

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS SERIES:

# Hurricanes and Tropical Cyclones



A hurricane, or tropical cyclone, is an organized system of clouds and thunderstorms that rotates around a well-defined center and originates over warm tropical waters. Hurricanes can produce many destructive hazards, such as heavy rains, storm surge, destructive winds and tornadoes. Although hurricanes can be dangerous killers, planning ahead and being prepared can reduce the chances of injury and major property damage.

## Before a hurricane/tropical cyclone

1. Review your family preparedness plan (See [Disaster Preparedness Series: Family Preparedness Plan](#)).
2. Establish a family communications plan (See [Disaster Preparedness Series: Family Communications Plan](#)).
3. Assemble a disaster supply kit (See [Disaster Preparedness Series: Disaster Supply Kit](#)).
4. Have a family evacuation plan in place (See [Disaster Preparedness Series: Family Evacuation Plan](#)).
5. Secure your property:
  - Cover windows. If storm shutters are unavailable, use 5/8-inch exterior-grade or marine plywood cut to fit each window. Use screws to attach them.
  - Trim trees and shrubs around your home so that they are more wind-resistant.
  - Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
  - Reinforce garage doors so wind doesn't enter and cause structural damage.
  - Bring in outdoor objects (furniture, toys, tools, etc.), anchor objects that cannot be brought inside, and remove outside antennas.
6. Know the difference between a hurricane WATCH and a hurricane WARNING:
  - Hurricane WATCH: Hurricane conditions are possible. Stay tuned to a National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration weather radio or TV for information. Be prepared to evacuate if necessary.

- Hurricane WARNING: Hurricane conditions are expected or occurring. Take shelter or evacuate immediately.

## During a hurricane/tropical cyclone

1. Listen to a NOAA weather radio or TV for updated information.
2. If ordered to evacuate by authorities, do so immediately. (See [Disaster Preparedness Series: Family Evacuation Plan](#)).
3. Keep valuables and important documents with you in a waterproof container. Consider scanning and sending copies of documents to yourself via email so that you have an electronic version available after the storm.
4. Turn off utilities — gas, water and power — if instructed to do so.
5. If electricity is lost, turn off appliances to avoid power surge when electricity is restored.
6. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water to ensure a supply for sanitary purposes.
7. Take refuge in a small interior room (closet/hallway/bathroom) on the lowest level and away from windows and glass doors.

## After a hurricane/tropical cyclone

1. Continue listening to a NOAA weather radio or TV for updated information.
2. Avoid damaged areas, stay off roads, and remain on firm ground.
3. Avoid floodwaters. The water may be contaminated.
4. Return home only after local officials declare it is safe.



Enter your home with extreme caution. Do not enter if floodwaters remain.

5. Inspect your home:
  - Leave the house if you smell gas or chemical fumes.
  - Check for damage to walls, the foundation, the electrical system and water lines.
  - Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches or other flammable liquids immediately.
  - **Notify your insurance company and Habitat affiliate if your home is damaged.**
6. Help injured or trapped people. Do not move seriously injured people unless they are in immediate danger of death or further injury. Call for help.
7. Open windows and doors to help dry the house.
8. Check food supplies and drinking water. Anything that has come in contact with floodwater may be contaminated and should be thrown out.
9. Clean and disinfect everything that got wet.
10. Watch out for snakes and other animals. Use a stick to poke through debris.
11. Avoid making phone calls except in serious emergencies. ▲

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### EMERGENCY/PREPAREDNESS INFORMATION

#### American Red Cross

[redcross.org/prepare/disaster/hurricane](http://redcross.org/prepare/disaster/hurricane)

#### Federal Emergency Management Agency

[ready.gov/hurricanes](http://ready.gov/hurricanes)

#### U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

[epa.gov/hurricanes/](http://epa.gov/hurricanes/)

### CURRENT STORM INFORMATION

#### National Weather Service

[weather.gov](http://weather.gov)

#### National Hurricane Center

[nhc.noaa.gov](http://nhc.noaa.gov)

#### Central Pacific Hurricane Center

[www.prh.noaa.gov/cphc](http://www.prh.noaa.gov/cphc)

#### National Hurricane Center Audio Podcasts

[nhc.noaa.gov/audio](http://nhc.noaa.gov/audio)

### OTHER INFORMATION

#### NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards

[nws.noaa.gov/nwr](http://nws.noaa.gov/nwr)

