

Hurricanes

Hurricanes are severe tropical storms that form in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Scientists can now predict hurricanes, but people who live in coastal communities should plan what they will do if they are told to evacuate.

Step 1: Get A Kit / "To-Go Bag"

- Get an [Emergency Supply Kit](#), which includes items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights and batteries. You may want to prepare a portable kit and keep it in your car. This kit should include:
 - Copies of prescription medications and medical supplies;
 - Bedding and clothing, including sleeping bags and pillows;
 - Bottled water, a battery-operated radio and extra batteries, a first aid kit, a flashlight;
 - Copies of important documents: driver's license, Social Security card, proof of residence, insurance policies, wills, deeds, birth and marriage certificates, tax records, etc.
- Make sure you have a "to-go bag" ready in case you need to evacuate, include:
 - Water and non-perishable food;
 - Battery operated radio and batteries so you can get important information from local officials;
 - First aid kit;
 - Flashlight;
 - Maps
 - Important documents such as proof residence, pictures of your family including pets, insurance policies, and tax records;
 - Comfortable clothing and blankets;
 - Unique family needs such as prescription medications, pet supplies, infant supplies or any other unique need your family may have;

Step 2: Make a Plan

Prepare your family

- Make a [Family Emergency Plan](#). Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency

- Plan places where your family will meet, both within and outside of your immediate neighborhood.
- It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- You may also want to inquire about emergency plans at places where your family spends time: work, daycare and school. If no plans exist, consider volunteering to help create one.
- Plan to Evacuate
 - Identify ahead of time where your family will meet, both within and outside of your immediate neighborhood.
 - Identify several places you could go in an emergency, a friend's home in another town, a motel or public shelter.
 - If you do not have a car, plan alternate means of evacuating.
 - If you have a car, keep a half tank of gas in it at all times in case you need to evacuate.
 - Take your [Emergency Supply Kit](#).
 - Take your pets with you, but understand that only service animals may be permitted in public shelters. [Plan how you will care for your pets in an emergency](#).
- Take a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) class from your local [Citizen Corps chapter](#). Keep your training current.

Step 3: Be Informed

Familiarize yourself with the terms that are used to identify a hurricane.

- A **hurricane watch** means a hurricane is possible in your area. Be prepared to evacuate. Monitor local radio and television news outlets or listen to NOAA Weather Radio for the latest developments.
- A **hurricane warning** is when a hurricane is expected in your area. If local authorities advise you to evacuate, leave immediately.
- Hurricanes are classified into **five categories** based on their wind speed, central pressure, and damage potential. Category Three and higher hurricanes are considered major hurricanes, though Categories One and Two are still extremely dangerous and warrant your full attention.

Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale			
Scale Number (Category)	Sustained Winds (MPH)	Damage	Storm Surge
1	74-95	Minimal: Unanchored mobile homes, vegetation and signs.	4-5 feet
2	96-110	Moderate: All mobile homes, roofs, small crafts, flooding.	6-8 feet
3	111-130	Extensive: Small buildings, low-lying roads cut off.	9-12 feet
4	131-155	Extreme: Roofs destroyed, trees down, roads cut off, mobile homes destroyed. Beach homes flooded.	13-18 feet
5	More than 155	Catastrophic: Most buildings destroyed. Vegetation destroyed. Major roads cut off. Homes flooded.	Greater than 18 feet

- Hurricanes can produce widespread torrential rains. **Floods** are the deadly and destructive result. Slow moving storms and tropical storms moving into mountainous regions tend to produce especially heavy rain. Excessive rain can trigger landslides or mud slides, especially in mountainous regions. Flash flooding can occur due to intense rainfall. Flooding on rivers and streams may persist for several days or more after the storm. Learn more about preparing your home or business for a possible flood by reviewing the [Floods](#) page.

Prepare Your Home

- Cover all of your home's windows with pre-cut ply wood or hurricane shutters to protect your windows from high winds.
- Plan to bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans and anything else that is not tied down.
- Keep all trees and shrubs well trimmed so they are more wind resistant.
- Secure your home by closing shutters, and securing outdoor objects or bringing them inside.
- Turn off utilities as instructed. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water.

Prepare Your Business

[Plan to stay in business](#), talk to your employees, and protect your investment.

- Carefully assess **how your company functions**, both internally and externally, to determine which staff, materials, procedures and equipment are absolutely necessary to keep the business operating.
- Identify **operations critical to survival** and recovery.
- Plan what you will do if your building, plant or store is not accessible.
 - Consider if you can run the business from a different location or from your home.
 - Develop relationships with other companies to use their facilities in case a disaster makes your location unusable.
- Learn about programs, services, and resources at [U.S. Small Business Administration](#).

Listen to Local Officials

Learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your [state and local government](#). In any emergency, always listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials.

Federal and National Resources

Find additional information on how to plan and prepare for a hurricane by visiting the following resources:

- [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)
- [NOAA Watch](#)
- [American Red Cross](#)
- [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control](#)