



Emergency Management



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Hurricane Preparedness



Making sure you and your loved ones will survive the storm is a year-round task that requires attention to your personal business, your family members, your home and your vehicles. It is not a task that can be done in just 24 hours, so start your planning now!

Complete a disaster plan BEFORE the chaos of an approaching hurricane to be sure you have time to do it right. Do home improvements during the cooler days of the year. Pack your [Emergency Survival Kits](#) before June 1st to be sure you have what you need. Organize important papers so you can grab them quickly.

The information below and links to resources will assist you in your planning, but how well you do it is up to you. Take the time to prepare ahead, you'll be glad you did.

You & Your Family

- ▼ [Make Sure You Have a Plan](#)
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 - ▶ [Know Where You Will Go](#)
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Emergency Management

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[gmap](#)

[Closed County Holidays](#)



Checklist - Printable:

- [Important Documents Checklist](#)
- [Evacuation Kit Checklist](#)
- [Shelter-in-place Emergency Survival Kit Checklist](#)
- [Pets Checklist](#)

You and Your Family:

Make Sure You Have a Plan

The below links can help you create your own personal plan.

- Create a Hurricane Plan at [Floridadisaster.org](#)
- [Family Plan - Do it yourself with these questions](#)
- [Settling Insurance Claims After a Disaster](#)
- [Protect Your Homebase](#)
- If a disaster strikes, phone lines may be jammed or internet access unavailable. TEXTING MAY BE THE ANSWER. This service is found on nearly all mobile phones and text messages can find their way through crowded airwaves. They are often the most reliable way to communicate during and after a disaster.
- [Hurricane Planning & Evacuation Info for the Homeless Citizen](#) - [Español](#)



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What To Do In the Workplace:

Be sure you know what to do when an evacuation order is issued during the work day. Both you and your employer should have a plan that is talked about in advance.

Things to do:

- Keep a list of emergency numbers at your work site
- Have a family plan that assigns who picks up the children, other relatives or pets
- Select a meeting place in case you are unable to get home
- Be sure to tell your boss if you need to evacuate and where you are going
- Learn your employer's policy about releasing employees and returning to work
- Learn your employer's plans for securing your workstation and work supplies
- Ask if there is an emergency phone number to contact your employer after a storm

If you do not need to evacuate, offer to [host a co-worker](#) who must evacuate.

Insurance Information:

Is your insurance ready?

Getting your insurance ready for hurricane season is an important preparedness step. Not only having insurance – but having the right amount and the right kind – can mean the difference between a smooth recovery and one full of

challenges. That's why it's important to check with your insurance agent to discuss the type of coverage you need and the amounts you should have.

Ask yourself these four important questions:

- **What is my deductible?**
- **What is my hurricane deductible?**
- **Do I need flood insurance?**
- **Do I have enough coverage to replace my home and belongings?**

If you have specific questions about your policy, be sure to speak with your agent, or visit these online resources.

- [Florida Office of Insurance Regulation](#) 
- [The Insurance Information Institute](#) 
- [Insuring Florida blog](#) 
- [Disaster Preparedness from the Division of Consumer Services](#) (English, Spanish, Creole)  

Don't wait another minute! Review your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy and review exactly what coverage you have.

Homeowners should check with their insurance agents to determine what improvements could offer discounts on their hurricane insurance premium. Some companies offer rate reductions for reinforcements to the roof, garage, windows and doors.

Homeowners can find information about their insurance policies by checking with the state's Department of Financial Services. Call (800) 342-2762 or visit www.fdfs.com 

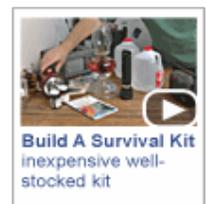
- [Other Flooding Information](#)

Medication Information:

One of the most important things to include in your emergency survival kit is your prescription medications. But, what happens when an emergency is declared and your insurance company claims it is too early for you to get a refill? In 2006, the Legislature passed the Emergency Prescription Refill bill (Florida Statute 252.358 and 462.0275). This law requires all insurers and managed-care organizations to suspend refill-too-soon restrictions when a patient seeks a refill in a county:

- currently under a hurricane warning issued by the National Weather Service; or
- declared to be under a state of emergency in an executive order issued by the Governor; or
- has activated its Emergency Operations Center and its emergency management plan.

This law also allows patients outside of these areas to get an emergency 72-hour refill if the pharmacist is unable to readily obtain refill authorization from



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the doctor. Please talk with your doctor and pharmacist now about how this new law can affect your prescriptions. In addition to having a supply of your medications on hand, keep a list of each one you take, including the name of the doctor who wrote the prescription, the name of the drug, dosage instructions and the name of the pharmacy where you had it filled.

Important Documents:

If you were ordered to evacuate from your home for a hurricane, could you easily and quickly collect all of your important documents for transport? Your important papers include everything from your driver's license to your homeowner's insurance policy. By spending some time now, you can ensure that you will have everything you need if you must evacuate.

Personal papers to take with you: [Document Checklist](#) 📄

Your Home:

Preparing your home to withstand high winds can mean the difference between minor and major repairs after a hurricane. That's why it's so important to strengthen your home to resist high winds.

Some key tips:

- Check your [garage door](#). If your door needs replacing, look for a reinforced, wind-rated model.
- [Shutter your windows](#). Glass can be broken by flying debris. Protecting your windows can keep storm winds and rain out. **Duct tape provides no protection.** Check weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors, replacing if necessary.
- If your [roof](#) needs replacement, a new one can be installed to meet stronger building codes first adopted in 2002, which will better protect your home.
- Research these online resources for additional home improvement information:
 - [Federal Alliance for Safe Homes](#) 🌐
 - [Institute for Business and Home Safety](#) 🌐
 - [Hurricane Retrofit Guide for Homes](#) 🌐



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Set Up a Safe Room:

Where your safe room should be located depends upon how many levels are in your home or building.

- In a one-story house, the ideal safe room is in the center of your home with few or no windows.
- In a two-story house, seek out an interior first-floor room such as a bathroom, closet or space under the stairs.
- In a multiple-story building, go to the first or second floors and take refuge in halls or other interior rooms away from windows. Interior stairwells and areas around elevators shafts are generally the strongest parts of a building.

If you don't have to evacuate and plan to weather a hurricane at home, set up a

safe room for you and your family in case your home is damaged. This is also a good place to store emergency supplies, important papers and battery-powered radios.

Make sure the room has a solid-core door with heavy duty hinges for greater protection. Use long screws to ensure the hinges are anchored securely. Installing a deadbolt lock, like those found on entry doors, will further help protect you and your family.

- [FEMA websites on Safe Rooms](#) 

Windows and Doors:

- Windows and doors are particularly vulnerable to wind and rain damage. Window films, tempered glass and other products may not withstand wind-borne debris felt during a hurricane.



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- **Plywood:** [How To Shutter Your Home](#)  (30 minute video on how to shutter your windows and doors...and how much it costs!)
 - Don't risk long lines and limited supplies if you plan to shutter with plywood. Buy and cut early.
 - Use a minimum of 5/8ths inch thick exterior grade plywood to withstand flying debris.
 - For masonry buildings, use masonry screws that cut their own thread in concrete, or use lag shields inserted into predrilled holes. Wood screws can be used for wood-framed homes.

- **Hurricane Shutters**

Typically made of metal, vinyl or polycarbonate, these shutters come in many designs. Check options with a licensed installer and be sure they meet the current Florida Building Code.

- **Hurricane Screens**

Some of the newest options available are permanently attached metal mesh screens or flexible woven polypropylene netting. Both are approved for use throughout Florida.



Roof:

- Your home's roof is the first line of defense against rain. And, it is very vulnerable to a hurricane's fury. High wind can tear shingles, underlayment and even the roof sheathing off.
- Before a storm threatens, take a good look at your roof. Are the shingles in good condition? Is there any damage that you might need to have repaired? Remember, any leaks you may already have could be made worse by wind-driven rain and the impact of storm debris.
- A quick inspection of the underside of your roof from inside the attic can also tell you a great deal about its structure. Look along the rafters or the tops of the roof trusses. Are there large nails driven through the sheathing, not secured into the framing? That could mean the roofers misnailed the roof deck when they installed it. One or two may be OK, but more than that, and your roof's strength could be compromised.
- If you need to have your roof redone, be sure to ask the roofer to renail

your sheathing to ensure it is properly secured, and specify wind-resistant shingles.

Garage Door:

- Garage doors deserve extra attention because of their large size. And, statistics prove that's true. According to the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH), about 80 percent of wind damage in homes starts with wind coming through the garage door.
- **State regulations mean stronger doors.** Since 2002, Florida building codes have required significantly stronger garage doors on all homes in Pinellas County. If your garage door was installed before 2002, call the manufacturer to determine the strength of the door. Or, have a building inspector check the door to determine its wind-worthiness.
- For safety's sake, older garage doors should either be replaced or retrofitted with more bracing.

Mobile & Manufactured Homes:

While mobile and manufactured homes are great places to call home, **they are NEVER good shelters during a hurricane.** Mobile and manufactured homes can be severely damaged from the hurricane-force winds and flying debris. This was proved true again during the storms of 2004 and 2005 when homes built after 1994, to the tougher standards, sustained damage when they were flipped off their foundations or damaged by flying debris. No matter the category of storm, **whenever an evacuation order is given, all mobile and manufactured home residents must evacuate.** Mobile and manufactured home residents need to have an evacuation plan in case a hurricane threatens. One word of caution – most mobile home park recreation centers are not rated to withstand high winds, either. Ask your park's management what plans – if any – are in place for sheltering options and for evacuation notification.



- **Why anyone in a mobile home must evacuate!**

Annual maintenance should include checking your tie down and anchoring system to help keep debris down during a storm.

- Look for possible rusting of anchors and connections.
- Tighten the straps if necessary.
- Add anchors and straps where possible.
- Check for wood rot and termite damage at connections, joists and trusses. Investigators have found that failures at these points allowed air to penetrate the home's air-tight envelope and led to structure failure.

Mobile homes are not safe havens

Back in 1992, Floridians got a rude wake-up call from Hurricane Andrew about the vulnerability of mobile homes to a hurricane's ferocious winds. After that storm, fully 90 percent of southern Miami-Dade County's mobile homes had been destroyed in that powerful Category 5 storm.

In 1994, shortly after the damage of Hurricane Andrew, the federal Housing and

Urban Development program mandated tougher building standards for mobile homes. Since then, these newer homes have been bought and installed in other counties around Florida. How well did they survive?

Hurricane Charley in 2004 visited similar damage on the mobile homes in Charlotte County. Older mobile homes failed in similar ways to those in Andrew, and many newer homes were flipped onto their sides when their tie downs failed in the 145 mph wind.

That is why – regardless of the level called – all mobile home residents must evacuate when an order is given. Mobile home residents can visit the [Mobile Tips](#) page or call (727) 464-3800 for more information on how to prepare for a hurricane.

Condo owners should prepare for an approaching storm:

Condo owners should prepare for an approaching storm. If a hurricane sets its sights on Pinellas County, condominium owners need to be ready to weather the storm. [Click here for more information.](#)



Renters Need a Plan Too:

As a storm approaches, homeowners are urged to prepare their homes to withstand heavy winds. But, what should you do if you rent? If you rent, here are some steps that you can take to prepare yourself for a hurricane:

- The first step in hurricane preparedness is to know your evacuation zone. Pinellas County government offers several outlets to [locate your zone](#). Remember, be ready to evacuate when ordered.
- Prepare yourself for the possibilities of damage to your personal property. Flood insurance and renter's insurance can help to replace your belongings should they be damaged. In conjunction with your insurance policy, take an inventory of your possessions to help during the recovery.
- Ask questions of your landlord. Will your landlord take steps to protect the windows? If not, you will need to find another place to ride out the storm, even if you live in a non-evacuation zone.

Just as with homeowners, you have a responsibility to create a personal hurricane plan. By finding out now what you will need to do, you may save your life when a storm threatens.

Yard:

Getting your yard ready to weather the storm can help keep you and your home safe. High winds can turn even the heaviest items into deadly projectiles that can break through your windows, doors and even walls. To prepare:

- Properly prune trees and shrubs before any storms threaten. Do not leave piles of branches that can become missiles in high winds.
- Keep your gutters and down spouts clear and in good repair.

- Replace rock mulch with shredded bark.
- When a hurricane warning is issued, bring in all yard items such as furniture, toys, bird baths/feeders and barbecue grills.
- Do not drain your pool. Super chlorinate the water and turn off all electricity to the pool for the duration of the storm.
- For more information see [Trees and Hurricanes](#) 

Vehicles:

During a weather emergency, you will rely on your vehicle to get supplies, provide a cool blast of air-conditioning and recharge your cell phone. Vehicle maintenance tips:

- Check your tires, belts, hoses, filters, oil and air-conditioning.
- Make sure you have jumper cables, road flares or reflectors, a first aid kit and a can of non-flammable inflatable tire repair compound.
- Have car chargers for phones, laptops and/or a small power inverter to convert the car's DC battery power into a AC plug.
- Pack an empty gas can in case you need to get more gasoline.
- Remove all non-essential items from your vehicle to keep the interior space ready for evacuation items.

Boats:

Boat owners need to have a plan to secure and protect their boats from hurricanes.

- [Marina Owners/Operators](#)



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Retrofit Guides and Info:

- [Disaster Safety](#) 
- [Federal Alliance for Safe Homes](#) 

Transportation:

For those who need to evacuate, but don't have their own transportation, a hurricane can cause anxiety. Pinellas County officials want to make sure that everyone can get to safe shelter.

If you don't require special needs transport, PSTA buses will run nearly all their routes until it's no longer safe to travel. PSTA will attempt to operate all routes until winds reach tropical storm force (40mph). Routes may be modified. During an evacuation, buses will also run from transfer stations to local shelters. All rides are free during an evacuation. Be prepared in advance by locating your nearest bus stop. Some people may not qualify for special needs transport, cannot ride the bus and have no other means of transportation to evacuate. If you are in that situation, contact your local fire department or the Department of Emergency Management, in advance, for special assistance. Take advantage of the help that is there for you. Don't stay in a dangerous situation just because you don't have your own ride. (Call the PSTA Info Line (727) 540-1900.

For current route information during a storm, go to www.psta.net )

If you have special needs, please sign up for the [special needs registry](#), you will then be asked about your transportation plans. If you need a ride to a shelter, your local fire department will be in contact with you to make arrangements when the time comes to evacuate.

Personal Transportation:

If you are taking your own personal transportation to leave town, be sure you are leaving enough time to get to your final destination. Roads get crowded and traffic jams can put you in danger because a hurricane can take many different paths through the state. When a HURRICANE WATCH is issued, you need to be packing your car and ready to leave as soon as the WARNING is issued.

Traffic Information:

There are convenient ways for motorists to receive this up-to-date traffic information:

- Visit FL511.com , with interactive roadway maps showing traffic congestion, travel times and crashes.
 - Call 511 toll free for updates in English and Spanish.
 - Download the free Florida 511 mobile app available for iPhone and Android devices.
 - Follow one of the 12 statewide, regional or roadway-specific FL511 feeds on [Twitter](#).

Pinellas County Emergency Operations Center
Department of Emergency Management
(727) 464-3800

**During an emergency activation, call the
Citizen Information Center at (727) 464-4333.**

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