

Hurricanes: Preparation and recovery

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Introduction

This handbook contains articles for those who were impacted by a hurricane, including information on cleaning up and coping with the aftermath of trauma. These and other disaster-management articles are also available through Achieve Solutions, an online health and wellness resource.

Please use the materials in this handbook as a starting point on your road to recovery. Information about cleaning up after the hurricane, rebuilding your life, helping your child(ren) cope with the disaster, and taking care of your mental health is included.

Disaster supplies kit

Your family will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes. One way to prepare is by assembling a disaster supplies kit. Once disaster hits, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you've gathered supplies in advance, your family can endure an evacuation or home confinement.

Prepare your kit

Review the checklist below. Gather the supplies that are listed and store them in a large, covered trash container; a camping backpack or a duffel bag.

Water

- Store water in plastic containers.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (2 quarts per day for drinking and 2 quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation). Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need more.

Food

- Store at least a three-day supply of nonperishable foods that are compact and lightweight. Items should require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Include ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables.

First-aid kit (one for home and one for each car)

Assorted sizes of safety pins	Triangular bandages (3)	Needle
Cleansing agent/soap	Nonprescription drugs	Moistened towelettes
Latex or nonlatex gloves (2 pairs)	2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)	Antiseptic
Petroleum jelly or other lubricant	3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)	Thermometer
2-inch sterile gauze pads (4 to 6)	Scissors	Tongue blades (2)
4-inch sterile gauze pads (4 to 6)	Tweezers	Sunscreen

Nonprescription drugs

Aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever	Syrup of ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)	Antidiarrhea medication
Laxative	Antacid (for stomach upset)	Activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)

Tools and supplies

Mess kits or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils	Matches in a waterproof container	Map of the area (for locating shelters)
Emergency preparedness manual	Tape	Medicine dropper
Battery-operated radio and extra batteries	Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type	Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
Flashlight and extra batteries	Pliers	Whistle
Cash or traveler's checks, change	Aluminum foil	Plastic sheeting
Nonelectric can opener, utility knife	Plastic storage containers	Needles, thread
Compass	Signal flare	
Tube tent	Paper, pencil	

Sanitation

Toilet paper, towelettes	Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation)	Soap, liquid detergent
Plastic bucket with tight lid	Feminine supplies	Disinfectant
Personal hygiene items	Household chlorine bleach	

Clothing and bedding

At least 1 complete change of clothing and footwear per person	Sturdy shoes or work boots	Thermal underwear
Rain gear	Sunglasses	Blankets or sleeping bags
Hat and gloves		

Supplies for babies and adults

Baby supplies	Adult supplies
Formula	Heart and high blood pressure medication
Diapers	Prescription drugs
Bottles	Insulin
Powered milk	Contact lenses and supplies
Medications	Denture needs
	Extra eye glasses

Entertainment

Games and books

Important family documents (keep in a waterproof, portable container)

Will, insurance policies, contracts deeds, stocks and bonds	Credit-card account numbers and companies	Passports, Social-Security cards, immunization records
Inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers	Bank account numbers	Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

Tips to remember

- Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of the disaster supplies kit in the trunk of your car.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags.
- Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh.
- Replace your stored food every six months.
- Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications

Source: www.ready.gov

Hurricane safety tips: What to do before, during, and after a hurricane

To prepare for a hurricane, you should take the following measures:

- Build an emergency kit and make a family communications plan.
- Know your surroundings.
- Learn the elevation level of your property and whether the land is flood-prone. This will help you know how your property will be affected when storm surge or tidal flooding are forecasted.
- Identify levees and dams in your area and determine whether they pose a hazard to you.
- Learn community hurricane evacuation routes and how to find higher ground. Determine where you would go and how you would get there if you needed to evacuate.

Make plans to secure your property:

- Cover all of your home's windows. Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection for windows. A second option is to board up windows with 5/8" marine plywood, cut to fit and ready to install. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking.
- Install straps or additional clips to securely fasten your roof to the frame structure. This will reduce roof damage.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed so they are more wind resistant.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Reinforce your garage doors; if wind enters a garage it can cause dangerous and expensive structural damage.
- Plan to bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans and anything else that is not tied down.
- Determine how and where to secure your boat.
- Install a generator for emergencies.
- If in a high-rise building, be prepared to take shelter on or below the 10th floor.
- Consider building a safe room.

What to do when a hurricane is six hours from arriving

- If you're not in an area that is recommended for evacuation, plan to stay at home or where you are and let friends and family know where you are.
- Close storm shutters, and stay away from windows. Flying glass from broken windows could injure you.
- Turn your refrigerator or freezer to the coldest setting and open only when necessary. If you lose power, food will last longer. Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator to be able to check the food temperature when the power is restored.
- Turn on your TV/radio, or check your city/county website every 30 minutes in order to get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.

What to do when a hurricane is six to 18 hours from arriving

- Turn on your TV/radio, or check your city/county website every 30 minutes in order to get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- Charge your cell phone now so you will have a full battery in case you lose power.

What to do when a hurricane is 18 to 36 hours from arriving

- Bookmark your city or county website for quick access to storm updates and emergency instructions.
- Bring loose, lightweight objects inside that could become projectiles in high winds (for example, patio furniture, garbage cans); anchor objects that would be unsafe to bring inside (for example, propane tanks); and trim or remove trees close enough to fall on the building.
- Cover all of your home's windows. Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection for windows. A second option is to board up windows with 5/8" exterior grade or marine plywood, cut to fit and ready to install.

What to do when a hurricane is 36 hours from arriving

- Turn on your TV or radio in order to get the latest weather updates and emergency instructions.
- Build or restock your emergency preparedness kit. Include food and water sufficient for at least three days, medications, a flashlight, batteries, cash, and first aid supplies.
- Plan how to communicate with family members if you lose power. For example, you can call, text, email or use social media. Remember that during disasters, sending text messages is usually reliable and faster than making phone calls because phone lines are often overloaded.
- Review your evacuation plan with your family. You may have to leave quickly so plan ahead.
- Keep your car in good working condition, and keep the gas tank full; stock your vehicle with emergency supplies and a change of clothes.

After a hurricane

- Listen to local officials for updates and instructions.
- Check-in with family and friends by texting or using social media.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it is safe.
- Watch out for debris and downed power lines.
- Avoid walking or driving through flood waters. Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down, and one foot of fast-moving water can sweep your vehicle away.
- Avoid flood water as it may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines and may hide dangerous debris or places where the ground is washed away.
- Photograph the damage to your property in order to assist in filing an insurance claim.
- Do what you can to prevent further damage to your property, (for example, putting a tarp on a damaged roof), as insurance may not cover additional damage that occurs after the storm.
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it's not contaminated.
- Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- Never use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.

Source: www.ready.gov

What to do before, during, and after a flood

Before a flood

To prepare for a flood, you should:

- Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.

During a flood

If a flood is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuation tips:

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away.

Driving in floods

The following are important points to remember when driving in flood conditions:

- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and pick-up trucks.

After a flood

Although floodwaters may be down in some areas, many dangers still exist. Here are some things to remember in the days ahead.

- Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
- Keep listening to the radio for news about what to do, where to go, or places to avoid.
- Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.
- If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded.
 - Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
 - Flooding may have caused familiar places to change. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Flood debris may hide animals and broken bottles, and it's also slippery. Avoid walking or driving through it.
- Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.

Staying healthy

A flood can cause emotional and physical stress. You need to look after yourself and your family as you focus on cleanup and repair.

- Rest often and eat well.
- Keep a manageable schedule. Make a list and do jobs one at a time.
- Discuss your concerns with others and seek help. Contact the Red Cross for information on emotional support available in your area.

Getting help

- The American Red Cross can help you by providing you with a voucher to purchase new clothing, groceries, essential medications, bedding, essential furnishings, and other items to meet emergency needs. Listen to the radio to find out where to go for assistance, or look up American Red Cross in the phone book and call.
- The Red Cross can provide you with a cleanup kit: mop, broom, bucket, and cleaning supplies.
- Contact your insurance agent to discuss claims.
- Listen to your radio for information on assistance that may be provided by the state or federal government or other organizations.
- If you hire cleanup or repair contractors, be sure they are qualified to do the job. Be wary of people who drive through neighborhoods offering help in cleaning up or repairing your home. Check references.

Source: www.ready.gov

Pets and animals and disasters

Make a plan

- Create a buddy system in case you're not home. Ask a trusted neighbor to check on your animals.
- Identify shelters. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets.
 - Find pet friendly hotels along your evacuation route and keep a list in your pet's emergency kit.
 - Locate boarding facilities or animal hospitals near your evacuation shelter.
 - Consider an out-of-town friend or relative.
- Locate a veterinarian or animal hospital in the area where you may be seeking temporary shelter, in case your pet needs medical care. Add the contact information to your emergency kit.
- Have your pet microchipped and make sure that you not only keep your address and phone number up-to-date, but that you also include contact info for an emergency contact outside of your immediate area.
- Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter or animal control office to get advice and information.
- If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located.
- Most boarding kennels, veterinarians, and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current.
- If you have no alternative but to leave your pet at home, there are some precautions you must take, but remember that leaving your pet at home alone can place your animal in great danger!

Tips for large animals

- Ensure all animals have some form of identification.
- Evacuate animals whenever possible. Map out primary and secondary routes in advance.
- Make available vehicles and trailers needed for transporting and supporting each type of animal. Also make available experienced handlers and drivers.
- Ensure destinations have food, water, veterinary care, and handling equipment.
- If evacuation is not possible, animal owners must decide whether to move large animals to shelter or turn them outside.

Build a kit

- **Food.** At least a three-day supply in an airtight, waterproof container.
- **Water.** At least three days of water specifically for your pets.
- **Medicines** and medical records.
- **Important documents.** Registration information, adoption papers, and vaccination documents. Talk to your veterinarian about microchipping and enrolling your pet in a recovery database.
- **First aid kit.** Cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors; antibiotic ointment; flea and tick prevention; latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol, and saline solution. Including a pet first aid reference book is a good idea too.
- **Collar or harness with ID tag,** rabies tag, and a leash.
- **Crate or pet carrier.** Have a sturdy, safe crate or carrier in case you need to evacuate. The carrier should be large enough for your pet to stand, turn around, and lie down.
- **Sanitation.** Pet litter and litter box if appropriate, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags, and household chlorine bleach.
- **A picture of you and your pet together.** If you become separated, a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you. Add species, breed, age, sex, color and distinguishing characteristics.
- **Familiar items.** Familiar items, such as treats, toys, and bedding can help reduce stress for your pet.

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency

After a traumatic event: How to help yourself

Find support

When a random traumatic event occurs, people may want to turn to their friends and family for support. If your community has been affected, you may need to look elsewhere. Meeting with others in a support group is helpful. Make sure it is led by a trained and experienced counselor. Don't isolate yourself.

Even if you were not directly affected, it's important to protect yourself against "*vicarious trauma*," or "*secondary traumatic stress*." Those are terms for secondhand exposure to others' pain and misfortune. When a community is affected, the scary information can seem to bombard you. If this is your situation, look into support groups for "families of" or "friends of" people who have gone through trauma. Talk with a friend outside of the situation.

Take advantage of any resources like on-the-spot counseling. Look for the people who are helping in this situation. You may need to take advantage of resources that you haven't used before. Social services and aid are there to help. Everyone needs help at some point. Sometimes you will be the helper and, sometimes, the receiver. Both are normal.

Even if you are hurting emotionally or financially from the event, it may make you feel better to give back. Donate time, effort, or money if you can. Don't overextend yourself. There will be times to give back later. You can do *something*; it doesn't have to be *everything*.

Re-establish your routine

Get back into your routine as soon as possible. It may be impossible to have the exact routine as before. Get back to work in some capacity. Recreate another home, if needed. Keep small things the same. Can you still have mealtimes at the same time? Exercise? Go out for coffee?

Educate and prepare yourself

Do some research. Look into how often these types of events happen where you are. Figure out what aspects of your life you can control at the moment. This is not the time to make major life decisions. Instead develop emergency plans and safety kits.

Limit media

Limit where you get news and the amount. Otherwise, you will feel buried in the same topic. Cut back on social media. Things might be posted that could trigger fear or anxiety.

Practice self-care

Be gentle with yourself. Practice deep breathing when you feel anxious. List things you are grateful for to improve your outlook. Stay hydrated. Eat well. Get rest. Don't push yourself. As long as you are getting stronger each day, you are making progress.

If feelings of helplessness, despair, or anxiety don't ease, or if it is difficult to get through your day, consider seeing a mental health specialist.

Helping children and adolescents cope with violence and trauma

Model a healthy display of emotions.

If parents express a lot of tears, grief, or worry, the child will follow their lead. These feelings of emotions, such as a racing heart or quick breathing, can be scary for children. It can cause them to panic even more. Try to set a calm tone. You don't have to hide all emotions. If your child sees you crying, you can say "Mommy is crying because I feel sad. It's OK to feel sad." If you need to release a lot of emotions, do so around other adults.

Seek other adults to talk to about your feelings. Try to maintain a stance of self-control.

A lot of times, adults try to hide their feelings from children to spare them additional worry. Many children sense when things are being kept from them. It may cause them more anxiety. Share some of your feelings and explain how you cope in a healthy way. The child will learn to do the same. For example, share that you talk to a trusted friend, breathe deeply, exercise, or remind yourself of positive things.

Talk to the child.

Adults may avoid talking to children about difficult subjects because the adults are afraid of distressing the child by saying the wrong thing. This can isolate the child when she most needs to talk about it. Make it a conversation. Don't be afraid to ask questions to see what your child knows and is curious about.

Help him focus on moments where he felt strong and in control. Use praise: "You were so brave!" Keep your tone upbeat.

A child may express guilt or shame. She may feel like something she said or did caused the events. Tell her it is not her fault. If these feelings remain, remind him that he did not mean for his actions to cause harm and they have not done so.

Return to a routine as soon as possible.

Home may feel like a safe place, so it may seem best to keep your child home for as long as possible. However, most children benefit from returning to their routines as soon as possible whether it is child care, school, sports practice, or other activities.

When your child goes back to school, speak to the necessary people about adjusting the child's responsibilities for a time. This may include less homework or more time to do it, extra time on tests or postponing tests, and leniency with a child's behavior in the classroom.

A return to routine doesn't mean the child doesn't need any more support or help. Support is needed for months or longer. If it is taken away too soon, the child may struggle and be unable to cope.

Limit media intake.

Media coverage is available everywhere. Continual access to the graphic details, pictures, or stories isn't helpful to anyone. Limit the amount of coverage that the family consumes. If possible, watch it first. If your child is watching it, be sure to watch along with her. Answer her questions and help her put it in perspective.

Involve the child.

Involving the child in positive ways gives him a purpose. Making cookies for rescue workers, writing cards to people who have been hurt, and helping with clean-up efforts are all good examples.

If a death has occurred, creating a memorial or having a service can help a child share her grief and feel less alone. When possible, have the child participate in the planning and service. This makes sure it is appropriate for someone her age and relevant to her.

Spend one-on-one time with the child. You can read books or games. The attention will help the child feel safe.

Source: ©2020 Beacon Health Options.