

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A HURRICANE?



Get Informed

Know if you live in an evacuation area. Assess your risks and know your home's vulnerability to [storm surge](#), [flooding](#) and [wind](#). Understand National Weather Service forecast products and especially the meaning of [NWS watches and warnings](#).

Contact your local National Weather Service office and local government/emergency management office. [Find out what type of emergencies could occur](#) and how you should respond.

Contacts

Keep a list of contact information for reference

- Local Emergency Management Services
- Local Public Safety – Military / Police / Fire / Ambulance / Rescue
- Locations of all local emergency shelters
- Local, State and Federal Government
- Local Hospitals
- Local Utilities
- Local Red Cross
- Local TV Stations
- Local Radio Stations
- Your Property Insurance Agent



Risk Analysis

Online hazard and vulnerability assessment tools are available to gather information about your risks.

- Check your hazards risks with [FEMA's Map Portal](#).
- Rate your flood risk with the [FloodSmart.gov](#) portal.

Plan & Take Action

Everyone needs to be prepared for the unexpected. Your friends and family may not be together when disaster strikes. How will you find each other? Will you know if your children or parents are safe? You may have to evacuate or be confined to your home. What will you do if water, gas, electricity or phone services are shut off?

Supplies Kit

Put together a [basic disaster supplies kit](#) and consider [storage locations for different situations](#). Help community members do the same.

Emergency Plans

Develop and document plans for your specific risks.

- Protect yourself and family with a Family Emergency Plan - [[PDF](#)]
- Be sure to [plan for locations away from home](#)
- Business owners and site locations should create [Workplace Plans](#)
- Make sure schools and daycares have [School Emergency Plans](#)
- Pet owners should have [plans to care for their animals](#). The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention offer information on [animal health impacts in evacuation shelters](#).
- Prepare your boat and be aware of [marine safety](#) if you are on or near the water.



Health & Environment

Follow guidelines to guard your community's health and protect the environment during and after the storm.

- Review the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) [health considerations before, during, and after a storm](#).
- Remember to follow the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) [food and water safety guidelines during disasters](#).
- Review the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggestions for [health and environmental safety in disaster preparedness](#).

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Evaluate and Prepare Your Home

Don't wait for a hurricane alert to go out and buy plywood

This is because the plywood has to fit the windows and it has to be firmly attached to them.

Experts recommend using 3/4 inch plywood and drilling screw holes 18 inches apart all around it. Are you going to have time to do this after a watch/alert is posted?

This is the kind of thing that should be done well ahead of time so the window covers will be stored with the screws started, and everything you'll need to install them, such as a ladder and the correct size screwdriver handy.

The big question you have to answer ahead of time is: Who's going to install the plywood covers, maybe with a 20 mph wind gusting to 30 mph as a storm approaches? It's probably a sure bet it's not going to be your 70-year-old mother, by herself.

Why is protecting windows so important?

Once a window is broken, the wind blows inside to not only wreck the interior, but also to apply upward pressure on the roof, which might be enough to send it flying. If this happens, the walls collapse and your house is done for.

Protection can include impact-resistant glass or other permanent materials that have passed the state of Florida or Miami-Dade County (Fla.) impact standards tests, sturdy shutters, or pieces of marine plywood, marked and cut to fit each window and glass door.

Here are some other things you should do before a tropical storm or hurricane watch or warning is posted:

- Remove weak and dead trees or tree limbs on your property.
- Know whether your home is in a zone that could be flooded by storm surge, meaning you'd have to evacuate.
- Have plans for where you will go if you evacuate, when you will leave (maybe early to avoid traffic jams), and how family members will contact each other.
- If you might have to evacuate, have a "grab and run" bag ready with important papers, such as your home owners insurance policy, and prescription drugs.
- If you live outside possible storm surge zones, and your house is sturdy, you should plan on riding out the storm in a "safe room" inside the house. (**Related story:** [Home shelters can save lives](#)).
- Have an evacuation or survival kit ready with nonperishable food, water, a first aid kit and other things you'll need.
- Have a battery-powered radio, maybe a battery-powered television set for keeping up with the latest advisories.

After a watch is posted, you should have done all of the things listed above. How you should stay tuned to forecasts and possible warnings. If you are in an area that could be flooded, you should be ready to evacuate.

Of course, if you are living in a mobile home, or a house that isn't sturdy enough to stand up to the wind, you should evacuate **EARLY** and avoid the rush.

Basics of protecting windows



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Evacuation

- Review the [FEMA Evacuation Guidelines](#) to allow for enough time to pack and inform friends and family if you need to leave your home. FOLLOW instructions issued by local officials. Leave immediately if ordered!
- Consider [your protection options](#) to decide whether to stay or evacuate your home if you are not ordered to evacuate.

When waiting out a storm be careful, the danger may not be over yet...

Be especially 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.

Recover

- Wait until an area is declared safe before returning home.
- Be alert to any electrical, gas and structural hazards as well as potential problems with debris left behind.
- Remember that recovering from a disaster is usually a gradual process.

Web Resources

- [FEMA - Are You Ready? Guide](#)
- [National Weather Service Weather Safety](#)
- [Be a Force of Nature with NOAA's Weather-Ready Nation](#)
- [NWS Storm-Ready Sites & Communities](#)
- [Occupational Safety & Health Administration \(OSHA\)](#)
- [Ready.gov Kids](#)

