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Hurricanes:

**PREPARATION AND  
RECOVERY**

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## Introduction

This handbook contains articles for those who were impacted by a hurricane, including information on cleaning up and coping with the aftermath of trauma. These and other disaster-management articles are also available on [Achieve Solutions](#).

Assistance can also be found by calling your toll free number: 1-877-694-9281.

## Disaster Supplies Kit

Your family will cope best by preparing for disaster before it strikes. One way to prepare is by assembling a disaster supplies kit. Once disaster hits, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you've gathered supplies in advance, your family can endure an evacuation or home confinement.

### Prepare your kit

Review the checklist below. Gather the supplies that are listed and store them in a large, covered trash container; a camping backpack or a duffel bag.

### Water

- Store water in plastic containers.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (2 quarts per day for drinking and 2 quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation). Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers and ill people will need more.

### Food

- Store at least a three-day supply of nonperishable foods that are compact and lightweight. Items should require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Include ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables.

### First-aid kit (one for home and one for each car)

assorted sizes of safety pins	triangular bandages (3)	needle
cleansing agent/soap	nonprescription drugs	moistened towelettes
latex or nonlatex gloves (2 pairs)	2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)	antiseptic
petroleum jelly or other lubricant	3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)	thermometer
2-inch sterile gauze pads (4 to 6)	scissors	tongue blades (2)
4-inch sterile gauze pads (4 to 6)	tweezers	sunscreen

### Nonprescription drugs

aspirin or nonaspirin pain reliever	Syrup of ipecac (use to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center)	
antidiarrhea medication	laxative	
antacid (for stomach upset)	activated charcoal (use if advised by the Poison Control Center)	

### Tools and supplies

mess kits or paper cups, plates and plastic utensils	matches in a waterproof container	map of the area (for locating shelters)
emergency preparedness manual	tape	medicine dropper
battery-operated radio and extra batteries	fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type	shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
flashlight and extra batteries	pliers	whistle
cash or traveler's checks, change	aluminum foil	plastic sheeting
nonelectric can opener, utility knife	plastic storage containers	needles, thread
compass	signal flare	
tube tent	paper, pencil	

### Sanitation

toilet paper, towelettes	plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation)
soap, liquid detergent	plastic bucket with tight lid
feminine supplies	disinfectant
personal hygiene items	household chlorine bleach

### Clothing and bedding

at least 1 complete change of clothing and footwear per person	
sturdy shoes or work boots	thermal underwear
rain gear	sunglasses
blankets or sleeping bags	hat and gloves

### For baby

formula	diapers	bottles	powdered milk	medications
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### For adults

heart and high blood pressure medication	prescription drugs	insulin
contact lenses and supplies	denture needs	extra eye glasses

### Entertainment

games and books
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### Important family documents (keep in a waterproof, portable container)

will, insurance policies, contracts deeds, stocks and bonds	credit-card account numbers and companies
passports, Social-Security cards, immunization records	inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers
bank account numbers	family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)

### Tips to remember

- Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of the disaster supplies kit in the trunk of your car.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags.
- Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh.
- Replace your stored food every six months.
- Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.

Source: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

## Steps to Take Before, During, and After a Hurricane

To prepare for a hurricane, you should take the following measures:

- Make plans to secure your property. Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection for windows. A second option is to board up windows with 5/8" marine plywood, cut to fit and ready to install. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking.
- Install straps or additional clips to securely fasten your roof to the frame structure. This will reduce roof damage.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Determine how and where to secure your boat.
- Consider building a safe room.

If a hurricane is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio or TV for information.
- Secure your home, close storm shutters, and secure outdoor objects or bring them indoors.
- Turn off utilities if instructed to do so. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Avoid using the phone, except for serious emergencies.
- Moor your boat if time permits.
- Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water.

You should evacuate under the following conditions:

- If you are directed by local authorities to do so. Be sure to follow their instructions.
- If you live in a mobile home or temporary structure—such shelters are particularly hazardous during hurricanes no matter how well fastened to the ground.
- If you live in a high-rise building—hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations.
- If you live on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river, or on an inland waterway.
- If you feel you are in danger.

If you are unable to evacuate, go to your safe room. If you do not have one, follow these guidelines:

- Stay indoors during the hurricane and away from windows and glass doors.
- Close all interior doors—secure and brace external doors.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed. Do not be fooled if there is a lull; it could be the eye of the storm—winds will pick up again.
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, or hallway on the lowest level.
- Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.

### After a hurricane

- Continue listening to a NOAA Weather Radio or the local news for the latest updates.
- Stay alert for extended rainfall and subsequent flooding even after the hurricane or tropical storm has ended.
- If you have become separated from your family, use your family communications plan or contact FEMA or the American Red Cross.
- FEMA has established the National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System (NEFRS), which has been developed to help reunite families who are separated during a disaster. The

NEFRS system will enable displaced individuals the ability to enter personal information into a website database so that they can be located by others during a disaster.

- ❑ The American Red Cross also maintains a database to help you find family. Contact the local American Red Cross chapter where you are staying for information. Do not contact the chapter in the disaster area.
- ❑ If you evacuated, return home only when officials say it is safe.
- ❑ If you cannot return home and have immediate housing needs. Text SHELTER + your ZIP code to 43362 (4FEMA) to find the nearest shelter in your area (example: shelter 12345).
- ❑ For those who have longer-term housing needs, FEMA offers several types of assistance, including services and grants to help people repair their homes and find replacement housing. Apply for assistance or search for information about housing rental resources
- ❑ Drive only if necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed- out bridges. Stay off the streets. If you must go out watch for fallen objects; downed electrical wires; and weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks.
- ❑ Keep away from loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately to the power company.
- ❑ Walk carefully around the outside your home and check for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage before entering.
- ❑ Stay out of any building if you smell gas, floodwaters remain around the building or your home was damaged by fire and the authorities have not declared it safe.
- ❑ Inspect your home for damage. Take pictures of damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance purposes. If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before entering.
- ❑ Use battery-powered flashlights in the dark. Do NOT use candles. Note: The flashlight should be turned on outside before entering - the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.
- ❑ Watch your pets closely and keep them under your direct control. Watch out for wild animals, especially poisonous snakes. Use a stick to poke through debris.
- ❑ Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it's not contaminated.
- ❑ Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
- ❑ Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
- ❑ Use the telephone only for emergency calls.
- ❑ NEVER use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.

Source: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

## What to Do Before, During, and After a Flood

### Before a flood

To prepare for a flood, you should:

- Avoid building in a floodplain unless you elevate and reinforce your home.
- Elevate the furnace, water heater and electric panel if susceptible to flooding.
- Install "check valves" in sewer traps to prevent flood water from backing up into the drains of your home.
- Construct barriers (levees, beams, floodwalls) to stop floodwater from entering the building.
- Seal walls in basements with waterproofing compounds to avoid seepage.

### During a flood

If a flood is likely in your area, you should:

- Listen to the radio or television for information.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without such typical warnings as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:

- Secure your home. If you have time, bring in outdoor furniture. Move essential items to an upper floor.
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuation tips:

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away.

### Driving in floods: facts

The following are important points to remember when driving in flood conditions:

- Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars, causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- A foot of water will float many vehicles.
- Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles (SUVs) and pick-up trucks.

### After a flood

Although floodwaters may be down in some areas, many dangers still exist. Here are some things to remember in the days ahead.



- Roads may still be closed because they have been damaged or are covered by water. Barricades have been placed for your protection. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, go another way.
- Keep listening to the radio for news about what to do, where to go, or places to avoid.
- Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.
- If you must walk or drive in areas that have been flooded.
  - Stay on firm ground. Moving water only 6 inches deep can sweep you off your feet. Standing water may be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
  - Flooding may have caused familiar places to change. Floodwaters often erode roads and walkways. Flood debris may hide animals and broken bottles, and it's also slippery. Avoid walking or driving through it.
- Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.

### **Staying healthy**

A flood can cause emotional and physical stress. You need to look after yourself and your family as you focus on cleanup and repair.

- Rest often and eat well.
- Keep a manageable schedule. Make a list and do jobs one at a time.
- Discuss your concerns with others and seek help. Contact the Red Cross for information on emotional support available in your area.

### **Getting help**

- The American Red Cross can help you by providing you with a voucher to purchase new clothing, groceries, essential medications, bedding, essential furnishings, and other items to meet emergency needs. Listen to the radio to find out where to go for assistance, or look up American Red Cross in the phone book and call.
- The Red Cross can provide you with a cleanup kit: mop, broom, bucket, and cleaning supplies.
- Contact your insurance agent to discuss claims.
- Listen to your radio for information on assistance that may be provided by the state or federal government or other organizations.
- If you hire cleanup or repair contractors, be sure they are qualified to do the job. Be wary of people who drive through neighborhoods offering help in cleaning up or repairing your home. Check references.

Source: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

## Pets and Disasters

### Make a pet emergency plan

- ID your pet. Make sure your pet's tags are up-to-date and securely fastened to your pet's collar. If possible, attach the address and/or phone number of your evacuation site. If your pet gets lost, his tag is his ticket home. Also consider microchipping your pets.
- Make sure you have a current photo of your pet for identification purposes.
- Make a pet emergency kit.
- Identify shelters. For public health reasons, many emergency shelters cannot accept pets. Find out which motels and hotels in the area you plan to evacuate to allow pets well in advance of needing them. There are also a number of guides that list hotels/motels that permit pets and could serve as a starting point. Include your local animal shelter's number in your list of emergency numbers.
- Make sure you have a secure pet carrier, leash, or harness for your pet so that if he panics, he can't escape.

### Prepare shelter for your pet

- Call your local emergency management office, animal shelter, or animal control office to get advice and information.
- If you are unable to return to your home right away, you may need to board your pet. Find out where pet boarding facilities are located. Be sure to research some outside your local area in case local facilities close.
- Most boarding kennels, veterinarians, and animal shelters will need your pet's medical records to make sure all vaccinations are current. Include copies in your "pet survival" kit along with a photo of your pet.
- Some animal shelters will provide temporary foster care for owned pets in times of disaster but this should be considered only as a last resort.
- If you have no alternative but to leave your pet at home, there are some precautions you must take, but remember that leaving your pet at home alone can place your animal in great danger! Confine your pet to a safe area inside—*never* leave your pet chained outside! Leave him loose inside your home with food and plenty of water. Remove the toilet tank lid, raise the seat, and brace the bathroom door open so he can drink. Place a notice outside in a visible area advising what pets are in the house and where they are located. Provide a phone number where you or a contact can be reached as well as the name and number of your vet.

### Protect your pet during a disaster

- Bring your pets inside immediately.
- Have newspapers on hand for sanitary purposes. Feed the animal moist or canned food so they will need less water to drink.
- Animals have instincts about severe weather changes and will often isolate themselves if they are afraid. Bringing them inside early can stop them from running away. Never leave a pet outside or tied up during a storm.
- Separate dogs and cats. Even if your dogs and cats normally get along, the anxiety of an emergency situation can cause pets to act irrationally. Keep small pets away from cats and dogs.
- In an emergency, you may have to take your birds with you. Talk with your veterinarian or local pet store about special food dispensers that regulate the amount of food a bird is given. Make sure that the bird is caged and the cage is covered by a thin cloth or sheet to provide security and filtered light.

- If you evacuate your home, do not leave your pets behind. Pets most likely cannot survive on their own and if by some remote chance they do, you may not be able to find them when you return.
- If you are going to a public shelter, it is important to understand that animals may not be allowed inside. Plan in advance for shelter alternatives that will work for both you and your pets; consider loved ones or friends outside of your immediate area who would be willing to host you and your pets in an emergency.
- Make a back-up emergency plan in case you can't care for your animals yourself. Develop a buddy system with neighbors, friends, and relatives to make sure that someone is available to care for or evacuate your pets if you are unable to do so. Be prepared to improvise and use what you have on hand to make it on your own for at least three days, maybe longer.

### **Caring for your pet after a disaster**

- If after a disaster you have to leave town, take your pets with you. Pets are unlikely to survive on their own.
- In the first few days after the disaster, leash your pets when they go outside. Always maintain close contact. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and your pet may become confused and lost. Also, snakes and other dangerous animals may be brought into the area with flood areas. Downed power lines are a hazard.
- The behavior of your pets may change after an emergency. Normally quiet and friendly pets may become aggressive or defensive. Watch animals closely. Leash dogs and place them in a fenced yard with access to shelter and water.

Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency

## After a Traumatic Event: How to Help Yourself

### 1. Find support.

When a random traumatic event occurs, people may want to turn to their friends and family for support. If your community has been affected, you may need to look elsewhere. Meeting with others in a support group is helpful. Make sure it is led by a trained and experienced counselor. Don't isolate yourself.

Even if you were not directly affected, it's important to protect yourself against "*vicarious trauma*," or "*secondary traumatic stress*." Those are terms for secondhand exposure to others' pain and misfortune. When a community is affected, the scary information can seem to bombard you. If this is your situation, look into support groups for "families of" or "friends of" people who have gone through trauma. Talk with a friend outside of the situation.

Take advantage of any resources like on-the-spot counseling. Look for the people who are helping in this situation. You may need to take advantage of resources that you haven't used before. Social services and aid are there to help. Everyone needs help at some point. Sometimes you will be the helper and, sometimes, the receiver. Both are normal.

Even if you are hurting emotionally or financially from the event, it may make you feel better to give back. Donate time, effort, or money if you can. Don't overextend yourself. There will be times to give back later. You can do *something*; it doesn't have to be *everything*.

### 2. Re-establish your routine.

Get back into your routine as soon as possible. It may be impossible to have the exact routine as before. Get back to work in some capacity. Recreate another home, if needed. Keep small things the same. Can you still have mealtimes at the same time? Exercise? Go out for coffee?

### 3. Educate and prepare yourself.

Do some research. Look into how often these types of events happen where you are. Figure out what aspects of your life you can control at the moment. This is not the time to make major life decisions. Instead develop emergency plans and safety kits.

### 4. Limit media.

Limit where you get news and the amount. Otherwise, you will feel buried in the same topic. Cut back on social media. Things might be posted that could trigger fear or anxiety.

### 5. Practice self-care.

Be gentle with yourself. Practice deep breathing when you feel anxious. List things you are grateful for to improve your outlook. Stay hydrated. Eat well. Get rest. Don't push yourself. As long as you are getting stronger each day, you are making progress.

If feelings of helplessness, despair, or anxiety don't ease, or if it is difficult to get through your day, consider seeing a mental health specialist.

By Jennifer Brick  
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## Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Trauma

### 1. Model a healthy display of emotions.

If parents express a lot of tears, grief, or worry, the child will follow their lead. These feelings of emotions, such as a racing heart or quick breathing, can be scary for children. It can cause them to panic even more. Try to set a calm tone. You don't have to hide all emotions. If your child sees you crying, you can say "Mommy is crying because I feel sad. It's OK to feel sad." If you need to release a lot of emotions, do so around other adults.

Seek other adults to talk to about your feelings. Try to maintain a stance of self-control.

A lot of times, adults try to hide their feelings from children to spare them additional worry. Many children sense when things are being kept from them. It may cause them more anxiety. Share some of your feelings and explain how you cope in a healthy way. The child will learn to do the same. For example, share that you talk to a trusted friend, breathe deeply, exercise, or remind yourself of positive things.

### 2. Talk to the child.

Adults may avoid talking to children about difficult subjects because the adults are afraid of distressing the child by saying the wrong thing. This can isolate the child when she most needs to talk about it. Make it a conversation. Don't be afraid to ask questions to see what your child knows and is curious about.

Help him focus on moments where he felt strong and in control. Use praise: "You were so brave!" Keep your tone upbeat.

A child may express guilt or shame. She may feel like something she said or did caused the events. Tell her it is not her fault. If these feelings remain, remind him that he did not mean for his actions to cause harm and they have not done so.

### 3. Return to a routine as soon as possible.

Home may feel like a safe place, so it may seem best to keep your child home for as long as possible. However, most children benefit from returning to their routines as soon as possible whether it is child care, school, sports practice, or other activities.

When your child goes back to school, speak to the necessary people about adjusting the child's responsibilities for a time. This may include less homework or more time to do it, extra time on tests or postponing tests, and leniency with a child's behavior in the classroom.

A return to routine doesn't mean the child doesn't need any more support or help. Support is needed for months or longer. If it is taken away too soon, the child may struggle and be unable to cope.

### 4. Limit media intake.

Media coverage is available everywhere. Continual access to the graphic details, pictures, or stories isn't helpful to anyone. Limit the amount of coverage that the family consumes. If possible, watch it first. If your child is watching it, be sure to watch along with her. Answer her questions and help her put it in perspective.

### 5. Involve the child.

Involving the child in positive ways gives him a purpose. Making cookies for rescue workers, writing cards to people who have been hurt, and helping with clean-up efforts are all good examples.

If a death has occurred, creating a memorial or having a service can help a child share her grief and feel less alone. When possible, have the child participate in the planning and service. This makes sure it is appropriate for someone her age and relevant to her.

Spend one-on-one time with the child. You can read books or games. The attention will help the child feel safe.

By Jennifer Brick  
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