

# American Red Cross preparedness guide for hurricane season

## What To Do Now

- ▶ Read this guide carefully.
- ▶ Decide where you plan to go if you are requested to evacuate. You may 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 for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters. If you need to make arrangements for your pet, contact your vet, local SPCA or Humane Society.

## When the Storm Approaches

- ▶ Listen for weather updates. Hurricanes are unpredictable, so remain informed.
- ▶ Have your car ready. Check gas, oil, water and maintenance.
- ▶ Check your emergency evacuation supplies.
- ▶ Board up or put storm shutters on windows. When windows break, homes are destroyed.
- ▶ Clear your yard of loose objects, bicycles, lawn furniture, trash cans, etc.
- ▶ Secure your boat. Remember that most drawbridges and swing bridges will be closed to all boat traffic after the evacuation order is issued.
- ▶ Leave swimming pools filled. Super-chlorinate the water and cover pump and filtration systems and intakes.



## 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 seven days.
- ▶ Obtain a week's supply of non-perishable foods. Don't forget a non-electric can opener.
- ▶ Check your disaster supplies kit.
- ▶ 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. Don't be fooled by the storm's calm eye.

## If a Warning Has Been Issued

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



## If You Must Evacuate

- ▶ Pack what you will need.
- ▶ Turn off water and electricity at the main valve, breakers or fuses.

## Build Your Disaster Supplies Kit

### Water

- Store one gallon of water per person per day (two quarters for drinking, two quarts for food preparation/sanitation)
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water for each person in your household

### Food

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Canned juices, milk, soup
- Staples: sugar, salt, pepper
- High-energy foods: peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix
- Vitamins
- Food for infants, elderly persons or persons on special diets
- Comfort/stress foods, cookies, hard candy, sweetened cereals, lollipops, instant coffee, tea bags

### Tools and supplies

- Mess kits, or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Emergency preparedness manual
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Fire extinguisher: small canister, ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil, plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil, needles, thread and medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench (to turn off household gas and water)

- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting
- Map of area (for locating shelters)
- Fully charged cell phone and extra batteries

### Sanitation

- Toilet paper, towelettes, soap, 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 and gloves, thermal underwear and sunglasses
- Blankets or sleeping bags

### Special items

#### For baby:

- Formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk and medications

#### For adults:

- Heart and high-blood pressure medication, insulin, prescription drugs, denture needs, contact lenses and supplies, extra eyeglasses, entertainment games and books and important family documents

#### Keep these records in a waterproof, portable container:

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

**Keep disaster checklist in your disaster supplies kit.**

- ▶ Turn off propane gas tanks that serve individual appliances like a stove or grill. Do *not* turn off natural gas unless local officials advise to do so.

## After a Storm

- ▶ 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.

- ▶ Avoid using candles, as they may result in fire. Use a flashlight.
- ▶ Fill clean containers with water for drinking and cooking. Store water in a bathtub for washing and to flush toilets.
- ▶ Turn the refrigerator and freezer controls to the coldest settings.
- ▶ To keep spoiling and thawing of food to a minimum, open the refrigerator or freezer as seldom as possible during a blackout. Food will stay frozen for up to 48 hours if a freezer is full and tightly packed and the door is kept closed. Food in a partly filled freezer may keep for 24 hours.
- ▶ Fill empty freezer spaces with reusable ice containers, or fill empty milk containers about four-fifths full of water, cap the containers loosely and place in empty space.
- ▶ If food in freezer does defrost, use it within one or two days. 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 avoid developing a permanent sense of loss.
- ▶ How you react to an emergency gives them clues on how to act. If you seem overcome with a sense of loss, a child may feel losses more strongly.
- ▶ Children's fears may also stem from their imagination, and you should take these feelings seriously. A child who feels afraid is afraid.
- ▶ When talking with your child, be sure to present a realistic picture that is both honest and manageable.



### 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 will 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.



### How to Prepare for a Tornado

#### What to listen for

**Tornado watch:** Tornadoes are possible in 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 to your pre-designated place of safety.

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

**Severe thunderstorm warning:** Severe thunderstorms are occurring.

#### What you can do before the storm

- ▶ Develop a plan for you and your family for home, work, school and when outdoors.
- ▶ Have frequent drills.
- ▶ Know your county 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.
- ▶ Listen to radio and television for information
- ▶ If planning a trip outdoors, listen to the latest forecasts and take necessary action if threatening weather is possible.

#### If a warning is issued or if threatening weather approaches

- ▶ In a home or building, move to a designated shelter.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ If caught outside or in a vehicle, 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 plans of what you will do and where you will go in a flash-flood emergency.

#### When a flash-flood watch is issued for your area

- ▶ Listen to area radio and television stations and NOAA weather radio for possible flash-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 area.
- ▶ Watch for signs (thunder, lightning) of distant heavy rainfall.

#### When a flash-flood warning is issued for your area

- ▶ Act quickly to save yourself and those who depend on you. You may have only seconds.
- ▶ Do not attempt to cross a flooding stream on foot where water is above your knees.
- ▶ If you are driving, don't try to drive through water of unknown depth. If your vehicle stalls, abandon it immediately and seek higher ground. Rapid rising water may sweep the vehicle away. Many deaths have been caused by attempts to move stalled vehicles.
- ▶ Keep children away from floodwaters 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.