

Harris County MUD 23

What YOU Can Do To Prepare For Hurricane Season

Hurricanes can be dangerous killers. Learn the hurricane warning messages and plan ahead to reduce the chances of injury or major property damage.

Plan an **EVACUATION ROUTE** by learning safe routes out of Houston.

Put together a **HURRICANE SURVIVAL KIT** (see attached).

Get flood insurance. You can find out about the National Flood Insurance Program through your local insurance agent or emergency management office. There is normally a 30-day waiting period before a new policy becomes effective. Homeowners policies do not cover damage from the flooding that accompanies a hurricane.

Develop an emergency communication plan. In case family members are separated from one another during a disaster (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a plan for getting back together. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed into emergency shelters for health and space reasons. Contact your veterinarian or local humane society for information on local animal shelters.

Protect your windows. Permanent shutters are the best protection. A lower-cost approach is to put up plywood panels. Use 1/2 inch plywood--marine plywood is best--cut to fit each window. Remember to mark which board fits which window. Pre-drill holes every 18 inches for screws. Do this at the beginning of hurricane season (June 1st).

Trim back dead or weak branches from trees.

Make sure that all family members know how to respond after a hurricane. Teach family members how and when to turn off gas, electricity, and water. Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1, police, or the fire department and which radio and/or television stations to tune into for emergency information.

DURING A HURRICANE WATCH:

- Listen to a battery-operated radio or television for hurricane progress reports.
- Check emergency supplies.
- Fuel car.
- Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, toys, and garden tools and anchor objects that cannot be brought inside.
- Secure buildings by closing and boarding up windows. Remove outside antennas.
- Turn refrigerator and freezer to coldest settings. Open only when absolutely necessary and close quickly.
- Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, jugs, bottles, and cooking utensils.
- Review evacuation plan.
- Moor boat securely or move it to a designated safe place. Use rope or chain to secure boat to trailer. Use tie-downs to anchor trailer to the ground or house.

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DURING A HURRICANE WARNING:

- Listen constantly to a battery-operated radio or television for official instructions.
- If in a mobile home, check tiedowns and evacuate immediately.
- Store valuables and personal papers in a waterproof container on the highest level of your home.
- Avoid elevators.

WHEN EVACUATION IS NECESSARY:

- Leave as soon as possible. Avoid flooded roads and watch for washed-out bridges.
- Secure your home by unplugging appliances and turning off electricity and the main water valve.
- Tell someone outside of the storm area where you are going.
- If time permits, and you live in an identified surge zone, elevate furniture to protect it from flooding or better yet, move it to a higher floor.
- Bring pre-assembled emergency supplies and warm protective clothing.
- Take blankets and sleeping bags to shelter.
- Lock up home and leave.

IF YOU STAY AT HOME DURING A HURRICANE:

- Stay inside, away from windows, skylights, and glass doors.
- Keep a supply of flashlights and extra batteries handy. Avoid open flames, such as candles and kerosene lamps, as a source of light.
- If power is lost, turn off major appliances to reduce power "surge" when electricity is restored.

AFTER THE STORM:

- Stay tuned to local radio and television for information.
- Help injured or trapped persons. Give first aid where appropriate. Do not move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of further injury. Call for help.
- Return home only after authorities advise that it is safe to do so. Avoid loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately to the power company, police, or fire department.
- Enter your home with caution. Beware of snakes, insects, and animals driven to higher ground by flood water.
- Open windows and doors to ventilate and dry your home.
- Check refrigerated foods for spoilage.
- Take pictures of the damage, both to the house and its contents and for insurance claims.
- Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges.
- Use telephone only for emergency calls.

INSPECTING UTILITIES IN A DAMAGED HOME:

Check for gas leaks--If you smell gas or hear blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.

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Look for electrical system damage--If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician first for advice.

Check for damage to sewage and water lines--If you suspect sewage lines are damaged avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid the water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

Mitigation includes any activities that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or lessen the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. Investing in preventive mitigation steps now such as strengthening unreinforced masonry to withstand wind and flooding and installing shutters on every window will help reduce the impact of hurricanes in the future.

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Hurricane Kit - List of Survival Materials

If you are planning to evacuate,
be sure to take at least the items marked with an asterisk (*).

Food/Water*

Bottled water (1 gallon per person per day) for 14 days*

Manual can opener*

Non-perishable foods:*

- Canned meat, fish, fruit and vegetables
- Bread in moisture-proof packaging
- Cookies, candy, dried fruit
- Canned soups & milk
- Powdered or single serve drinks
- Cereal bars
- Package condiments
- Peanut butter and jelly
- Instant coffee and tea

Supplies

- Flashlight (1 per person)*
- Portable battery powered lanterns
- Glass enclosed candles (not for use in shelters)
- Battery powered radio or TV
- Battery operated alarm clock
- Extra batteries, including hearing aids*
- Ice chest and ice
- First Aid Kit, including aspirin, antibiotic cream, and antacids*
- Mosquito repellent
- Sun Screen (45 SPF recommended)
- Waterproof matches/butane lighter (not for use in shelters)
- Money*
- Plain bleach or water purification tablets*
- Disposable plates, glasses, and utensils*
- Maps of the area with landmarks on it*

Cooking:

- Sterno
- portable camp stove or grill
- disposable eating utensils, plates and cups
- napkins and paper towels
- aluminum foil
- oven mitts

Personal Supplies:*

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- prescriptions (1 month supply)
- photo copies of prescriptions
- toilet paper
- entertainment: books, magazines, card games, etc.
- soap and detergent
- toiletries
- bedding: pillows, sleeping bags
- changes of clothing
- rain ponchos and work gloves
- extra glasses or contact lenses (and don't forget the solutions needed for the contact lenses)

Baby Needs:*

- Disposable diapers*
- formula, food and medication
- clothing and blankets

Documents:*

- **insurance papers: home/renters, automobile**
- **proof of occupancy of residence (utility bills)**
- photo identification
- photo copies of prescriptions (medications and eyeglasses/contacts)
- medical history information
- **waterproof container for document storage**
- back-up disks of your home computer files
- **camera and film to document damage to home/belongings**

Pet supplies (remember - shelters do NOT allow pets - plan to board them with a veterinarian or local humane society)

- dry and canned food for two weeks
- water (1/2 gallon per day per pet)
- litter box supplies
- traveling cage

Other necessities:

- tools: hammer, wrenches, screw drivers, nails, saw
- trash bags (lots of them)
- cleaning supplies
- plastic drop cloth
- mosquito netting
- ABC rated fire extinguisher
- masking or duct tape
- outdoor-rated extension cords
- spray paint to identify your home if necessary
- one of your home phones (many people lost theirs during Hurricane Andrew, even though their phone service still worked)