

**HURRICANE  
PREPAREDNESS  
GUIDELINES**

## PRE-SEASON HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

A pre-season/hurricane watch plan should outline what you will do before, during and after a hurricane strikes. It is highly recommended that your hurricane plan be in place by June 1st (the start of hurricane season). If you do not put your plan in place at that time, ensure you have a plan in place by the time a hurricane watch is issued. If you wait until after that time, it will be too late to protect yourself and family.

The most important decision you will make will be **where will you stay during a hurricane?**

- At home?
  - At a hotel or with friends/family outside the affected area? (Pick a back-up location in case there is a problem with your first choice).
  - At a Red Cross Shelter (this should be your last resort).
- Have an emergency meeting place designated in advance in case your group/family should get separated.
  - Ask an out of town friend or relative to be your emergency contact.
  - Involve the entire family in hurricane preparations.
  - Make arrangements for family members that have special needs.
  - Practice and review your plan with the whole family.
  - Take First Aid, CPR and disaster preparedness classes offered by you local Red Cross Chapter.

### **Storm Season Supplies:**

Have a **TWO WEEK SUPPLY** of each item for each person in your home. Stock up well in advance. Critical supplies may become scarce once a Hurricane Watch is issued. Keep all food and water supplies in a cool, dark place. Keep food covered at all times and inspect for spoilage before use.

### **WATER**

- One gallon per person, per day (half gallon for drinking and half gallon for personal use).
- Store water in clean, plastic containers in a cool place.

### **FOOD**

- Prepared foods (canned soups and meats, tuna, hash, fruits and vegetables, packaged puddings, etc.) that **REQUIRE NO REFRIGERATION**.
- Canned juices, milk, soup (if powdered/dry, store extra water), shelf packaged juice and Milk boxes.
- Peanut butter, jelly, nuts, crackers, cheese spreads, crackers.
- Snacks: cookies, candy, cereals, dried fruit.
- Instant coffee and tea.
- Soft drinks, juices, sports drinks. Lots of ice.
- Paper napkins, plates, cups and plastic utensils.
- Salt, pepper, sugar and other seasonings.

### **BABY SUPPLIES**

- Special medications.

- Formula, diapers, bottles, powdered milk, wet naps, etc.

### **PET SUPPLIES**

- Medications.
- Newspapers and cat litter.
- Bottled water.
- Canned and dry food.

### **MEDICINE**

- Prescription and/or special medications (two week supply). Medic alert tags.
- Fully stocked first aid kit and first aid handbook. Children's medicines.
- Aspirin or non-aspirin pain reliever.
- Extra over the counter medicines (for colds, upset stomachs, allergies, etc.).
- Insect bite lotion.

### **PERSONAL NEEDS**

- Toilet paper, towelettes.
- Soap, shampoo.
- Personal hygiene items.
- Denture needs.
- Feminine hygiene products.
- Contact lenses and supplies. Extra pair of eyeglasses.
- Sunscreen.
- Medicine for 3 to 7 days
- Sanitary wipes

### **OTHER IMPORTANT SUPPLIES**

- Battery operated radio and TV - don't forget extra batteries.
- Flashlights, extra batteries and bulbs.
- Non-electric can opener. Bottle opener.
- Extra propane for gas grill - **DO NOT STORE INSIDE THE HOUSE.**
- If using an auxiliary generator top off fuel tank and have gas can filled.
- Fire extinguishers.
- Portable coolers.
- Wind-up or battery powered clock.
- Plastic trash bags/ties (get various sizes).
- Aluminum foil and plastic wrap.
- Household chlorine bleach (can be used to purify water). Get regular bleach - not lemon (or other) scented.
- Insect repellent.
- Tarp or sheet plastic, duct tape, hammer and nails.
- Cleaning supplies.
- Cans of spray paint (can be used to identify your house for insurance adjusters).
- Matches.
- Clothing/bedding (keep in travel bag or clean trash bags).
- Sturdy shoes.
- Hats and sturdy work gloves.
- Scissors.

- Inexpensive rabbit-ears TV antenna to use if cable goes out.
- Hand tools - hammer, screwdrivers, shovel, pickax.
- Rope.
- Detailed map of your local area.
- List of important and emergency phone numbers.
- Pocketknife - preferably Swiss Army style.
- Camp stove or other cooking device.

### **PREPARING YOUR HOME - SINGLE FAMILY**

- Know the elevation of your area and its flooding and storm surge history. If your area is flood prone check your insurance coverage. If you **DO NOT** have flood insurance, purchase it now. There is usually a 30 day waiting period from the time you buy insurance until it is effective. Flooding is one of the most common cause of severe damage to property and flood damage is not usually covered by homeowners insurance.
- Store an axe in the attic of your home. If storm surge rises quickly you may become trapped in your attic. The axe will provide you with the means to create an exit opening.
- Make a list of loose items that will need to be brought in/tied down.
- Trim trees and bushes to allow “blow through”. **DO NOT HATRACK TREES.**
- Urge your neighbors to hurricane proof their homes.
- Get hurricane shutters or plywood to protect all windows and sliding glass or double doors. Taping your windows **WILL NOT** provide protection and is a waste of time.
- Get materials to brace garage doors.
- Cement loose tiles and nail down shingles on the roof.
- Know the location of main electric breaker, water valve and gas valve.
- Photograph or video tape your home and personal property **BEFORE A STORM.**
- If you have an electric garage door opener find out where the manual release is located and learn how to operate.
- If you have a cordless telephone or a telephone requiring electricity to operate plan for alternate communication or purchase a phone that is not dependent on electricity to operate.

### **PREPARING YOUR HOME - MOBILE HOMES**

Mandatory evacuation of mobile homes will be necessary if the area comes under a hurricane warning. You are risking your life if you choose to stay in a mobile home during a hurricane.

- o Check to ensure all code requirements are met.
- o Inspect tie-downs and replace defective parts.
- o Know where to evacuate.

### **PREPARING YOUR HOME - APARTMENTS/CONDOS**

- If you live in an evacuation area, know where you will evacuate to.
- If you own your condo, get shutters for all sliding glass doors and windows.
  - Before you purchase them, check with your association.
- If you are renting, know what the owner is responsible for.
- Buy renter’s insurance.

- Know the route to the nearest stairs (elevators may not work during and after a storm).

## **EVACUATION PLANNING**

It is important to plan evacuation and other transportation needs well before the actual crises.

- Develop a family evacuation plan.
  - Have a primary meeting place near your home and an alternate meeting place further from your home. Designated these in advance and make sure that everyone knows the locations and directions on how to get there. You may become separated in an evacuation or start from different origination points. If phone numbers for those locations are available have each family member have those numbers available (written down and in their “Go Bag”, programmed into cell phones, etc)
  - Identify alternate travel routes. Often times main highways are clogged with traffic from other evacuees.
  - If a hotel is your final destination, call before leaving to make a reservation.
  - Make sure you fill up your car before leaving.
- Have a small supply of snacks and water in your “Go Bag”. You may be sitting in traffic for an extended period of time without the ability to stop for food.
- Have an out of state friend as a family contact so all your family members have a single point of contact.
- If someone in your home is elderly, disabled, bedridden, requires constant medical care or needs electrical life support equipment, call your county Emergency Management department for special instructions.
- If you live alone, consider teaming up with a neighbor to work up an evacuation plan.
- If you choose to stay in a shelter:
  - o Learn the location of three (3) shelters nearest to you. Shelter locations change as the hurricane season progresses.
  - o When a storm threatens, listen to local radio/TV stations to find out which shelters are open.
- Most shelters are not equipped to deal with people with special medical needs. If someone in your home requires special attention, discuss alternate plans **NOW** with his/her health care professional.

### **SHELTER SUPPLY KIT (Also known as a “Go Bag”)**

If you will be evacuating to a Red Cross shelter, you will need to bring your own supplies. Following are some recommended items:

- o Bottled water/juices/sodas. Package or canned foods.
- o Non-electrical can opener.
- o Change of clothing, rain gear, sturdy shoes.
- o Toiletries.
- o Sanitary wipes
- o Feminine supplies

- Blankets and pillows or sleeping bags.
- Cards, games and books for quiet entertainment.
- One flashlight per person and extra batteries.
- Credit cards, cash (small amount) or travelers checks and picture identification (with home address).
- Extra set of house and car keys.
- Enough medicine for 3 to 7 days (includes contact lens supplies and denture needs)
- Extra eye glasses
- First Aid Kit
- Important documents in a waterproof container.
- Sleeping bag/blankets/pillows
- Child's favorite stuffed animal

**PETS, ALCOHOL AND WEAPONS ARE NOT ALLOWED IN RED CROSS SHELTERS.**

### **BOATS**

- Whatever preparations you are going to make, **MAKE THEM EARLY.**
- **DO NOT ATTEMPT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, TO RIDE OUT THE STORM IN A BOAT.**

Options to consider in the event of a hurricane watch/warning:

- Dry docking/marinas.
- Move inland by water.
- If your boat is small enough, consider keeping it in your garage.
- If you must, tie down your boat and trailer outside.

If you will be moving your boat (by water), check with the county to see when bridges will be placed in the locked down position. Some counties lock down bridges three hours after the **EVACUATION** order is given, others eight hours before predicted landfall.

### **PETS**

Your pet's safety and well being **DEPEND ON YOU!** If you are not staying home during a hurricane, you will need to make arrangements ahead of time for your pet. No matter where your pet will be, ensure you have a three day supply of food and a collar with identification on your pet.

Taking your pet with you:

- Call ahead to hotels and motels to ensure they allow pets.
- Use a portable carrier or cage to travel with household pets.

Boarding your pet:

- Make boarding arrangements **NOW!** Do NOT wait until a hurricane watch/warning has been issued.

- Make sure your pet is wearing identification. In addition to food, leave a familiar towel or blanket and any needed medication.

If you're leaving your pet - last resort ONLY:

- **DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PET OUTSIDE.**
- Leave your pet enough food, and more importantly water, for at least three days.
- Leave a soft towel or blanket for your pet to rest on.
- Choose an enclosed garage, utility room or bathroom, preferably with a tile floor to make clean up easier. The room used should be a place the pet has lived in before and ideally should not have any windows.
- Put out plenty of food, water, newspapers or kitty litter.
- Do NOT leave vitamins or mineral supplements where the pet can get to them. Over eating such things can poison an animal.
- Have a pet first-aid kit on hand, with salve and bandages, for when you return.

## **HURRICANE WATCH**

A hurricane watch means hurricane conditions pose a possible threat to a specified area within 36 hours. When a watch is issued, you should begin preparing your home and family. Following are reminders to assist you:

- Make your final decision as to whether you will be staying or evacuating.
- Check your Storm Season Supply Kit. Stock up NOW on anything you need. Now is the time to buy perishable food items (fresh fruits and vegetables, bread, cheese, etc.). Stock up on ice.
- Have flashlights and battery operated TV and radio on hand. Remember extra batteries.
- Be prepared to protect your windows and doors.
- Prepare a "safe room" if you plan to stay in your home. This room should be away from all windows, skylights and outside doors.
- Make sure all emergency battery operated equipment is in working order.
- Fill the gas tanks of all family vehicles.
- Check medical supplies and first aid kit - stock up now.
- Turn refrigerator and freezer to the coldest setting.
- Put valuables and important documents in a waterproof container.
- Get extra cash or travelers checks.
- Stay tuned to local radio/TV stations for the latest information.
- Keep a list of emergency telephone numbers next to your phone.
- Charge rechargeable cellular phones, drills, flashlights, lanterns, batteries.

## **HURRICANE WARNING**

A hurricane warning is issued when hurricane conditions are expected in a specified area within 24 hours. When a hurricane warning is issued:

You should rush to complete all hurricane preparations. Follow evacuation instructions from local officials. If advised to evacuate, leave immediately to avoid delays.

Understand that if you have waited until this time to buy necessary supplies, you will encounter:

- heavy traffic,
- crowded stores
- and in many cases, empty shelves.

Following are some last minute reminders:

#### OUTSIDE YOUR HOME:

- Finish attaching hurricane shutters or plywood.
- Brace garage doors.
- Finish bringing in any loose objects. Remove turbine fans from roof and replace with caps.
- If you own a pool:
  - **DO NOT DRAIN YOUR POOL.**
  - Turn off the electricity to your pool.
  - Cover the filter pump if exposed.
  - Add extra chlorine.

Park your car in the garage or carport. If you have neither, park as close to your house as possible. Do **NOT** trim trees/bushes now - it is too late for pick up by your trash haulers.

#### INSIDE YOUR HOME:

- Scrub bathtubs, sinks, jugs, bottles and cooking utensils. Rinse well and fill with potable (drinkable) water.
- Put as many loose objects as possible in drawers for safekeeping.
- Let someone know outside the storm area where you will be.
- Ensure all windows are closed and locked.
- Secure and brace external doors, especially double doors.
- Move as many valuables as possible off the floor to limit flooding damage.
- If you have space in your refrigerator or freezer consider filling plastic containers with water and placing in refrigerator and freezer. This will help to prolong the refrigeration of food and provide drinking water.
- Backup valuable files from your computer to a portable storage device or media type (floppy disk or read/write CDs)

#### IF YOU ARE EVACUATING:

- Finish all preparations before you leave.
- Try to leave in the daylight hours.
- Ensure you have picture identification with your home address with you.
- Unplug appliances as they could act as a conductor for lightning.
- Lock your home.

## DURING THE STORM

It is a common myth that windows should be opened to equalize pressure during a hurricane. The fact is, opening windows during a storm is ineffective in reducing damage. It actually contributes to damage.

- Tell stories, sing songs or play games to keep children calm.
- If the power goes out
  - Use flashlights, NOT candles or kerosene lamps. The fire department will be UNABLE to respond during a hurricane.
  - Turn off electrical equipment you were using before power went out. Leave one light on so that you can tell when power has been restored.
  - Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer.
- Do **not** use a gas bar-b-que grill inside.
- If you are using an auxiliary generator:
  - Do not operate it inside confined areas such as inside your house or garage.
  - Be sure that the generator is properly ventilated
  - Have a licensed electrician install a generator transfer switch prior to using your generator or connect equipment directly to the outlets on the generator. Do not connect a generator directly to a home's electrical system.
- If the "eye" of the storm passes over you (calm area in the center), STAY INSIDE. Do not be fooled by the calm; storm conditions will return from the other direction with the same or greater force.
- Use your phone only for urgent calls.
- If using a cell phone and are unable to get an outgoing call, using the text messaging function of your phone will often get a message out. Voice calling uses significant bandwidth and is real time. Text messaging uses significantly less bandwidth and the messages are queued so they will be delivered when there is capacity in the system.
- Listen to battery operated radio or TV for updates from the authorities. Be aware that stations may go off line during the storm. If so, turn on your radio or TV occasionally to see if power has been restored.
- Stay away from windows and doors.
- Stay indoors in your "safe room".
- Stay calm.
- If you fear your house will come down around you, get into a bathtub and place a mattress over you.

## AFTER THE STORM

After the storm has passed, you will need to take many safety precautions. You may encounter problems with telephone, power and water service. You may encounter dangers from downed power lines, looters, and wild animals (snakes are of special concern). Once a hurricane has passed, it still may not be safe to go outside for awhile.

### **If You Stayed Home:**

- Stay inside until the all clear is given by local authorities.
- Continue to listen to radio or TV for the latest information.. The possibility of storm spawned tornadoes is a possibility.
- If your neighborhood floods during the storm, you may be required to evacuate.
- Puddles may conceal dangerous debris or contain sewage or chemicals. Do **not** let children play in them.
- If you are using an auxiliary generator do not operate it inside confined areas such as inside your house or garage. Be sure that the generator is properly ventilated and properly connected to the electrical supply entry of your home.

### **Going Home:**

- Do not return home until the officials announce your area is ready.
- Reenter your home with caution:
  - o Check for structural damage.
  - o If you didn't turn off external gas lines before you evacuated, turn them off **BEFORE** reentering your home. Open windows to let the house air out.
  - o Do not use open flame as a light source.
  - o Don't let children play in damaged buildings or near piles of debris.

### **Telephone Communications:**

- Let your family know that you are safe.
- If using a cell phone and are unable to get an outgoing call, using the text messaging function of your phone will often get a message out. Voice calling using significant bandwidth and is real time. Text messaging uses significantly less bandwidth and the messages are queued so they will be delivered when there is capacity in the system.
- Call your manager to let him/her know you are safe.
- Do not call 911 except for life threatening situations.
- Do not call the power/water companies to report individual interruptions. If after services have been restored to the neighborhood and you are still without, then call. Utility companies have recovery plans to restore services.

Water supplies may become contaminated. Use only water you have stored **BEFORE** the storm until Health officials advise otherwise. Do **NOT** eat food that has come in contact with flood waters unless it is in sealed, airtight containers. Before using food from the refrigerator/freezer, check it for spoilage. Use gas/charcoal grills **OUTSIDE ONLY**.

## **Useful Resources:**

**National Flood Insurance Program:** 1-888-CALL-FLOOD ext 445, TDD# 1-800-427-5593

**The American Red Cross:** [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

Each state has a local chapter of the American Red Cross. Visit the site above and type in your zip code in the designated area and you will be directed to the closed chapter in your area.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency:** [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

State Level Emergency Management Agencies:

- Texas: <http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/>
- Louisiana: <http://www.loep.state.la.us/>
- Mississippi: <http://www.msema.org/>
- Alabama: <http://www.ema.alabama.gov/>
- Florida: <http://www.floridadisaster.org/>
- Georgia: <http://www2.state.ga.us/GEMA/>
- South Carolina: <http://www.scemd.org/>
- North Carolina: <http://www.dem.dcc.state.nc.us/>
- Virginia: <http://www.vdem.state.va.us/>

Above are typically the stated most vulnerable to hurricanes. All state and many counties or local communities have emergency management agencies. These sites are useful for information regarding evacuations, shelters and other important resources prior to, during, and after a hurricane.

## **Useful Web Sites:**

### **Weather:**

**National Weather Service – Tropical Prediction Center:** [www.nhc.noaa.gov](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov).

You can sign up for e-mail advisories on the web site. In the left hand column click on E-Mail Advisories and follow instructions. Select Atlantic Full for all advisories.

**National Weather Service:** [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov).

Overall weather and atmosphere site. All other weather sites use this site for their base information and then add “expert” software and commentary.

**The Weather Channel:** [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)

Some good information and easy to navigate.

During an incident you can often get live feeds from local news stations. A listing of Florida News Stations can be found at: [www.this-town.com/FloridaNewslink.htm](http://www.this-town.com/FloridaNewslink.htm).

**Disaster Help:** [www.disasterhelp.gov](http://www.disasterhelp.gov).

A good overall site for links to information regarding any type of disaster.

# The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale

---

The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale is a 1-5 rating based on the hurricane's present intensity. This is used to give an estimate of the potential property damage and flooding expected along the coast from a hurricane landfall. Wind speed is the determining factor in the scale, as storm surge values are highly dependent on the slope of the continental shelf and the shape of the coastline, in the landfall region. Note that all winds are using the U.S. 1-minute average.

## Category One Hurricane:

Winds 74-95 mph (64-82 kt or 119-153 km/hr). Storm surge generally 4-5 ft above normal. No real damage to building structures. Damage primarily to unanchored mobile homes, shrubbery, and trees. Some damage to poorly constructed signs. Also, some coastal road flooding and minor pier damage. [Hurricane Lili](#) of 2002 made landfall on the Louisiana coast as a Category One hurricane. [Hurricane Gaston](#) of 2004 was a Category One hurricane that made landfall along the central South Carolina coast.

## Category Two Hurricane:

Winds 96-110 mph (83-95 kt or 154-177 km/hr). Storm surge generally 6-8 feet above normal. Some roofing material, door, and window damage of buildings. Considerable damage to shrubbery and trees with some trees blown down. Considerable damage to mobile homes, poorly constructed signs, and piers. Coastal and low-lying escape routes flood 2-4 hours before arrival of the hurricane center. Small craft in unprotected anchorages break moorings. [Hurricane Frances](#) of 2004 made landfall over the southern end of Hutchinson Island, Florida as a Category Two hurricane. [Hurricane Isabel](#) of 2003 made landfall near Drum Inlet on the Outer Banks of North Carolina as a Category 2 hurricane.

## Category Three Hurricane:

Winds 111-130 mph (96-113 kt or 178-209 km/hr). Storm surge generally 9-12 ft above normal. Some structural damage to small residences and utility buildings with a minor amount of curtainwall failures. Damage to shrubbery and trees with foliage blown off trees and large trees blown down. Mobile homes and poorly constructed signs are destroyed. Low-lying escape routes are cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Flooding near the coast destroys smaller structures with larger structures damaged by battering from floating debris. Terrain continuously lower than 5 ft above mean sea level may be flooded inland 8 miles (13 km) or more. Evacuation of low-lying residences with several blocks of the shoreline may be required. Hurricanes [Jeanne](#) and [Ivan](#) of 2004 were Category Three hurricanes when they made landfall in Florida and in Alabama, respectively.

## Category Four Hurricane:

Winds 131-155 mph (114-135 kt or 210-249 km/hr). Storm surge generally 13-18 ft above normal. More extensive curtainwall failures with some complete roof structure failures on small residences. Shrubs, trees, and all signs are blown down. Complete destruction of mobile homes. Extensive damage to doors and windows. Low-lying escape routes may be cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Major damage to lower floors of structures near the shore. Terrain lower than 10 ft above sea level may be flooded requiring massive evacuation of residential areas as far inland as 6 miles (10 km). [Hurricane Charley](#) of 2004 was a Category Four hurricane made landfall in Charlotte County, Florida with winds of 150 mph. [Hurricane Dennis](#) of 2005 struck the island of Cuba as a Category Four hurricane.

## Category Five Hurricane:

Winds greater than 155 mph (135 kt or 249 km/hr). Storm surge generally greater than 18 ft above normal. Complete roof failure on many residences and industrial buildings. Some complete building failures with small utility buildings blown over or away. All shrubs, trees, and signs blown down. Complete destruction of mobile homes. Severe and extensive window and door damage. Low-lying escape routes are cut by rising water 3-5 hours before arrival of the center of the hurricane. Major damage to lower floors of all structures located less than 15 ft above sea level and within 500 yards of the shoreline. Massive evacuation of residential areas on low ground within 5-10 miles (8-16 km) of the shoreline may be required. Only 3 Category Five Hurricanes have made landfall in the United States since records began: The Labor Day Hurricane of 1935, Hurricane Camille (1969), and [Hurricane Andrew](#) in August, 1992. The 1935 Labor Day Hurricane struck the Florida Keys with a minimum pressure of 892 mb--the lowest pressure ever observed in the United States. Hurricane Camille struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast causing a 25-foot storm surge, which inundated Pass Christian. [Hurricane Andrew](#) of 1992 made landfall over southern Miami-Dade County, Florida causing 26.5 billion dollars in losses--the costliest hurricane on record. In addition, [Hurricane Gilbert](#) of 1988 was a Category Five hurricane at peak intensity and is the strongest Atlantic tropical cyclone on record with a minimum pressure of 888 mb.