

Hurricane Preparedness Guide



Worry Free Hurricane Season

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There have been four years with successive hurricanes that reached Florida, and the Atlantic hurricane season generally reaches its peak in late summer. It has become clear to many Floridians that preparation is key to your safety and comfort.

This year, Westminster Communities of Florida wants you to be prepared. We want you to have the information and tools you need to stay safe before, during and after any storm that might affect you, your family and your home.

All About Hurricanes

On the news, you'll often hear a whole range of terms, from "waves" to tropical depressions, tropical storms and hurricanes. What are all of these things?

A tropical storm or hurricane is a type of weather disturbance, and in the case of storms affecting Florida, it is a tropical cyclone that forms in the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico or the Caribbean. These cyclones are intense storms packing sustained winds that can reach up to 190 mph.

Hurricanes are categorized by their sustained wind speeds:

CATEGORY 1 74 TO 95 MPH – WITH 4 TO 5 FEET STORM SURGE

CATEGORY 2 96 TO 110 MPH – WITH 6 TO 8 FEET STORM SURGE

CATEGORY 3 111 TO 130 MPH – WITH 9 TO 12 FEET STORM SURGE

CATEGORY 4 131 TO 155 MPH – WITH 13 TO 18 FEET STORM SURGE

CATEGORY 5 OVER 155 MPH – WITH 19+ FEET STORM SURGE



But their most destructive punch comes from water, in the form of excessive rainfall and storm surge in coastal areas.

That's why it's important to prepare for power outages caused by wind — and to evacuate when directed.

Hurricane Risks

What are the risks from a hurricane when you live in Florida? A lot depends on where you live. A home near the coast or a large inland lake can be at risk of storm surge. A home surrounded by trees or on a hill could be subject to high winds.

Storm Surge: When a storm passes over water, it pushes the water forward toward land. This “wall” of water is known as storm surge. If you live near the coastline, a bay or large inland lake, you should check with your county emergency management office to find out if you live in an evacuation zone. The storm surge from Hurricane Michael in 2018 obliterated miles of coastline in the Florida Panhandle.



Flooding: If you live in a low-lying area near a river or bayou, then the rain that falls during the storm will likely be coming your way. Your flood insurance policy will tell you the risk of flooding.

High Wind: Nowhere in Florida is immune from high winds. When Hurricane Andrew made landfall in Miami in 1992, it damaged roofs and walls of tens of thousands of houses.

Power Outages: Hurricane season occurs during the summer, so when a storm threatens, it's important to take measures for power outages. Emergency experts recommend you keep bottled water and ice, non-perishable foods like bread, peanut butter and raisins, and disposable plates and utensils.





How to Prepare to Shelter in Place or Evacuate

Regardless of whether your home is in an evacuation zone, you should be prepared to shelter in place and to evacuate depending on the circumstances. The Florida Division of Emergency Management recommends that you have a supply kit that will last at least three days.

For sheltering in place, the Emergency Management recommendations are to have two gallons of water per person per day for drinking and hygiene, plus non-perishable food and paper plates. You should also have a flashlight or lantern, battery-powered fan, and weather radio. Fill your prescriptions in advance. Bag important documents in plastic, and withdraw cash from ATMs.

If your home is in an evacuation zone, make your plan now. Will you stay with friends or family? Go to the county-operated shelters? Be sure to pack clothes, food, water and other essentials. Keep your important documents in a waterproof bag or case to bring with you.

What to Put In An Emergency Supply Kit

According to the Florida Division of Emergency Management, a basic disaster supply kit should include:

- Water (one gallon of water per person per day, and one gallon per person per day for hygiene and cooking)
- Food, including non-perishable packaged or canned food and juices, snack foods, cooking fuel, and paper plates and plastic utensils
- Flashlight or lantern
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio
- First-aid kit
- Extra batteries
- Whistle to signal for help
- Cleaning supplies, including wet wipes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Cell phone with charger and a backup battery
- Local maps
- Important documents in a waterproof container, such as insurance policies, medical records and bank account records

If you have special needs, consider adding:

- Eyeglasses
- Medications and prescriptions, including getting advance refills if possible before the storm
- Small generator for electrically dependent equipment like an oxygen concentrator or a nebulizer
- Extra bottled oxygen, if you use it

Based on your individual circumstances there may be other items you may need. This list is just a guideline to help you be prepared for the basics.

Caring for Pets in A Storm

Caring for our furry friends in the event of a hurricane requires preparation as well. Remember that they will be stressed out, too — animals can sense the coming of a storm, and your stress level, before you can. Animal Services recommends you take some important steps to help prepare them.

Regardless of whether you're sheltering in place or evacuating, keep their veterinary records with you, and make sure that they have their collars or tags on.

Here's the state emergency management department's list of items to prepare your pets for the storm:

- Food for three days for each pet
- 1/2 gallon to one gallon of water per pet per day
- Medications
- Identification and immunization records
- Leash and/or muzzle
- A carrier or cage

How to Prepare Your Home

Preparing your home for a hurricane is also an important step.

The Florida Division of Emergency Management recommends that you check your home for weaknesses in the roof, windows, doors and garage doors. It's important to strengthen the exterior of the house.





It may be advisable to make home improvements now, or to install temporary wind protection (like hurricane shutters or plywood boards) in advance of a storm. Your county emergency management office or sheriff's office may offer free brochures to help you prepare your home now and in the future.

How to Get the Most Current Information

Before the storm hits, you can get the most current information about possible effects, evacuation and flood zones, and shelters from your county emergency management agency:

Leon County – (850) 606-3700

Manatee County – (941) 749-3500

Orange County – (407) 836-9151

Pinellas County – (727) 464-5550

St. Johns County – (904) 824-5550

