

# Hurricane Preparedness

The following information was obtained from [www.bereadyescambia.com](http://www.bereadyescambia.com).

## Before The Storm

Every year, prior to hurricane season, your family should review your hurricane plan and make changes as necessary. It should include if you plan to evacuate, where you will go, the route you will take to get there, when you will leave and what supplies you will take.

If you plan to stay, make sure you have all of the supplies necessary to be on your own for at least 72 hours. If you are planning to go to an evacuation shelter, have your shelter supplies kit packed and ready. Make sure you have all the materials on hand to protect your home. You should also trim dead wood from trees. Don't forget to make arrangements for pets. Print and save this page for future reference. You may not have power if a storm is approaching.

If the storm is threatening the area you should listen to local media for information and actions to be taken. In addition you should:

- Fuel your car. You will need it to evacuate and pumps don't work without electricity.
- Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, toys and garden tools.
- Install your storm shutters or cover windows with plywood and secure all doors. If you don't cover our windows, remove your screens so they won't blow away and you can reinstall them after the storm to keep mosquitos at bay.
- Prepare boats as appropriate.
- Turn refrigerators and freezers to the highest settings. Freeze plastic bottles of water (leave room for expansion).
- Turn off small appliances that are not needed.
- Turn off LP tanks.
- Call an out-of-town friend or relative to let them know of your plans. Then instruct other family members to call that person for information about your family after the storm.
- Fill sinks and bathtubs with water. Check them for slow leaks.
- Get an extra supply of cash. Banks and ATMs may not be operational immediately after the storm.

## Tracking a Storm

Those of us who live along the Florida Gulf Coast should track every Atlantic hurricane or tropical storm. Many times, we will need to begin making preparations before the storm ever enters the Gulf of Mexico. When tracking a storm, remember that a hurricane is not just a point on a map. Usually the coordinates of the center of the storm are given so that you can track it on your map, however, hurricanes can have tropical storm force winds over 200 miles from that center and even hurricane force winds over 75 or 100 miles from the center. We must remember that hurricane forecasting is not an exact science and they don't always go where predicted.

**Tropical Storm Watch:** Issued when tropical storm conditions are possible in the specified watch area, usually within 36 hours.

**Tropical Storm Warning:** Issued when tropical storm conditions are expected in the specified warning area, usually within 24 hours.

**Hurricane Watch:** Issued when hurricane conditions are possible in the specified watch area, usually within 36 hours. During a hurricane watch, be prepared to take immediate action to protect your family and property in case a hurricane warning is issued.

**Hurricane Warning:** Issued when hurricane conditions are expected in the specified warning area, usually within 24 hours. Storm preparations should be completed and evacuation under way.

# Disaster Supplies

If you plan to stay at home during a hurricane, you should have the following items on hand. It is a good idea to get these items at the beginning of the hurricane season because as a storm approaches, stores become very busy and stock is depleted quickly.

## Water

Water should be stored in plastic containers - avoid using glass. Store one gallon of water per person per day - and plan on at least five days of need. Save your empty 2-liter bottles during hurricane season to fill with water the night before a storm may hit. Fill bathtubs and sinks with water for sanitation use. Check them for leaks before the storm, and if water is draining out, place a sheet of plastic wrap over the drain. Washing machines can also be filled with water to use for washing hands. Water purification agents such as bleach should also be on hand.

## Food

Store at least a three day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, cooking or preparation. Think about what kind of food you would take camping - those are the types of foods that you need on hand after a storm. Many good foods come in ready-to-eat, non-refrigerated packaging. Small packages are a good choice because you won't have refrigeration for leftovers. Make sure to have a full tank of propane for your grill, or plenty of charcoal. Never use propane or charcoal indoors.

## First Aid Kit

It is a good idea to have two first aid kits; one for your home and the other for your car. Your kit should include things like bandages, scissors, tweezers, soap, latex gloves, lubricant, assorted size safety pins and any non-prescription drugs deemed necessary. Stock plenty of mosquito repellent and "bug bite sticks" for relieving the itch of insect bites and stings.

## Tools and Other Supplies

You should have a basic tool kit with items you feel are necessary to make temporary repairs after the storm. Basics include: plastic sheeting, paper plates and plastic utensils, flashlights and a battery-operated radio with plenty of spare batteries (or better yet - a hand-crank radio), non-electric can opener, fire extinguisher (because of the candles), tent, matches, aluminum foil, plastic storage containers, plastic garbage bags, small shovel and insect repellent. A corded phone (not cordless - they require electricity) will help if you have phone lines but no power. Small, portable antennas will give you access to local television stations if you have power but no cable. Small televisions often have adapters for use in automobiles.

## Clothing and Bedding

Clothing and bedding items should be protected by covering them with plastic drop cloths, placing them in waterproof boxes, plastic bags or other suitable containers. Be sure to have available: work boots and gloves, rain gear, blankets or sleeping bags, lots of towels, hats and sunglasses.

## Special Items

Always remember family members with special needs. For children you should have plenty of necessary baby formula, diapers, bottles and medications. Adults with medications such as insulin or other prescription drugs should have their prescriptions filled before the storm. Don't forget any denture needs and eye glasses or contacts. You may also consider asking your vet about a mild sedative for your pets if they are anxious during storms. You should also have some form of entertainment for everyone including books for adults. Keep all important family documents safe and in a waterproof container. Items for consideration to keep safe are wills, insurance policies, bank account numbers, credit cards, your address book and a household inventory complete with serial numbers and pictures or video.

## Shelter Items

Hurricane evacuation shelters are provided for public use in the event a hurricane evacuation becomes necessary and if you have no other place to go. It is recommended that other arrangements be made with a friend or relative that lives in a well constructed home, out of the evacuation area, and properly protected to withstand hurricane force winds. You will probably be more comfortable, certainly in a less crowded environment and among friends. Remember, alcohol, weapons and pets are not permitted in public shelters.

Many churches will provide shelter for members and businesses should consider sheltering employees and families if possible.

Buildings used for evacuation shelters are normally public schools that are staffed by Red Cross volunteers and U.S. Navy personnel. Shelters are always crowded, usually uncomfortable when the power goes off because there is no ventilation, have long lines to use restrooms and to get food, and are very noisy - making it difficult to rest or sleep. Keep in mind you may have to stay in the shelter for several days.

### **If you go to a public shelter, you will need to take the following items:**

- A change of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes
- Toiletries and personal items
- Blankets or sleeping bags and pillows
- Identification and any important papers
- Games or toys for children
- books for adults
- Special items for infants or elderly family members
- Any special dietary needs and non-perishable foods for snacks
- Battery operated radio, flashlights and plenty of spare batteries
- Prescription medications or any over-the-counter medications you normally take

### **Should You Stay or Go?**

Have a good plan of action ready and stick to it. Don't let the storm's strength determine whether, or when, you evacuate. Storms can change strength and speed quickly. Leave early otherwise you may get stuck in traffic as the storm moves inland.

If you live near the coast, in a low-lying area, in a flood plain or in a manufactured home, you should evacuate. If you live on high ground away from evacuation areas, then cover your windows and pick a small, interior room to ride out the storm with your hurricane survival kit. Tornadoes often develop as a storm approaches. It's a good idea to pad your "safe room" with mattresses.

### **After A Hurricane:**

- Do not try to return to your home until evacuated areas have been cleared of danger.
- Have your driver's license or utility bill handy for proof of residence.
- Be wary of weak bridges, overpasses, porches, and decks – and of downed power lines and any pools of water that they may be in.
- Beware of broken glass and other sharp objects.
- Pay attention to the smells around you; they may warn you of broken gas lines.
- Watch out for poisonous snakes driven from their dens by flooding rains or saltwater intrusion.
- Do not drink tap water until emergency management officials pronounce it safe.
- TV and radio will be the best sources of information after the storm, but if you cannot "tune in," go to the nearest disaster relief center. Relief centers usually are set up near the hardest hit areas and can provide you with information and disaster assistance such as unemployment compensation, food stamps, etc

## What About My Pets?

Only 38% of U.S. households have children, but 43% have pets! Take time now to plan how you will protect yours during a weather emergency.

### If You Plan To Evacuate

All pet owners should make arrangement for their pets if they plan to evacuate. Public shelters will not accept pets. If you can't take your pets with you, arrangements should be made with a clinic or kennel. These arrangements should be made well in advance because available spaces fill up quickly as a storm approaches. If you plan to take your pets with you, you may want to ask your vet for a mild sedative (for the pet) and remember to take these items for their care:

- A secure pet carrier of appropriate size
- Food/water bowls
- A one week supply of dry food
- Water in plastic containers
- Medications and health records
- Leashes (muzzles if necessary)
- Newspapers and paper towels for cleanup
- A favorite blanket

Many hotels/motels will accept pets, especially in emergency situations. If you plan to go to a motel, determine in advance if pets are welcome and what, if any, special rules are applicable. All pets should have current immunizations and ensure that they have a collar with proper identification.

### If You Must Leave Your Pet At Home

If you have to leave your pets at home try to secure them in a safe area of your home. Otherwise, your pets may escape and become disoriented as a storm could alter landmarks and scent trails. Make sure the pet is wearing a collar with proper identification. Remember, don't leave dogs and cats in the same space. Even if they normally get along, things may change as the storm approaches. Some other things to remember are:

- Place pets in ventilated safe rooms without windows
- Leave at least a three day food supply
- Leave plenty of water
- Leave access to elevated spaces in the event of flooding

Pet stores sell slow-release feeders and fizzing tablets to provide oxygen for fish tanks if you have no power.

After the storm, walk pets on a leash until they become reoriented to their home and surroundings. Downed power lines and other debris pose risks for you and your pets. Don't let pets consume food or water which may have become contaminated.

## Refrigerators and Freezers

During a hurricane emergency, leave the refrigerator and freezer plugged in and turn them up to the coldest setting as they can maintain food-preserving temperatures for up to two days after power has been lost. Open the refrigerator and freezer only when necessary to maintain food preserving temperatures for as long as possible.

Use dry ice in the freezer if it is available. After placing the dry ice into the freezer, cover the freezer with blankets, quilts or some other insulating covering. Be sure the covering does not obstruct any air ventilation openings as the power may go off unexpectedly and ventilation in the freezer will be needed. It will also help to put crumpled newspapers between the freezer and the covering. Avoid contacting the dry ice with skin. Use paper of gloves in handling the dry ice to avoid a severe burn.

If freezer stops working, the food in the freezer will stay frozen depending on:

- the amount of food in the freezer. A full freezer will stay cold many hours longer than a freezer only one-quarter full.
- the type of food in the freezer. A freezer full of meat will not warm up as fast as a freezer full of baked food.
- the temperature of the food. The colder the food, the longer it will stay frozen.
- the quality of the freezer. A well-insulated freezer will keep food frozen much longer than one with little insulation.
- the size of the freezer. The larger the freezer, the longer the food will stay frozen.

The following steps should be taken in the event the freezer stops working:

- Estimate how long the power will be off to determine how long the food will stay frozen. With the freezer closed, the food in a fully loaded freezer will usually stay frozen two days. If the food is in a freezer with less than half a load, it will probably not stay frozen for more than a day.
- If arrangements have been made in advance to have the food stored in a locker plant, call the plant to see if it is operating. If the plant is operating and it is possible to transport the food to the plant, make sure the food is wrapped in newspaper and blankets or placed in an insulated container before transporting it to the plant to prevent it from thawing.
- If the food is stored in the freezer at home, refreeze the food quickly by turning the temperature control on the freezer to the coldest setting once it is operating again. Clean the freezer before refilling it. Place the warmer packages against the refrigerated surface if possible, but stack them so air can circulate around them. After the food is well frozen, turn the temperature control to its usual setting. If the freezer is too full, move some of the colder packages to the refrigerator, and return them to the freezer gradually.

### Thawing and Refreezing:

- Foods that have been frozen and thawed require the same care as foods that have never been frozen. Use refrozen food as soon as possible.
- Partial thawing and refreezing does reduce the quality of foods, particularly fruits, vegetables and prepared foods. Red meats are affected less than many other foods by partial thawing and refreezing. Food that has thawed may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or if it is still cold - about 40 degrees Fahrenheit - and has been at this temperature no longer than one or two days after thawing.
- Thawed fruits can be refrozen if they still taste and smell good. Fruits usually ferment when they start to spoil. A small amount of fermentation will not make fruits dangerous to eat; however, it may spoil their flavor.
- Care should be taken in determining whether or not thawed meat and poultry should be refrozen. Meats and poultry become unsafe to eat when they start to spoil. Therefore, each package of food should be examined before determining whether or not it should be refrozen. If the color or odor of the thawed food is poor or questionable, dispose of it, as it may be dangerous to eat.
- Do not use melted ice cream.
- If refreezing the thawed food is not possible, canning it may be the only practical solution to saving most, if not all, of it

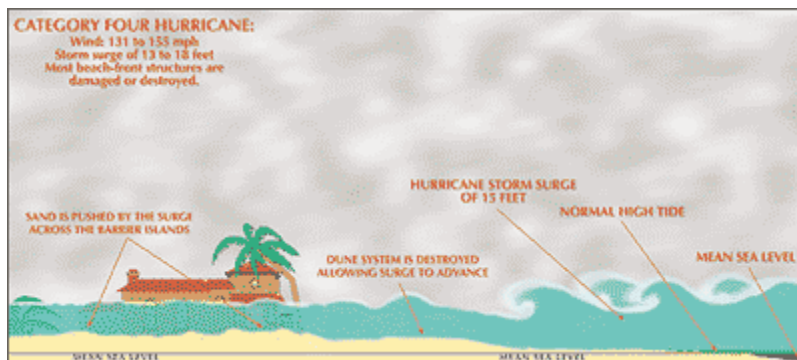
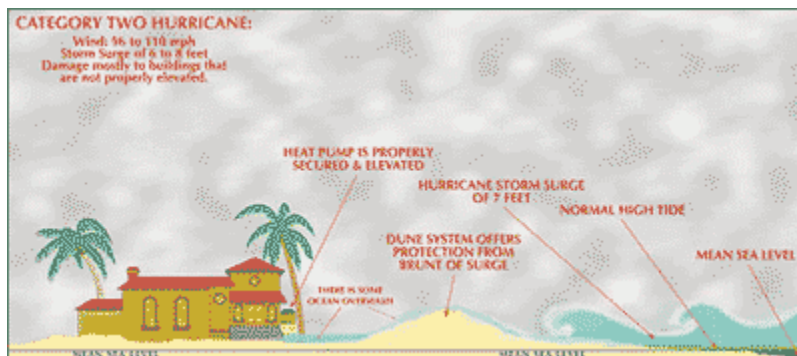
## During The Storm

If you stay at home during a hurricane you should take the following precautions in addition to those mentioned on the before the storm page as the storm approaches:

- Stay away from windows and doors, even if they are covered.
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, hallway or basement if available. If you live in a two story home, choose a room on the first floor.
- Close all interior doors and brace exterior doors if possible.
- Lie on the floor under a table, or another sturdy object. Some protection is afforded by covering with a mattress during the height of the storm.
- If the eye of the storm passes over, it will be calm for a short period of time. **REMAIN INDOORS!** As soon as the eye passes over, winds will increase rapidly to hurricane force from the opposite direction.
- Remain calm. It may take several hours for the storm to pass.

## The Result

The illustrations below depict a category two hurricane and a category four hurricane at the beachfront. The illustrations show the beach in profile to demonstrate scale. Notice the differences in the two scenarios. The category two hurricane causes dune erosion and minor ocean over wash on well nourished barrier islands. Thus the damage is typically minor as compared to what will likely occur during a category four hurricane.



## After The Storm

- Keep listening to your local radio or TV stations for information.
- If you evacuated, return home only when authorities advise that it is safe. Make sure you have plenty of gas, and bring any supplies you may need (batteries, water, non-perishable food).
- Drive only if it is absolutely necessary. Immediately following the passage of the storm, debris and downed power lines may be covering roadways making them impassible. Emergency crews will be working to clear roadways but it may take hours or even days to clear them all. Avoid sightseeing. Roads may be closed for your protection so if you encounter a barricade, turn around and go another way.
- Do not drive in flooded areas. Avoid weakened bridges and washed out roadways. If water is touching the span of the bridge, do not cross over.
- Stay on firm ground. Moving water only six inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from downed power lines.
- Beware of downed power lines. Lines may be charged and dangerous.
- Beware of snakes, insects or animals driven to higher ground by flood waters.
- Enter your home with extreme caution. Beware of fallen objects or damaged roof and wall sections.
- Remove shutters or plywood and open windows and doors to ventilate or dry your home if necessary. Replace screens if you removed them prior to the storm.
- Check gas, water and electrical lines and appliances for damage. Do not attempt to repair damaged gas or electrical lines. Call a professional.
- Do not drink or prepare food with tap water until you are certain it is not contaminated.
- Avoid using candles or other open flames indoors. The fire department may not be able to respond if you have a fire. Use a flashlight, glow sticks or battery-powered lighting.
- Use the telephone to report emergencies only. This includes cellular phones. An older "corded" phone can be used if your power is out but you phone lines are up.
- Be especially cautious when using a chainsaw to cut fallen trees. Ambulances may have difficulty responding to accidents, and roads to hospitals might be impassable.
- Never connect portable generators to your house. Use them only to run necessary appliances and plug the appliance into the generator.
- Gulf Power Company has information that may help you determine if power is back in your area.

## Emergency Generators

When using an emergency generator during a power failure, extreme care must be taken to ensure your safety as well as others who might be working to restore your power. **NEVER CONNECT YOUR GENERATOR TO THE HOUSE CURRENT.** All permanent connections must be made by a licensed electrician. If not properly connected, a generator may feed electrical current to service wires and place power company service personnel in danger.

When using a portable generator, plug the appliances directly into the generator. Other safety tips are listed below:

- **Do not** operate your generator inside the home. It must be located in a well ventilated area with air flow sufficient for cooling the engine and exhausting carbon monoxide fumes.
- Cover your generator and protect it from the elements to prevent electrical shorting and rusting. Make sure that nothing comes in contact with the exhaust system and that the exhaust is kept clear.
- **Do not** overload your generator. It must have a maximum wattage rating greater than your anticipated requirement.
- **Never** put fuel in your generator while it is running or the exhaust is still hot. The heat from the exhaust may ignite the fumes from the fuel.
- **Never** store gasoline inside your home or in an area where open flame is present, such as a water heater or other appliance with a pilot light or gas burner.

### Frequently Asked Questions About Generators

#### 1. What size generator do I need?

Depending on their wattage output, generators will run anything from a small lamp to a number of large appliances. The following chart can be used as a guideline to help you to determine what size generator you will need for the items you wish to operate. Most "total electric homes" of 1,200 to 3,000 square feet would require a 3,000 to 5,000 watt generator (not including the air conditioning/heating system). Some appliances, such as air conditioners, heaters, refrigerators, pumps and other motors, require more wattage at startup than a reduced wattage to operate. The startup wattage should be considered when determining the size of the generator. Wattages on the following chart are averages. Check your appliance label for accurate wattage.

<u>Appliance</u>	<u>Run Wattage</u>	<u>Start Wattage</u>
Light bulb	40 - 100 watts	N/A



Television	400 watts	N/A
Microwave	800 - 1000 watts	N/A
Toaster Oven	1500 watts	N/A
Portable Heater (5,000 BTU)	1500 watts	1800 watts
Refrigerator/Freezer	1000 watts	3000 watts
Water Heater	3500 - 4500 watts	N/A
Coffee Maker	1300 watts	N/A
Air Conditioner (20,000 BTU)	3200 watts	7500 watts
Electric Blanket	500 watts	N/A
Clothes Washer	1000 watts	3500 watts

**2. What is the difference between rated and maximum watts?**

A generator's rated wattage is the amount of power produced continuously, while maximum wattage is the power produced for short periods of time (such as a motor starting)

**3. How are generators protected from overload?**

Most generators feature AC circuit breakers. In the event of overloading, the circuit breaker will shut the unit down and trip. If this occurs, the overload condition must be corrected and the circuit breaker reset.

**4. How long will my generator run?**

Runtime will vary depending on several factors. The fuel tank capacity and how hard the generator works are the greatest factors in determining the runtime of your generator. Most new generators will provide information on fuel consumption and various load percentages, as well as the capacity of your fuel tank. With these two pieces of information, you can determine the runtime of your generator. Example: If your generator uses 1 gallon of fuel per hour at full load, and the fuel tank capacity is 8 gallons, then you can operate your generator at full load for 8 hours. **Remember, never fuel a generator while it is running or while the exhaust system is hot.** You should also exercise your generator on a regular basis to ensure its operating condition.

**5. What kind of extension cords should I use?**

Since your generator will be outside, you should use an extension cord rated for outdoor use. Make sure that the extension cord is rated for the wattage of the appliance or appliances that you will be using.