

American Red Cross Preparedness Guide for Hurricane Season

What To Do Now

- ▶ Read this guide carefully.
- ▶ Decide where you plan to go if you need to evacuate. You may choose to go to a hotel or motel, stay with friends or relatives in a safe location or go to a Red Cross shelter.
- ▶ Put together your disaster supplies kit as recommended in this guide.
- ▶ Plan ahead to evacuate with your pets. Emergency shelters cannot accept pets unless they are service animals. Prepare a list of family, friends, pet-friendly motels and boarding facilities that can shelter your animals during an emergency.

When a Watch Is Issued

- ▶ Listen for weather updates. Hurricanes are unpredictable, so stay informed.
- ▶ Have your car ready. Check gas, oil, water and maintenance.
- ▶ Check your disaster supplies kit.
- ▶ Close all windows and doors and then hurricane shutters. If you don't have shutters, close and board up all doors and windows with plywood. When windows break, homes are destroyed.
- ▶ Bring in bicycles, lawn furniture, hanging plants, trash cans or anything that could be picked up by strong winds.
- ▶ Secure your boat. Remember that most drawbridges and swing bridges will be closed to all boat traffic after the evacuation order is issued.



If You Can Stay Home

- ▶ Obtain and mark clean containers for storing water. You should have a minimum of one gallon per person per day for three days.
- ▶ Obtain a three-day supply of non-perishable foods that don't need refrigeration or cooking. Don't forget a manual can opener.
- ▶ Check your disaster supplies kit to ensure you have everything needed.
- ▶ Be a good friend. Offer your home as shelter to friends or relatives who live in vulnerable areas or mobile homes.
- ▶ Stay inside, away from windows.
- ▶ Wait for official word that the danger is over before going outside. Don't be fooled by the storm's calm eye.



If a Warning Has Been Issued

In the event that a hurricane warning is made for your area, your local radio and television will provide frequent updates about the storm as well as advice from local officials. Keep listening for updates, as the intensity and the path of the hurricane can change quickly and without notice.

Build Your Disaster Supplies Kit

Water

- Store one gallon of water per person per day, for at least three days

Food

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Canned juices, boxed milk, soup
- Non-perishable, high-energy foods: peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix
- Food for infants, elderly persons or persons on special diets

Tools and supplies

- Hand-crank or battery-operated radio
- Flashlight
- Extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Emergency preparedness manual
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Manual can opener, utility knife
- Pliers
- Roll of duct tape
- Compass
- Shut-off wrench (to turn off household gas and water)
- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting
- Map of area (for locating shelters and evacuation routes)
- Matches in waterproof container
- Paper, pencils

Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes, soap, hand sanitizer, liquid detergent, feminine supplies, personal hygiene items, plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation uses), plastic bucket with tight lid, disinfectant and household chlorine bleach

Clothing and bedding

- Sturdy shoes or work boots and rain gear
- Hat, work gloves and sunglasses
- Blankets or sleeping bags

Special items

For babies:

- Formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk and medications

For adults:

- Prescription and non-prescription medications that are regularly used, denture needs, contact lenses and supplies, extra eyeglasses, hearing aid batteries

Keep copies of these records in a waterproof, portable container:

- Will, insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks and bonds
- Passports, Social Security cards, immunization records
- Bank account and credit card numbers and companies' numbers
- Inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

Keep this checklist in your disaster supplies kit.

If You Must Evacuate

- ▶ Pack what you will need.
- ▶ Tell someone outside the storm area where you are going, such as the out-of-town contact person you identified in your family disaster plan.
- ▶ Unplug appliances and turn off electricity, propane gas tanks and the main water valve.
- ▶ Do not turn off natural gas unless local officials advise to do so. Only a professional should turn gas back on, to avoid the possibility of a leak leading to explosion.

After a Hurricane

- ▶ Have valid identification. You will not be allowed back into your area unless you can show proof of residency.
- ▶ Stay at home and avoid sightseeing, which can impede emergency and recovery response from officials.
- ▶ Beware of snakes, insects and animals driven to higher ground.

- ▶ Avoid downed or dangling utility wires.
- ▶ Enter your home with caution.
- ▶ Be cautious with fires. Do not strike matches until you are certain there are no gas leaks.
- ▶ If a power outage occurs, turn off or disconnect all motor-driven appliances and fixtures to avoid damage from sudden surges when power is restored.
- ▶ Use battery- or crank-operated flashlights. DO NOT use candles, as they may result in fire.
- ▶ Fill clean containers with water for drinking and cooking. You can store water in a bathtub for washing and to flush toilets.
- ▶ If your power has gone out, use perishable food in the refrigerator first, then use the food in the freezer followed by non-perishable foods.
- ▶ To keep spoiling and thawing of food to a minimum, open the refrigerator or freezer as seldom as possible during a blackout. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if it is unopened. Food will stay frozen for up to 48

American Red Cross preparedness guide, continued

hours if a freezer is full and tightly packed and the door is kept closed.

- ▶ To keep food colder longer, fill empty freezer spaces before a power outage occurs with containers of water for ice. If your water supply is contaminated or unavailable, the melting ice will also supply extra drinking water.
- ▶ Never refreeze food that has thawed completely. How do you tell if food has gone bad? The rule of thumb is, "If in doubt, throw it out!"

Helping Children Cope With Disasters

- ▶ During a disaster, your family may have to leave your home and daily routine.
- ▶ As an adult, you'll need to cope with the disaster in a way that will help children cope with temporary and permanent losses.
- ▶ How you react to an emergency gives them cues on how to act. If you appear overwhelmed, your children are more likely to feel overwhelmed.
- ▶ Children's fears may also stem from thoughts and imagination, and you should listen to your children and make sure to gently correct any mistaken beliefs.
- ▶ When talking with your child, use words that they use and understand and be honest and factual about information that they need to know. Provide *realistic* reassurances to your children.



Lessons Learned From Past Hurricanes

- ▶ Remember that some areas of your state may have been asked to evacuate before yours, so even if you leave early, roads may be congested.
- ▶ If possible, you should know where you are going and how you plan to get there before you leave home.



- ▶ Using alternate routes may lessen your travel time. Know what alternate routes are viable before you leave.
- ▶ Leaving early could shorten your travel time. Leaving later may not allow you enough time to reach safe shelter.
- ▶ You will need a full tank of gas and cash. Credit cards and ATM machines may not work.

How to Prepare for a Tornado

What to listen for

Tornado watch: Tornadoes are possible in and around your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

Tornado warning: A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If a tornado warning is issued for your area and the sky becomes threatening, move immediately to your safe room. For more information about safe rooms, go to www.redcross.org.

Severe thunderstorm watch: Severe thunderstorms are possible in your area.

Severe thunderstorm warning: Severe thunderstorms are occurring in your area.

What you can do before the storm

- ▶ Make a plan for you and your family to use during a tornado. Pick a "safe room" where family members and pets can gather during a tornado. A basement, storm cellar or interior rooms without windows (bathrooms, closets, hallways) are best. Choose a safe room at home, work, school or any other place you spend time.
- ▶ Have frequent drills to practice your emergency plan.
- ▶ Know the county in which you live, and keep a highway map nearby to follow storm movement from weather bulletins.
- ▶ Have a NOAA weather radio with a warning alarm tone and battery backup to receive warnings.

If a tornado warning is issued or if threatening weather approaches

- ▶ If at home or in building, move to a designated safe room underground.
- ▶ If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and get under a sturdy piece of furniture.
- ▶ Stay away from windows.
- ▶ Get out of automobiles.
- ▶ Do not try to outrun a tornado in your car.

Be Red Cross Ready

- ▶ If caught outside or in a vehicle away from buildings, lie flat in a ditch or depression.
- ▶ Mobile homes, even if tied down, offer little protection from tornadoes and should be abandoned.

Tips on Flooding

Before the flood

- ▶ Know the elevation of your property in relation to nearby streams and other waterways.
- ▶ Make a plan for what you would do and where you would go during a flood emergency.

When a flood watch is issued for your area

- ▶ Listen to area radio and television stations and NOAA weather radio for possible flood warnings and reports of flooding in progress from the National Weather Service and public safety agencies.
- ▶ Be prepared to evacuate at a moment's notice.
- ▶ If you are on a road, watch for flooding at highway dips, bridges and low areas.
- ▶ Watch for signs (thunder, lightning) of distant heavy rainfall.

When a flood warning is issued for your area

- ▶ Head for higher ground and stay there. Even a shallow depth of fast-moving flood water produces more force than most people realize.
- ▶ Act quickly to save yourself and those who depend on you. You may have only seconds.
- ▶ If you come upon a flowing stream where water is above your ankles, stop, turn around and go another way.
- ▶ If you are driving, avoid already flooded areas and areas more prone to sudden flooding. Do not cross flowing streams or water-covered roads. If your vehicle stalls, abandon it immediately and seek higher ground. Rapidly rising water may sweep the vehicle and its occupants away. Many deaths have been caused by attempts to move stalled vehicles.
- ▶ Keep children away from floodwaters, especially near culverts and storm drains.
- ▶ Be especially cautious at night when it is harder to recognize flood danger.
- ▶ When you are out of immediate danger, tune in to area radio and television stations and NOAA weather radio for additional information.

Be Red Cross Ready



The American Red Cross encourages everyone to "Be Red Cross Ready" for disasters and other emergencies by taking a few simple actions now to get better prepared; 1) Get a kit, 2) Make a plan and 3) Be informed. The Be Red Cross Ready campaign challenges individuals, businesses and communities to take responsibility for their safety and that of their families, homes and neighborhoods, while empowering people with the knowledge, tools and peace of mind to respond effectively in a disaster or emergency situation. To find out more, visit www.redcross.org.



Get a kit



Make a plan



Be informed