

HURRICANE DISASTER RESPONSE

Background:

Hurricanes are violently rotating windstorms, usually including heavy rains and winds of 74 miles per hour or higher. Hurricanes can cause flash flooding, downed trees, downed power lines, power outages and massive amount of debris on roads. The peak months for hurricanes are August and September; however, hurricane season extends from June 1 to November 30.

To understand the severity of hurricanes, the National Weather Service may issue a hurricane “watch” or a “warning” to alert the public what to expect and precautions to take. The difference between a **watch** and a **warning** is distinguished below:

- A hurricane **WATCH** means that a hurricane is possible within 36 hours.
- A hurricane **WARNING** means that a hurricane is expected within 24 hours or less.

Before a Hurricane:

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

- Make plans to secure your property. 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.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Determine how and where to secure your boat.
- Consider building a safe room.

During a Hurricane:

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

- Listen to the radio or TV for information.
- Secure your home, close storm shutters, and secure outdoor objects or bring them indoors.
- Turn off utilities if instructed to do so. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks. Avoid using the phone, except for serious emergencies.
- Moor your boat if time permits.
- Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water.

You should evacuate under the following conditions:

- If you are directed by local authorities to do so. Be sure to follow their instructions.
- If you live in a mobile home or temporary structure—such shelters are particularly hazardous during hurricanes no matter how well fastened to the ground.
- If you live in a high-rise building—hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations.
- If you live on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river, or on an inland waterway.
- If you feel you are in danger.

If you are unable to evacuate, go to your safe room. If you do not have one, follow these guidelines:

- Stay indoors during the hurricane and away from windows and glass doors.
- Close all interior doors—secure and brace external doors.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed. Do not be fooled if there is a lull; it could be the eye of the storm - winds will pick up again.
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, or hallway on the lowest level.
- Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.

After a Hurricane:

Recovering from a disaster is usually a gradual process. Safety is a primary issue, as are mental and physical well-being.

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