

Fact Sheet

Hurricanes

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Hurricanes are violent storms which bring intense winds, heavy rain, a storm surge, floods, coastal erosion, landslides, and tornadoes. While it is difficult to predict the exact time, place, and force of hurricanes, residents of the Atlantic and Gulf Coast states must be prepared. The season for hurricanes is June through November, with most hurricanes occurring mid-August to late October. Each season, on average, six hurricanes form in the Atlantic Ocean of which two become major hurricanes.

Know Your Risk and What To Do

- Contact your local emergency management office to learn about evacuation routes and emergency plans.
- Get additional information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (www.fema.gov), Citizen's Corps (www.citizencorps.gov), the American Red Cross (www.redcross.org) and NOAA's National Hurricane Center (www.nhc.noaa.gov).
- Buy flood insurance. Anyone can get flooded, even if you don't live in a designated flood zone. There is a 30-day waiting period before activation of flood insurance policies. Homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage. Ask your insurance agent or go to www.floodsmart.gov.
- Inquire about emergency plans and procedures at your child's school and at your workplace.
- Make a family disaster plan that includes out-of-town contacts and locations to reunite if you become separated. Be sure everyone knows home, work and cell phone numbers, and how to call 9-1-1.
- Assemble a disaster supplies kit with food, water, medical supplies, battery-powered radio and NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards, batteries, flashlights, and other items that will allow you to get by for 3 days after a hurricane hits.
- Gather important documents such as birth and marriage certificates, social security cards, passports, wills, deeds, and financial and insurance records. Store them in a fire and flood safe location or safe deposit box.

Prepare Your Home Before the Storm

- Install permanent wooden or metal storm shutters or board up windows with 5/8" marine plywood.
- Install metal straps or hurricane clips to securely fasten your roof to the frame structure.
- Trim trees and clear rain gutters and downspouts.
- Plan ahead for protection of pets and livestock. For information go to www.fema.gov and search on "Pet Owners."

As the Storm Approaches

- Remember that a **Hurricane Watch** means the onset of hurricane conditions is possible within 36 hours; a **Hurricane Warning** means the onset of hurricane conditions is likely within 24 hours.
- Have a full tank of gas in a vehicle, cash, and your disaster supplies kit ready to go.
- Make sure every family member carries or wears identification.
- Listen to the radio or television and NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards for current information and be prepared to act quickly.
- Turn refrigerator and freezer to maximum cold and keep closed.
- Secure your boat or move it to a safer mooring.
- Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water for bathing, flushing toilets, and cleaning, but do not drink this water.
- Secure or bring inside such outdoor items as patio furniture, kids' slides, and power mowers.
- Turn off propane tanks. Shut off other utilities if emergency officials advise you to do so.

As the Storm Approaches (Continued)

Evacuate if you:

- Are directed by local authorities to do so. Be sure to follow their instructions.
- Live in a mobile home, a high-rise building, on the coast, a floodplain, near a river, or an inland waterway, or otherwise feel you will be in danger.

If You Are Told to Evacuate:

- Turn off all utilities if authorities advise you to do so.
- Don't delay in evacuating once you get word to leave.
- Stick to designated evacuation routes. If you need help, this is the most likely place to find it.
- Take your most reliable vehicle and avoid taking multiple vehicles that create gridlock.

If You Cannot Evacuate and Are Staying In Your Home:

- Go to a safe indoor place for refuge, such as an interior room, closet, or hallway. Stay downstairs only if you are not in a flood prone or storm surge area.
- Do not go outdoors during the storm, even in its early stages. Flying debris is extremely dangerous.
- Close all doors, brace external doors, stay clear of windows and keep curtains and blinds shut.
- If necessary take cover under a heavy table, or under something protective.
- Don't be tricked by a sudden lull in the storm, it may be the "eye" passing over. The storm will resume.

Immediately After the Storm

- Use extreme caution going out of doors. Be alert for downed power lines, broken glass, and damage to building foundations, streets and bridges, and coastal or hillside erosion.
- Keep listening to radio, TV, or NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards.
- Watch for closed roads. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, **Turn Around and Don't Drown™**.
- Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from power lines.
- Once home, check gas, water, electrical lines and appliances for damage.
- Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Never use candles or other open flames indoors.
- When using a generator, avoid electrocution hazards by following manufacturers' instructions and standard electrical code.
- Do not drink tap water until you know it is safe.

The Recovery Process

- For direct assistance to individuals' and families' immediate needs contact the American Red Cross or other local voluntary agencies.
- Check newspapers, television, or radio news for information on disaster assistance available.
- If you have property damage, contact your insurance company as soon as possible.
- For information on helping children deal with disaster, visit www.fema.gov or get a copy of FEMA 478 *Helping Children Cope with Disaster*. To obtain other fact sheets and publications call the FEMA publication warehouse at 1-800-480-2520. You can also visit DHS' www.ready.gov.

Dangerous Hurricane Myth!	The Facts:
Tape your windows when a hurricane threatens.	Taping your windows is a waste of time and energy. It provides little strength to the glass and no protection against flying debris. Once a Hurricane Warning has been issued you should shutter your doors and windows for protection.