

Hurricane Safety

A Family Plan

The best defense against a hurricane is to be prepared. Start now to devise a complete plan of actions of your family in the event a hurricane threatens. It's important that everyone in your family has a role in your plan. Review your plan at the beginning of every hurricane season and then rehearse it to assure that everyone knows what will be expected of him or her and how long it will take to accomplish each task. Don't forget to add time to account for deteriorating weather conditions and increased traffic. If you have elderly friends who will be staying with you during a hurricane, be sure to include them in your plan. Who pick them up? Keep a list of their prescribed medications and include them in your food and water storage plans. If you live alone, you may want to consider teaming up with a friend or neighbor. There is safety in numbers.



Here are your options in order of preference:

1. Stay with friends or relatives at an inland home that is determined to be safe (shutters, etc.). If you do plan to stay with friends, make sure, in advance, that they know you intend to stay with them. Decide who will be responsible for supplies. You could also try to get a room in a low-rise inland hotel or motel that has been determined to be a safe structure.
2. If you intend to attempt to relocate outside of the area, be prepared to leave as early as possible to avoid traffic and rapidly deteriorating weather conditions. Be advised: tropical storms and hurricanes are notorious for changing direction. You may find yourself headed directly into a threatened area. A hurricane can travel faster than a traffic jam, and the worst place to be in a hurricane is stuck in your car. You're better off staying in a well constructed, properly prepared structure.
3. A Red Cross shelter should be your last resort if you have nowhere else to go. Shelters will be crowded and uncomfortable with no privacy. Bring pillows, blankets and your own supply of food, water, and prescription medicine. If you have young children, you'll need a few of their favorite small toys, games or books. Don't go to a shelter until you hear from officials that the shelters have been opened. Pets, alcohol and firearms are not allowed in shelters. If you need transportation to a shelter or if you need non-life threatening medical support (oxygen, dialysis, etc.), you need to pre-register with your county's Office of Emergency Management for a "special needs" shelter. Only those who preregistered will be assured of space in a special needs shelter.

General

- Talk with your children about hurricanes, what a hurricane is and how you are preparing for one.
- Assign an emergency meeting place in case your family gets separated. Designate an out of town family member or friend as an emergency contact.
- Write down the important points in your plan so it's clear will handle each task and you won't forget anything in the heat of the moment.
- Identify a "safe room" where your family can take cover if a major hurricane hits and threatens the structural integrity of your home. A large interior closet, bathroom, hallway or stairwell with no windows works best.
- Decisions about what to do in a hurricane, however, are yours alone, and the Department of Public Utilities is not responsible for any damage or injury resulting from information in, or omitted from the Guide.

Action Items & Tips

The Department of Public Utilities Gas & Electric Emergency Checklist Before the Storm

- In preparation for a hurricane or violent windstorm, gas appliances should be secured. Water heaters in particular can be extremely heavy and can break gas line connections when they fall.
- If you want your gas turned off, call the Department of Public Utilities for assistance. If your gas service has been turned off, it must be rechecked before services is restored. You must contact the Department of Public Utilities office to restore your gas.
- If you smell gas after the storm, leave your home and call the Department of Public Utilities.
- Before using gas appliances, connections to stoves, water heaters and dryers need to be checked by qualified service contractors.
- Fallen trees may cause a number of problems, and extreme caution needs to be used in tree removal. Watch out for power lines that might be entangled in downed trees. These lines can present a physical hazard as well as an electrical one. Tree roots can also present a less obvious hazard as they grow around buried gas and underground electrical lines and can possibly damage such a line if the trees falls. Customers should exercise caution in attempting to remove any trees. If you have to excavate a tree, customers are to call 1-888-721-7877 (1-888-SC1-PUPS) to have gas lines and underground electrical lines located before digging.
- If you have left your residence and return to the smell of gas, don't use the telephone in your home. Leave your home and call the Department of Public Utilities.
- As a precautionary measure, if you see anything irregular with your gas or electric meter, notify the Department of Public Utilities immediately. If your meter is damaged, it must be repaired or replaced by the Department of

Public Utilities.

- A qualified contractor should inspect appliances that have been subjected to flooding or water damage. This also applies to heating and air units that are located outside.

Portable Generator Safety

Most electrical outages are temporary and do not require any auxiliary power. However, homeowners sometime use portable electric generators. Please, always use caution when operating a portable generator. Improper use can cause problems and injury to electrical utility workers as result of "feedback" to the utilities' electrical distribution systems. Here are some safety tips to remember:

- Do not connect a portable generator to your existing house wiring. Connect it directly to appliances, and only use approved and properly sized power cords.
- Operate generators outside, away from flammable objects. Keep children and pets away from portable generators.
- Never add fuel while a generator is running. Turn it off and let it cool first.
- Portable generators should be properly grounded before being used. Read your owner's manual for instructions.
- The use of an extension cord that is connected to a neighboring home or business is discouraged. Depending on how the cord is connected to the home needing power, it can result in "silent feedback" to the utility's electrical distribution system.

Doors & Windows

- Wind force on doors is focused on the lock, jambs and hinges. Double and French entry doors that open in are the most vulnerable.
- The bolts that secure the top and bottom of double doors must be strong enough to withstand hurricane-force winds, most are not. Some manufacturers make reinforcing bolts kits.
- Doors with windows must have impact protection just like any other window.
- Replacing old doors with new ones that adhere to the stricter codes is one option (a potentially expensive one). Remember that the jambs may have to be reinforced.
- Older, weaker doors can be protected using 2 x 4 braces bolted to the frame or concrete.
- Garage doors are also vulnerable to wind and impact. New doors are being built that meet the new tougher codes and in many cases are surprisingly affordable.
- Brace older garage doors by using vertical 2 x 4 braces, one in the middle for single doors, two or more for larger doors. Bolt them to the frame above the door and the floor at the bottom.
- Use extreme caution when working with garage doors. They can be very dangerous. Don't attempt to improve or repair the springs yourself. Call a

professional.

- To protect your windows by using homemade plywood shutters, you must purchase and pre-fit the shutters long before a hurricane threatens. It would be virtually impossible for most people to properly install shutters on all windows as a hurricane approaches.

Terms to Know

WATCHES & WARNINGS

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When tropical storm or hurricane threatens, the National Hurricane Center will issue advisories based on the projected time until landfall of the storm.

WATCHES

A tropical storm or hurricane watch means that tropical storm or hurricane conditions pose a possible threat in a specified coastal region within 36 hours. You should begin preliminary preparations to protect life and property. Stay tuned to your local news cast and the Hurricane Network for continuing updates.

WARNINGS

A tropical storm or hurricane warning means that tropical storm or hurricane conditions are expected in specified coastal regions within 24 hours. All preparations should be completed. Stay tuned to your local news cast and the Hurricane Network for evacuation orders and additional instructions.

Remember: winds and storm surge from tropical storms are not as serious as a hurricane. However, many tropical storms and even tropical depressions may contain tornadoes and torrential, flooding rains.

KNOW YOUR STORMS

A tropical disturbance, tropical wave or easterly wave can be defined as a cluster or clouds and thunderstorms moving through the tropics.

When a tropical wave develops a rotary, cyclonic (counter-clockwise) circulation with sustained winds reaching 39 mph, a tropical storm has formed.

When sustained winds reach 74 mph, a hurricane has formed.

Saffir/Simpson Scale

CATEGORY ONE

Winds 74-95 MPH or Storm Surge 3-4 feet above normal.*

CATEGORY TWO

Winds 96-110 MPH or Storm Surge 6-feet above normal.*

CATEGORY THREE

Winds 111-130 MPH or Storm Surge 9-12 feet above normal.*

CATEGORY FOUR

Winds 131-155 MPH or Storm Surge 13-18 feet above normal.*

CATEGORY FIVE

Winds 155 MPH PLUS or Storm Surge Greater than 18 feet above normal.*

*Actual storm surge values will vary considerably depending on coastal configurations and other factors.

What to Do

Lowe's Home Improvement Warehouse and the American Red Cross want to help challenge individuals, businesses and communities to take actions to reduce the effects of natural disasters like hurricanes. By following the preparation tips illustrated here, you can help your community become a disaster resistant community.

Preparing Your Property

Before hurricane season arrives (June 1 to November 30) there are steps you can take to prepare your home or property:

- Obtain and store the materials necessary to properly secure your home, such as hurricane shutters, plywood, durable containers, and plastic sheeting.
- Owning your own chain saw allows you to trim trees and cut down weak limbs that could fall or blow onto your house during high winds.
- Tack down any loose roofing or siding.

Before the Storm

Together with your family, choose where you will go if an evacuation order is issued by authorities. A friend or relative, a region outside the threatened area, or a shelter are all options before weather becomes threatening.

Designate a safe spot within your home for the family to gather in the event of a hurricane. An interior room without windows, such as a bathroom, pantry or closet.

Make sure all family members are familiar with how and when to turn off gas, water, and electricity.

Hurricane Preparedness

When a "hurricane watch" is issued hurricane conditions are a treat to a specific area with 36 hours. You should:

- Monitor radio and television broadcast for information regarding the storm's progress.
- Clear the yard of lawn furniture potted plants, and other flying debris.
- Check food and water supplies.

When a "hurricane warning" is issued hurricane conditions are expected in a specific area within 24 hours. You should:

- Cover windows and doors with shutters or plywood.
- Turn refrigerator and freezer to coldest settings.
- Have flashlights and extra batteries handy.
- If an order to evacuate is issued, unplug major appliances, turn off electricity and the main water valve. You should also inform friends or family members of your evacuation plans.

Hurricanes can be devastating, but being well prepared can minimize the

damage to your property and maximize the safety of you family. For more information, please contact your local American Red Cross chapter or visit Lowe.com on the web.