

Hurricane Season is Upon Us

It is that time of year again, as Hurricane season is rapidly approaching. Please read about some of these suggested preventative tasks you can complete before disaster strikes. The goal is to ensure that everyone is prepared and has a plan should a major storm cross our path.

A great place to start is to determine your risk. That includes checking local flood maps, storm surge charts, and the possibility of inland tornados in your area. Another good step would be developing an evacuation plan. That will mean finding out if you live in an evacuation zone, planning your evacuation route, and planning for your pets.

Next, you should assemble disaster supplies. You should have enough dry food and water for approximately a week, a backup of any essential medicines, an emergency radio with batteries, extra fuel for any vehicles, and a stash of extra cash in hand. It is also advised to include an insurance checkup. Use this opportunity to find out what kind of flood insurance you have, learn if you need to update any of your policies, and get a copy ready to be taken with you in the event of an evacuation.

A large part of hurricane preparedness is remembering to strengthen your home. That includes trimming all loose and overhanging branches on trees near your house, securing any loose items in and around your yard, developing a plan to secure your windows, and moving your car to a safe location. A big step many people overlook is clearing the drainage ditches on your property of any blockages or debris. It is important for the stormwater to be able to flow freely away from your property and into the greater stormwater system. Remember, the garage door is generally the weakest point in most houses, so ensure that it can withstand hurricane force winds.

Do not forget to help your neighbors. Take a few hours to check in on your neighbors and ensure they have been following the same steps you have and offer to help them if needed. Before, during and after a hurricane, neighbors can be the best resource for communication and sharing needed materials, so you should all have a similar disaster plan.

Finally, you and your family should come together and create a written plan. Having a written plan helps ensure you do not forget any of these important steps and can help you remember many small things that could be overlooked during a disaster. Being prepared for a major storm before it begins gives you and your family the upper hand for safety. By collecting all the necessary supplies, you can avoid spending valuable time waiting in long lines trying to get products that have already been sold out. Instead, you can use that time to begin following your written disaster plan and beginning to prepare.

Being in a hurricane can be a scary ordeal. Following these helpful tips can make all the difference in such a situation. Be sure to listen to the radio or television for official bulletins on the storm's progress and path. Make sure you follow all instructions issued by local, state, and federal agencies. If you are in an evacuation zone, be sure to leave immediately. If you are evacuating, do your best to leave during daylight hours. Whether you stay with friends or family, or head to a hotel, make sure your relatives and loved ones know where you are going. Ensure that your family members know who to call if they get separated. If you are evacuating, do not leave your pets behind. Find a shelter for them or find a family shelter that accepts animals. Another good idea is to remove anything that is susceptible to water damage. Unplug all small appliances and shut down all computers. Make sure that your computer equipment is placed high up off the floor and you may want to cover it in plastic as extra protection. If you are staying home during the storm, turn your refrigerator to its coldest setting and

leave the door closed as much as possible. It is also a good idea to fill all sinks and bathtubs with water. This can be helpful with washing yourself and your dishes and can also be used to flush toilets in an emergency. This is especially important for homes that use a septic/well system.

After the storm, it is time to assess the damage to your property and ensure all your belongings have survived. Listen to the radio for safety updates and advisories. Some advisories you should listen for are flood warnings, electrical outages, and road conditions. Do not attempt to drive across flowing water. As little as six inches of water is enough to make you lose control of your vehicle, and only 2 feet of water can carry a car away. Also, avoid standing water, as it can be electrically charged from underground power or fallen utility cables. It is a good idea to have a professional assess your home, appliances, and property for damages. Lastly, make sure that your local officials have cleared your water for consumption before using it to cook or clean.

While we all hope that these steps will not be needed this year, it is much better to have a plan and not need it, than to need a plan and not have it!