks for keeping your house and property in order.

- **Plywood**: Nailing plywood over windows is still the best option for protecting the inside of your house.
- **Sand bags**: If you live in a low area, especially, use sand bags to dispel water.
- **Bring outside furniture indoors**: Move patio furniture and pool toys into the garage.
- **Turn off utilities if you leave**: Before evacuating, shut off power, propane gas and water, but leave on natural gas unless told to do so by authorities. A licensed professional is the only one who can turn it back on.
- **Anchor mobile homes**: Pre-1994 construction mobile homes probably aren't anchored well enough to stand even Category 1 hurricanes.
- **Buy impact resistant glass**: Well before you hear about any storms, replace older windows with higher resistance ones.
- **Prepare your pool**: Make sure water drains for the deck, store toys, and close umbrellas.
- **Lock windows and doors**: Lock up your windows and doors for personal safety and to keep the wind from blowing them open.
- **Prune trees and shrubs**: Loose limbs and plants will fly around easily when the winds pick up.
- **Get storm shutters**: Place these over glass doors, windows and skylights.
- **Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors**: Make sure these will work even if the power is out.
- **Buy tarps and rope**: Already have these items on hand so that you can start repairs as quickly as possible to prevent more damage.
- **Fill bathtub with water**: If you're going to get hit pretty badly, give your family an extra supply of water by filling a sanitized bathtub.

Food and Water

Know which foods to keep on hand during a storm.

- **Food and water should last for 72 hours**: Make sure you have enough supplies to last everyone in the house for at least 72 hours.
- **Replace stored goods every six months**: If you're keeping a kit stocked around the year, replace food items every six months to ensure freshness and safety.
- **Be aware of boil water alerts**: After a storm, you may have to boil water for a few days at least due to flooded wells, spilled sewage and other contamination.
- **Prepare your refrigerator ahead of time**: Stock your freezer with dry ice to keep food frozen longer if the power goes out.
- **Get out your ice chest**: Fill an ice chest with dry ice before and after the storm to keep food cold.
- **Canned foods**: Canned meat, fish, fruits, soups, milk and vegetables are all smart, easy-to-prepare options.
- **Pick higher calorie foods**: You'll need to eat foods with more calories and nutrition per serving to sustain your energy.
- **Buy perishable foods right before the storm**: When everyone else is out buying canned items, you can buy cookies, raisins, dry cereal, pepperoni and cheese that doesn't need to be refrigerated. These will give you more variety but will still last a few days if you don't have power.
- **Use camping gear**: If you have basic camping gear like a small grill, you can make simple meals while the power's out.
- **Baby formula**: Don't forget to store enough baby formula and baby food.

Power Outages

Learn what to do when the power goes out.

- **Consider a generator**: These will make your life much easier during a storm, but understand the carbon monoxide risks and that your neighbors might get angry if you won't share.
- **Connect via Twitter and Facebook on your phone**: Most local news stations will send updates via FB and Twitter, which you can access on your phone if the power goes out.
- **Keep numbers of energy companies handy**: Write down or store in your phone the numbers of energy providers so that you can notify them of an outage.
- **Know which foods are safe to eat**: This guide explains which foods you can thaw and refreeze, how long they'll last in your refrigerator without power, and which to throw out.
- **Use grills and pressure washers outside**: Gas grills and generators carry a carbon monoxide risk.
- **Stay away from downed power lines**: Let trained workers clean up the damage.

- **Have a realistic understanding of restoration times**: Here you can read estimates of expected restoration times according to the strength of a hurricane.
- **Drink lots of water**: When it's hot and you don't have A/C, drink water to stay cool and hydrated.
- **Get your vaccines early**: If you're planning on getting a vaccine soon, do it before the storm, since power outages may spoil supplies.
- **Know how to connect a generator**: Don't connect it to your home's main power fuse.

Entertainment

Keep yourself entertained even when it's storming outside and the power goes out.

- **Board games**: Get out board games to keep you distracted during the storm and to play if the power goes out.
- **Read**: Read when it's light out, and save the radio battery for nighttime or news alerts only.
- **Play with your pets**: Give your pets extra attention, especially if they seem stressed or scared.
- **Play charades**: Games like charades or hide and go seek don't require any power.
- **Sing**: Singing will also help children relax.
- **Tell ghost stories**: If little kids aren't around, scare yourself with ghost stories during the storm.
- **Make a fort**: Use blankets, furniture and flashlights to make a cozy fort for your family.

Special Needs and Children

The elderly, sick, disabled, pregnant women and children all have special needs during hurricanes.

- **Minimize stress**: Help children cope better by minimizing stressful situations and discussions.
- **Limit TV time**: Don't let your kids watch scary footage of the storm on TV.
- **Pre-register for special needs shelters**: If you think you will have to evacuate and are bringing a special needs or disabled person with you, pre-register to ensure space and adequate care.
- **Maintain normal routines**: Keeping up with a normal routine helps soothe everyone from babies to adults.
- **Call the doctor**: Pregnant women and special needs patients should communicate with their doctors to let them know your plan for riding out the storm or evacuating.
- **FEMA for Kids**: As long as you have power, direct kids to this colorful site that includes games, cartoons, quizzes and information about hurricanes, presented in a friendly manner.

- **Contact home health care service:** If you use a home health care service, call them and ask them to check on you during and after the storm.
- **Answer children's questions:** Welcome questions from children about what to do, what a hurricane is, and how to prepare for it.
- **Get older kids to help:** School-aged children will feel more prepared and maybe even excited if they're allowed to help gather blankets and find batteries.
- **Bunk with the neighbors:** If you're elderly, ask to spend the night at the neighbors' house, or work out some kind of signal for help should you need it and if the phones go out.
- **Clean up clutter:** If the power goes out, or an elderly person is in a new home, he or she may be more likely to fall.
- **Stay hydrated:** People who are sick and the elderly are especially at risk for dehydration.
- **Know the risks:** Disabled individuals will find it harder to evacuate, so know all the obstacles and risks involved in transporting them or keeping them safe in your home.

Evacuating

Find out what to do if an evacuation is in order.

- **Find a place for pets ahead of time:** If you're unable to take your pets with you, make arrangements ahead of time, and never leave your pet chained up or alone on your property. It's cruel.
- **Get a real map:** You may not be able to rely on your GPS, especially if roads are blocked or flooded. Get a real map to help you find your way out.
- **Plan meeting places:** Pick two or three meeting places — one inside your home, one inside your neighborhood, and one outside your neighborhood for whenever the storm hits or where you plan to evacuate.
- **Sleeping bag:** Get a sleeping bag, blankets and pillows ready if you have to evacuate.
- **Keep your gas tank at least half full:** Fill it up all the way unless authorities are rationing it, but even when you're on the road, try not to let your tank get lower than half full.
- **Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes:** There should be standard routes, but listen to the news to learn about any new or updated routes.
- **Plan to stay with friends:** Hotels will book up quickly, so plan to stay with friends or family who live inland at least for the first couple of nights.
- **Find out if you live in an evacuation zone:** You may not even have to worry about evacuating.
- **Leave when you're told:** Avoid the worst traffic, road closures and getting stuck behind by leaving right when you're told to go.
- **Carefully inspect your home upon return:** Before letting children back, watch for snakes, rats, hanging electrical wires and loose debris.

Paperwork

Keep important documents safe during a storm.

- **Emergency contact information**: Put doctors' phone numbers and other emergency contact information in your preparedness kit.
- **Prioritize what's important**: You can't take everything with you, but deeds, wills, Social Security cards, birth certificates and important financial statements should be collected.
- **Use a USB drive**: Download important data onto a flash drive and put it in a waterproof, sealable bag or container.
- **Check home insurance**: Do this before hurricane season starts, otherwise updated coverage may not take effect until the following year. Also look into flood insurance.
- **Write down serial numbers**: In case important belongings are stolen or lost in the storm, you'll need serial numbers to get them back.
- **Set up direct deposit**: Ask your employer if you can switch to direct deposit since mail could be interrupted during a storm.
- **Proof of residence**: A driver's license or mail should suffice.
- **Use a fireproof safe**: A fireproof safe will keep your belongings protected.
- **Take video and photos**: Take them of your car, home and property before and after the storm for insurance purposes.

Staying Informed

Here are hacks for staying updated on alerts and warnings.

- **Know the terminology**: Know the difference between tropical depressions, tropical storms and hurricanes so that you can follow the reports better.
- **Listen for warnings**: Actually do what the officials tell you to do: stay put, evacuate, and/or get your supplies ready.
- **Check IBISEYE**: This website tracks Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico hurricanes.

Safety

Keep reading for more hacks on keeping your home and family safe.

- **Head to a windowless room**: Even if your windows are boarded up, stay in a windowless room while the winds are blowing.
- **Stay downwind**: This area is the opposite side of the house that the wind is hitting.

- **Stay inside**: Stay indoors for the entire duration of the storm, and do not go outside during the calm of the storm, when the eye passes over.
- **Be careful with candles**: Only light them if you have to, and set a reminder to blow them out before leaving the room or going to bed.