

Actions to Take Before -- and After -- a Hurricane

The hurricane warning system is increasingly effective in providing warnings in time for people to move inland when hurricanes threaten.

However, it is becoming more difficult to evacuate people from densely populated areas. Roads are easily overcrowded, particularly during summer tourist season. The problem is compounded by the complacency of people who do not understand the awesome power of the storm.

Complacency and delayed action could result in needless loss of life and damage to property.

Before a Hurricane Strikes

Plan a safe evacuation route that will take you 20-50 miles inland. Contact your local emergency management office or Red Cross chapter and ask for the community preparedness plan.

Have disaster supplies on hand, including:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First-aid kit
- Emergency food and water
- Nonelectric can opener
- Essential medicines
- Cash and credit cards
- Sturdy shoes and a change of clothing
- Copies of important papers, including bank accounts, insurance and household inventory records

Make sure your family goes over the family disaster plan

Make plans for protecting your house, especially the roof, windows and doors.

Trim dead or weak branches from trees.

Check into flood insurance. Homeowners policies do not cover damage from flooding that often accompanies hurricanes. Call your local insurance agent for information or the National Flood Insurance Program at 800-720-1090.

When a Hurricane Watch or Warning Is Issued

Listen to radio or television for hurricane progress reports. Follow instructions if ordered to evacuate.

Check your emergency supplies. Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, jugs, bottles and cooking utensils.

Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, toys and garden tools; anchor objects that cannot be brought inside but that could be wind-tossed. Remove outdoor antennas, if possible.

Secure your home by installing hurricane shutters or precut plywood.

Turn the refrigerator and freezer to the coldest settings if not instructed by officials to turn off utilities.

Fuel your car. Review evacuation routes and gather your disaster supply kit in case you are instructed to evacuate.

Store valuables and personal papers in a waterproof container.

After a Hurricane

Return home only after authorities say it is safe to do so. Keep tuned to your local radio or tv station for recovery information.

Beware of downed or loose power lines. Report them immediately to the power company, police or fire department.

Enter your home with caution. Open windows and doors to ventilate or dry your home. Do not use candles or open flames in doors. Use a flashlight to inspect for damage.

Check for gas leaks. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, quickly leave the building and leave the doors open. Call the gas company.

Look for electrical system damage. If you see sparks or frayed wires, turn off electricity at the main fuse box. If you have to step in water to reach the electric box, call an electrician for advice.

Check for sewage and water-line damage. If you suspect there is such damage, call the water company. Do not drink or prepare food with tap water until notified it is safe to do so.

Take pictures of the damage for insurance claims and contact your service agent.

If Evacuation Is Necessary

If officials order evacuation, leave as soon as possible. Avoid flooded roads and watch for washed-out bridges.

Secure your home. Unplug appliances and turn off electricity and the main water valve. If time permits, elevate furniture to protect it from flooding or move it to a higher floor.

Take your pre-assembled emergency supplies and warm, protective clothing.

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Copies of Surviving the Storm are available on the FEMA Web site: www.fema.gov
Aileen Cooper, Editor, DHS/FEMA_Office of Public Affairs.

For more: http://www.state.nj.us/njoem/guide_to_hurricane_prep.html