



# Weather Safety: Hurricanes

## Safety and Preparedness Fact Sheet

### Before the Hurricane Season

- ▶ Determine safe evacuation routes inland.
- ▶ Learn location of official shelters.
- ▶ Make emergency plans for pets.
- ▶ Check emergency equipment, such as flashlights, generators and battery-powered NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards and cell phones.
- ▶ Buy food that will keep and store drinking water.
- ▶ Buy plywood or other material to protect your home.
- ▶ Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- ▶ Trim trees and shrubbery.
- ▶ Decide where to move your boat in an emergency.
- ▶ Review your insurance policy.

### During the Storm

#### When in a **Watch** area...

- ▶ Listen frequently to radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards for bulletins of a storm's progress.
- ▶ Fuel and service your vehicles.
- ▶ Inspect and secure mobile home tie-downs.
- ▶ Board up windows in case the storm moves quickly and you have to evacuate.
- ▶ Stock up on batteries, food that will keep, first aid supplies, drinking water and medications.
- ▶ Store lawn furniture and other loose, light-weight objects, such as garbage cans and garden tools.
- ▶ Have cash on hand in case power goes out and ATMs don't work.

#### Plan to evacuate if you...

- ▶ Live in a mobile or manufactured home. They are unsafe in high winds no matter how well fastened to the ground.
- ▶ Live on the coastline, an offshore island or near a river or flood plain. In addition to wind, flooding from storm surge waves is a major killer.
- ▶ Live in a high-rise. Hurricane winds can knock out electricity to elevators, break windows and more.

### TERMS TO KNOW

**Hurricane Watch:** Hurricane conditions are possible within the specified coastal area. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane watch is issued 48 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.

**Hurricane Warning:** Hurricane conditions are expected in the specified area of the warning. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane warning is issued 36 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.

**Tropical Storm Watches and Warnings:** Take these alerts seriously. Although Tropical Storms have lower wind speeds than hurricanes, they often bring life-threatening flooding and dangerous winds. Take precautions!

#### When in a **Warning** area...

- ▶ Closely monitor radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards for official bulletins.
- ▶ Close storm shutters.
- ▶ Follow instructions issued by local officials. **Leave immediately if ordered!**
- ▶ If evacuating, leave as soon as possible. Stay with friends or relatives, at a low-rise inland motel or at a designated public shelter outside the flood zone.
- ▶ DO NOT stay in a mobile or manufactured home.
- ▶ Notify neighbors and a family member outside of the warned area of your evacuation plans.
- ▶ Take pets with you if possible, but remember, most public shelters do not allow pets other than those used by the handicapped. Identify pet-friendly motels along your evacuation route.

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## If Staying in a Home...

- ▶ Turn refrigerator to maximum cold and keep closed.
- ▶ Turn off utilities if told to do so by authorities.
- ▶ Turn off propane tanks.
- ▶ Unplug small appliances.
- ▶ Fill bathtub and large containers with water in case tap water is unavailable. Use water in bathtubs for cleaning and flushing only. Do NOT drink it.



## If Winds Become Strong...

- ▶ Stay away from windows and doors, even if they are covered. Take refuge in a small interior room, closet or hallway.
- ▶ Close all interior doors. Secure and brace external doors.
- ▶ If you are in a two story house, go to an interior 1st floor room.
- ▶ If you are in a multi-story building and away from water, go to the 1st or 2nd floor and stay in the halls or other interior rooms away from windows.
- ▶ Lie on the floor under a table or other sturdy object.

This information is adapted from a joint NWS, FEMA and American Red Cross brochure:  
[www.weather.gov/os/brochures/hurr.pdf](http://www.weather.gov/os/brochures/hurr.pdf)

For links to forecasts, billion dollar hurricanes, service assessment, brochures, and more go to:

[www.weather.gov/os/hurricane](http://www.weather.gov/os/hurricane)  
NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards:  
[www.weather.gov/nwr](http://www.weather.gov/nwr)  
National Hurricane Center  
[www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov)

## What to Bring to the Shelter

- First aid kit
- Medicine
- Baby food and diapers
- Cards, games, books, music players with headphones
- Toiletries
- Battery-powered radio, cell phone
- Flashlights, one per person
- Extra batteries
- A blanket or sleeping bag for each person
- Identification
- Valuable papers such as insurance policies
- Cash, credit card

**REMINDER: If you are told to leave, do so immediately!**

## Be Alert For...

- ▶ Tornadoes: They are often spawned by hurricanes.
- ▶ The calm “eye” of the storm. It may seem like the storm is over but after the eye passes, the winds will change direction and quickly return to hurricane force.

## After the Storm

- ▶ Keep listening to radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio.
- ▶ Wait until an area is declared safe before entering.
- ▶ Watch for closed roads. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, **Turn Around Don't Drown!**<sup>TM</sup>
- ▶ Avoid weakened bridges and washed out roads.
- ▶ 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 and electrical lines and appliances for damage.
- ▶ Use a flashlight to inspect for damage. Never use candles and other open flames indoors.
- ▶ Do not drink or prepare food with tap water until officials say it is safe.
- ▶ If using a generator, avoid electrocution by following manufacturers instructions and standard electric code.