

Hurricane Preparation

The information contained in these documents was gleaned from a variety of sources, including the SunHerald and cnnmoney.com. They were forwarded to us by [Vern Holmes](#) of the [Carbondale Fire Dept.](#) He is part of their team and regularly monitors news updates, weather and related events via the internet. Vern has been a big help to [Tom Dalessandri](#) and the [Pearlington Project](#) from the beginning and continues to be an important partner of Tom's and of the [Coalition of Disaster Relief Agencies \(C.O.D.R.A.\)](#) in Pearlington.

Follow the advice of local emergency management officials. If a storm is headed for South Mississippi, and officials issue voluntary or mandatory evacuation orders, listen to them. Don't wait to see if the storm weakens or changes course. Evacuate early so you don't get caught in heavy traffic and end up spending hours on the road.

FEMA recommends keeping a full tank of gas in your car. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and may be unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to stay together and reduce traffic on the roadways.

Take the proper items with you when you evacuate. This includes maps, a firstaid kit and prescription medicines, jumper cables and other tools, nonperishable food and water for 72 hours, bedding and extra clothing, garbage bags, toilet paper and paper towels, insect repellent, sunscreen and games and books for children.

Get prescriptions refilled. If a storm threatens this area, get your prescriptions refilled in case drug stores aren't able to open right away. Also, when evacuating take with you a list of all the medications you take, any diseases you have and any allergies you have.

Prepare your home. When you leave your residence, unplug computers, lamps, radios, televisions, toasters and microwave ovens, FEMA suggests. Set freezers and refrigerators to the coldest setting and leave them plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding. Close and lock doors and windows.

Make proper transportation arrangements. If you don't drive or own a car, make plans with family or friends to help you leave in the event of a storm. Also, take the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency's evacuation survey by the end of the day today if you don't have transportation. The number is 1-866-647-0966.

Get your car ready. Before hurricane season starts, perform any routine maintenance on your car, such as changing the oil and windshield wipers. Make sure your tires are in good shape and all your belts and hoses don't need to be replaced. You don't want your car to break down when you're trying to flee a storm.

Renew your driver's license early. If your license will expire during hurricane season, consider renewing it now. That will be one less thing you have to worry about if a storm hits this area, and the offices are closed for a while.

Use only safe water. The state Health Department reminds residents that safe water includes bottled, boiled or treated water. Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash or prepare food or make ice.

Make sure food is safe to eat. Food may not be safe to eat during and after a hurricane. Safe water for cooking includes bottled, boiled or treated water. The state Health Department recommends throwing away food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water or food that has an unusual odor, color or texture. Wash your hands thoroughly before preparing or eating food.

Know what to do when a warning is issued. If there is a hurricane warning, prepare to bring your supply kit with you if you evacuate. Also protective actions for your home should be completed, such as boarding up and securing loose objects.

Know what to do when a watch is issued. If there is a hurricane watch, make sure nothing is missing from your supply kit and replenish your water. Also, activate your family disaster plan and make sure your home is secure.

Put necessary items in one location. Before hurricane season starts, make sure the items for your disaster-supply kit are together in one place. Also before the season begins, write out your family disaster plan and review it with everyone.

Don't forget bug spray and body lotion. Bug spray will come in handy if the electricity goes out and bugs get in the house. Body lotion will help keep your skin from drying out if you don't have water.

Know where to get information. Hurricane preparedness and safety tips can be found on many Web sites, including:

www.sunherald.com

www.weather.gov

www.weather.com

www.nhc.noaa.gov

Know hurricane terminology. A watch means conditions are favorable for a weather event within 36 hours. A warning means conditions are expected in a specific area within 24 hours or less. Watches and warnings usually refer to tropical storms, hurricanes or tornadoes.

Write your name and address on storage bins. If you store valuables in large plastic bins and leave them at home, write your name, address and phone number on them. If these storage containers do blow away, you still have a chance at getting them back.

Make a list of items you'll need if you evacuate. Keep a "hurricane box" handy and tape a sheet of paper on the inside cover. When you think of something you don't want to leave behind if you evacuate, put it on the list. Examples include jewellery, photos and other priceless mementos.

Get your property appraised. The American Society of Appraisers recommends people their home and possessions appraised before a storm hits. In that situation, an appraisal can help people prove the exact worth of a piece of property. If the appraiser is accredited, it can be used in court, with the IRS or an insurance company.

If you're nervous about the upcoming hurricane season, ask for help. Talk to family, friends or someone from your church. Talking can help relieve feelings of anxiety, and you'll probably find who others share your concerns.

Make sure your cell phone has text messaging capabilities. During a hurricane or tropical storm, text messaging is more likely to work when other forms of communication fail. Check with your wireless company for text messaging rate plans.

Hurricanes aren't just a coastal event. These storms also can cause massive flooding inland, so even if you don't live right on the Coast, make sure and prepare your home and property against flooding. You also might want to purchase flood insurance in the event of a storm.

Save empty water bottles and jugs. If a tropical storm or hurricane approaches, fill empty jugs and bottles and put them in the freezer. The extra ice will help preserve food in the freezer for a longer period of time if the electricity goes out.

Prepare to turn off utilities. FEMA recommends knowing how and when to turn off water, gas and electricity at the main switches or valves. Keep any tools you need near the shut-off valves, but turn off utilities only if you think lines are damaged, you suspect a leak or if officials instruct you to do so.

Prepare your pets now. Make sure dogs and cats are up-to-date on their shots and have enough heartworm and flea medicine to last through hurricane season. The Mississippi Board of Animal Health also recommends pets always wear current identification and that they be micro-chipped.

Know your friends and neighbors' disaster plans. It's a good idea to know if others plan to stay or evacuate during a storm, especially the elderly and handicapped. Check with your neighbors and find out where they plan to go and get a contact number for them in the event of a hurricane.

Purchase equipment now. Right now is the time to buy generators and chain saws in preparation for hurricane season. Stores likely have a better supply now than they will if a storm approaches this area. Go over safety guidelines and instructions before using the equipment.

If you don't have a way to evacuate, let MEMA know. The Mississippi Emergency Management Agency is conducting a hurricane evacuation transportation survey to see who will need help leaving if a storm heads this way. The number is 1-866-647-0966, and the phone line will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays and 8 a.m. to noon Saturdays.

Begin talking precautions now. Place large, heavy objects on lower shelves and hang pictures and mirrors away from beds. FEMA also recommends trimming loose branches from trees before the season starts and storing weed killers, pesticides and flammable products away from heat sources.

Review your hurricane plan. Review your evacuation and communication plans with family members now. FEMA and the American Red Cross also recommend checking food supplies, batteries and medication for expiration dates. Anything that has expired should be discarded and replaced.

Purchase flood insurance now. There is a 30-day waiting period for new policies to take effect, and hurricane season begins June 1. These policies cover damage up to \$250,000 for your dwelling. If you purchase contents coverage, it pays up to \$100,000 for items inside your home.

If you own a business, formulate a plan now. Know what your employees will do in the event of a hurricane, the Department of Homeland Security recommends. Also, make plans to secure and protect your building so you can get back in business as soon as possible.

Plan for family members with disabilities and special medical needs. Keep medical equipment and supplies in a designated place so they can be found quickly. The American Red Cross recommends developing a contingency plan that includes an alternate power source for medical equipment or relocating the person if evacuation becomes necessary.

Be informed of threats to your community. This area, as we well know, is prone to hurricanes, but some areas are more likely than others to get flooding, storm surge or tornadoes. Your county emergency management office has information about potential hazards and the best way to prepare for them.

If you live in a trailer, pay special attention to storms. Trailers cannot withstand some of the strong winds associated with thunderstorms, much less tropical systems and hurricanes. If you evacuate, do not try and take your trailer with you. These trailers aren't made to be moved, and this could slow down the evacuation of other residents. Also, it's illegal to move a FEMA trailer.

Make sure to include pets in your disaster plan. If you evacuate, take your pets, the Mississippi Board of Animal Health recommends. Animals left behind be lost or killed. Before hurricane season begins, make sure your pets' immunizations are up to date and that they have proper identification.

Know what flood zone and evacuation zone you live in. Both are labelled A, B and C, but they can be different, depending on where you live. For maps showing the two different zones, go to your county's emergency management office.

Make a hurricane plan and review it with your family. Discuss what supplies you will need and your evacuation route. Explain the dangers to children and work with everyone to help prepare the family for a storm. Let a friend or family member who doesn't live in your area know what your plan is and notify them if you have to evacuate.

Give yourself an insurance checkup. Make sure your insurance coverage is adequate. Consider purchasing flood insurance since homeowners policies do not cover flood damage. Meet with your insurance agent and make sure you have enough coverage for your property in the event of damage or destruction.

Reduce home hazards. Take steps to reduce the chance of damage to your home or injury to family by repairing defective electrical wiring and leaky gas connections, FEMA recommends. Use straps to secure tall cabinets, bookshelves and large appliances; repair cracks in ceilings and foundations and have a professional clean and repair chimneys, flue pipes, connectors and gas vents.

Inventory home possessions. The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends making a record of your possessions in case of loss or damage. Store the information in a safety deposit box or other secure location. Include photos or videos of the interior and exterior of your home, cars, boats and recreational vehicles. Get appraisals of jewellery, collectibles or artwork.

Make several copies of all your important papers. This includes health, life and homeowners' insurance policies and Social Security cards, birth certificates and marriage certificates. If possible, scan them and burn them on a CD and take that as well as the copies if you evacuate. Also, mail a copy of these documents to a family member or friend who doesn't live in a hurricane-prone area.

If you plan to board the windows at your home this season, measure them and buy the plywood now. Wood could be in short supply as a hurricane approaches and it likely will be more expensive the closer a storm gets.

Choose an evacuation route now. Don't wait until a storm threatens before deciding where to go and how to get there. Decide where you will go and inform family and friends of your decision. If you live in a FEMA trailer and a severe thunderstorm approaches, plan to move to a more substantial structure until the storm passes.

Prepare a disaster supply kit now. These should include a weather radio, batteries, bottled water, nonperishable food (at least three days' worth), first-aid kit, flashlights, clothing and bedding, toiletries and medications, soap, plastic garbage bags and a whistle to signal for help.

Sound Financial Advice

Secure your garage:

About 80 percent of residential hurricane damage starts with wind entry through garage doors, according to the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes. Many garage doors are made of lightweight materials to conserve weight and expense which makes them vulnerable to high winds.

Look for a sticker on the inside of your garage door that gives you a pressure rating. If you don't see a sticker, chances are you'll need to reinforce your doors. But consumer beware: "There many products out there claiming to provide protection, but they may not be up to code and they can be quite expensive," says Kerri Caldwell of *Hurricane Protection* magazine. In some cases, you may be paying over \$15 a square inch to shield your garage.

It makes better sense to replace your garage system with impact resistant garage doors. This can cost you about \$1,200. A cheap way of reinforcing your garage is to use plywood or steel. You can also hire a contractor to reinforce your garage, but you should expect to pay about \$600, according to the Federal Emergency Management Association.

Reinforce your windows:

Forget about taping your windows. It's a waste of time. If you live in a hurricane or storm-prone area, you may want to think about installing impact resistant windows, recommends Leslie Chapman-Henderson of the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes.

These windows are designed to withstand flying debris. But keep in mind, you'll be paying for the extra protection. Impact resistant windows may cost twice as much as regular windows. These windows are designed to withstand the impact of a standard missile travelling at 34 mph.

If you don't live in an area that has a lot of hurricanes, you may think about investing in storm shutters. For the best shutter protection, install permanent shutters that carry the Miami-Dade building code approval. This is the highest standard a product can carry, according to Tim Reinhold of the Institute for Building and Home Safety.

Storm shutters can cost \$50 to \$60 per square foot of window. You can use plywood shutters. According to the Red Cross, these shutters can offer a high level of protection if you install them properly. But make sure the plywood is at least 3/4 inch thick.

Shutters come in a variety of styles including accordion shutters, aluminum shutters and roll-up shutters. For more information on types of shutters available and how much it may cost you, check out www.flash.org.

Watch your grading:

Soil should slope away from your house. After the first four feet of your home's perimeter, the ground should slope down about six inches. If your grading needs improvement, use clean fill dirt, not top soil, to build up a slope around your house. Top soil is organic and will hold water against your home's foundation.

To get clean fill dirt, consider calling a landscape supplier. It may cost you about \$100 for a small truckload. Once you've finished your slope, you can finish with a layer of top soil and grass seed to prevent erosion. Or, just use stone or mulch.

Check your trees:

Every year falling trees and tree limbs cause hundreds of millions of dollars in damage as well as personal injuries and deaths. Homeowners are the first line of defence against problem trees.

You'll need to check regularly for signs of damage or disease including cracks in the trunk or major limbs, insect infestations, trees that look one-sided or that lean significantly, branches hanging over the house or near the roof, limbs in contact with power lines or mushrooms growing from the bark signalling decay.

Secure your stuff:

If you have furniture and other outdoor equipment on your patio or deck, bring them inside when strong weather threatens. Don't forget trash cans, grills, toys, and potted plants. Keep them from becoming flying objects that can cause additional injury or damage during storms with high winds.

"You would be very surprised about what people don't think about," says Chapman-Henderson. "We saw garden gnomes wedged into palm trees. We saw an old record sliced into a tree. We saw sailboats in the tops of trees after hurricane Andrew," she said.



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