

7 Steps For Hurricane Readiness

There is no doubt about it – natural disasters are scary – and each part of the beautiful U.S. of A. has its own special disaster you may need to prepare for. Growing up in the Northeast, hurricanes are my forte and I'd love to share with you some tips and tricks to be ready to go this hurricane season!

If you're never prepared for hurricane season before, you may think it requires more time (and more money) than it actually does. You may be surprised to learn that you can check most of the points off your hurricane readiness to-do list within a weekend or less.

Not sure where to begin? Here is where you can start!

How Prepared?

The first question to ask yourself is: *How prepared do I need to be?*

Residents of Fort Lauderdale, FL, will have different preparation needs than residents in Harrisburg, PA.

Know the risks for your area. Are you likely to see the eye of the hurricane? Will you just see higher rainfall and a few downed limbs? Are you in a flood zone? Will winds get high enough to pick up large debris?

There's no point in preparing like you live in Key West, FL if you live in Albany, NY. Find out the risks for your area before making any plans or buying any supplies.

Know Who to Trust

That may sound ominous, but all it really means is: *Where will you get your news?*

Your Auntie Em's Facebook feed may be helpful for personalized, local information. Tweets and updates from locals can help alert you to a tree that's blocking Market Street or the power lines down on Main. However, you should look elsewhere for your primary source of storm information.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has two Hurricane Centers that are the most trusted sources of up-to-date hurricane information. NOAA broadcasts emergency information through the National Weather Service. You can tune into one of seven frequencies, though you may need a special radio to pick them up.

A list of emergency management agencies is also available through FEMA.

Don't forget to check for official social media accounts for your trusted sources and, if possible, sign up for a text alert system.

Double Check Your Insurance

You know what they say about assuming, right?

Don't assume that your insurance will cover you in the event of hurricane damage. Skip the internet search and word of mouth and head straight for the source. Call your insurance agent, sit on hold for as long as necessary (fold laundry or do something semi-productive while you wait – it helps!), and check to see what is covered under your policy.

Remember that most insurances do not provide flood coverage.

If you're in a flood zone, consider purchasing a separate flood insurance policy.

Stock Up on Supplies

Make sure you have the supplies you need to keep your family fed and functioning in the event you need to weather a few days stuck in your home.

A basic emergency kit should include:

- Food and water for three days (allow one gallon of water per person, per day – don't forget water for your pets)
- Manual can opener and a multipurpose tool
- Battery-operated radio
- Flashlight
- Extra Batteries
- Cash (lower denominations help)
- Copies of Important Documents
- First Aid Kit
- Child and Pet Supplies (formula, diapers, leashes, etc.)
- List of Emergency Numbers

Make sure your cell phones and laptops are fully charged in preparation for a storm. In the event of a power outage, you can use your laptop to charge your phone.

For a more comprehensive list of what you should include in your emergency kit, check out further recommendations from the CDC.

Hurricane Property Prep

You can make both last-minute and long-term hurricane preparations to your property.

Keep up with outdoor maintenance. Trim tree limbs that are too

close to the house. Check for and remove any dead limbs or trees before Mother Nature has a chance to do it for you. Make smart landscaping choices like opting for mulch instead of rocks. Keep gutters clear of debris.

Have shutters ready to secure and cover windows and doors. You can purchase tested and approved shutters that are designed for hurricane conditions or you can use tutorials available through flash.org to create your own plywood coverings. Don't forget to reinforce your garage door as well. Garage doors can be too light and flimsy to withstand hurricane conditions on their own.

If a hurricane seems imminent, move outdoor furniture, grills, and other items into the house or garage. Move your car into the garage as well.

Make an Evacuation Plan

Don't wait until a hurricane is happening to make an evacuation plan.

Know where your local shelters are located and pick an evacuation point in the event you need to leave your area completely. It doesn't have to be across the country, as a friend or family member located outside the evacuation zone will do just fine.

Map out your routes ahead of time and make a point to research and review extreme weather driving tips.

Write It Down

An emergency situation can throw off the best of us. Don't rely on memory alone: *Write down your emergency plans and keep them easily accessible.*

A family binder is a great place to store important information, including emergency plans. Fill that section with:

- Emergency Numbers
- Emergency Supply Inventory
- Property Preparedness Checklist
- First Aid Tips
- Evacuation Plan and Mapped Routes

You may also find it helpful to include a short list of items to grab in the event of an evacuation. A list like this will keep you from forgetting important, portable items and keep you from wasting time in the moment, trying to decide what to take.

Wrap-Up

This may seem like a ridiculous amount of information, but there's no need to feel overwhelmed! Bring the whole family on board and set aside a work weekend. Together you can quickly and easily get yourselves and your home ready to face any emergency safely!



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