

## HURRICANES

**Hurricanes** are intense storms that can produce severe thunderstorms, violent winds, tornadoes, torrential rains, flooding, and incredibly high waves or storm surge. These storms usually form when a pre-existing weather disturbance combines with warm tropical water, high atmospheric moisture and light winds.

## How Strong is That Hurricane?

Hurricanes and tropical storms are rated according to their strength on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale. Take every storm seriously. Lower category storms may inflict just as much damage as higher category storms.

**Tropical Depression – Winds less than 38 mph**

**Tropical Storm – winds 39-73 mph**

**Category 1 Hurricane – winds 74-95 mph**  
Damage to mobile homes. Some damage to signs. Some coastal flooding.

**Category 2 Hurricane – winds 96-110 mph**  
Some damage to building roofs, doors and windows. Considerable damage to mobile homes. Flooding damages piers and small craft in unprotected moorings. Some trees are blown down.

**Category 3 Hurricane – winds 111-130 mph**  
Structural damage to residences and utility buildings. Large trees are blown down. Mobile homes and signs are destroyed. Coastal flooding destroys smaller structures and larger structures are damaged by floating debris. Inland flooding possible.

**Category 4 Hurricane – winds 131-155 mph**  
Curtainwall failures and some complete roof structure failure on small residences. Major erosion of beach areas. Inland flooding is possible.

**Category 5 Hurricane – winds 156 mph and up**  
Complete roof failure on many residences and industrial buildings. Some complete building failures. Major flooding damage to structures near the coastline.

## HURRICANE HAZARDS

**Winds** from tropical storms and hurricanes can be devastating. Tropical Storm force winds (39 – 73 mph) are extremely dangerous to those caught in them – seek shelter before winds of this force or higher arrive in your area. Hurricane force winds can destroy poorly constructed buildings and mobile homes. These strong winds can turn everyday items such as signs, roofing material, etc. into flying missiles. Trees, power lines, and towers may also suffer extensive damage.

**Rainfall and inland flooding** are also a hazard of hurricanes. Hurricanes may produce 10 to 15 inches of rain, greatly increasing the risk of flooding and flash flooding.

**Storm surge** is the greatest potential threat to human life from hurricanes. Storm surge is created as water is pushed toward the shore by the force of the rotating winds. As the storm approaches, more water is pushed into coastal and low-lying areas causing higher tides and severe flooding. Storm surge combined with wind-driven wave action causes massive damage.

Not all hurricanes produce **tornadoes**, but some hurricanes produce several. While often less destructive than those that occur in the Midwest, tornadoes add to the damage inflicted by a hurricane.



## HURRICANES: BE PREPARED

Hurricanes and tropical storms are among the most destructive, deadly forces on earth. They are serious storms that should never be taken lightly. Do your part to protect your family and property from disaster: **Be prepared for hurricanes.**

PLANNING  
AHEAD

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Each year, an average of eleven tropical storms develop off the coast of the United States. Of these storms, an average of six will become **hurricanes**. In an average three-year period, five hurricanes will strike the coastline, killing 50 to 100 people and destroying millions of dollars in property.

## BEFORE THE STORM

Develop a **Family Disaster Plan**. Talk about the types of potential hazards and the vulnerability of your home to storm surge, flooding and wind.

If evacuation is not mandatory and you choose to ride out the storm, identify the safest place in your home as the **Safe Room**. The safest place might be a community shelter, hotel or friend's home away from the affected area.

Map out the best escape routes from your home and pick a safe, close location where everyone in your family will meet.

Select an out-of-state friend to serve as a single point of contact and make sure everyone in your family has this number.

Many shelters won't allow pets, so plan for their safety if you must evacuate.



To secure your home and possessions, you should:

- Install permanent storm shutters on windows or attach 5/8" marine plywood. The use of tape on windows is not effective.
- Install straps or clips between the roof and the framing to minimize damage.
- Secure all outside furniture and fixtures.
- Prune or trim trees and shrubs surrounding your home.
- Clear gutters and downspouts of debris.

Create a **Disaster Supply Kit**. Include the following:

- Nonperishable emergency food supplies for three days
- Drinking water for each family member for three days (one gallon per person per day)
- Battery operated flashlights and a radio
- A first-aid kit and prescription medications
- A change of clothing and shoes for each family member
- Any special items for infants or the elderly



## DURING THE STORM

If a hurricane has been forecasted to affect your area, you should:

- Listen to broadcast media for information and instructions.
- Close all doors and windows, secure storm shutters and bring objects outside of your home indoors.
- Set the refrigerator to the coldest setting and keep the doors closed. If instructed to, disconnect utilities.
- Shut off propane tanks.
- Store water in bathtubs and large containers for sanitary purposes, like flushing toilets.
- If directed to evacuate by local authorities, don't delay. Follow all instructions carefully.
- Mobile homes or other temporary structures do not generally do well in hurricane conditions. You should evacuate.
- Strongly consider evacuation if you live in a high-rise building because they are more susceptible to winds.
- If you live in a low-lying coastal area, near a river or inland waterway, you should evacuate.
- If you suspect you are in danger for any reason, play it safe and evacuate.
- If you are unable to evacuate, go to your Safe Room. Stay low to the ground and cover yourself with a sturdy object, such as a table.
- Never go outside during a hurricane and stay away from windows and glass doors.
- Don't be fooled if the winds die down. The eye of the hurricane may be passing, in which case the winds will pick up again.

## AFTER THE STORM

If you evacuated, do not return to your home until local authorities deem it safe to do so. When you do return, keep the following in mind:

- Carefully examine the outside of your home. Check for damaged gas lines, downed power lines and structural damage. If you see anything suspicious, don't enter the home until a building inspector or structural engineer has inspected it.
- Don't enter your home if you smell gas, if floodwater surrounds the structure, or if the home was damaged by fire.
- Keep a battery-powered radio so you can stay informed to emergency updates.
- If you have city-provided water or a well that has been flooded, don't assume that it's safe to drink. Listen to media broadcasts for water system updates and have well water tested before consuming. If you have no other drinking water supply, boil water for one minute, let it cool, then store it in clean containers.
- Don't eat food that has come into contact with floodwaters.
- Wash, sanitize or discard anything that has come into contact with floodwaters.
- Be cautious of wildlife and other animals.

## WATCH OR WARNING?

**A HURRICANE WATCH** indicates the possibility that your area may experience hurricane conditions within the next 36 hours. Execute your Family Disaster Plan and protect life and property while you still have the time.

**A HURRICANE WARNING** indicates the probability that sustained winds of 74+ mph are expected in your area within 24 hours. Once issued, you should be well on your way to implementing your Family's Disaster Plan.