



## Preparedness and plans for specific disasters

### Hurricanes

#### ***Eight Steps of Hurricane/Major Storm Preparation***

**Step 1: Respect nature.** Weather events, such as hurricanes, are powerful and dangerous. In fact, hurricanes and typhoons kill thousands of people worldwide every year and cause billions of dollars in property damage. Do not underestimate the weather's power. Having a healthy respect for hurricanes, tornadoes, winter storms and severe weather in general is the first step to being prepared.

**Step 2: Decide whether to go or stay.** You must first decide if you will evacuate your home or stay and ride out the storm. Such a decision should be a family decision and must include considering such factors as:

- Are you in a storm surge or flood zone?
- Is your home structurally capable of withstanding hurricane force winds?
- Do the openings in your home, such as the windows, sliding glass doors, and jalousie doors have shutters to keep the powerful winds and rain out?
- Do any of your family members have special medical needs that will require help you cannot provide?
- Is your home capable of providing a "livable" environment after the storm when all utilities are lost?

**Step 3: Make a personal plan.** Whether you decide to evacuate or stay in your home to ride out

a storm, it is wise to get your family together to develop a family disaster plan. There simply will not be time to think of everything when a storm gets close. You will be surprised at the number of issues that need to be discussed once you sit down and start listing them.

If you are going to evacuate:

- Where will you go?
- Will you be using a local shelter?
- Where is the shelter located?
- What route will you drive to get there?
- How long will it take to pick up everyone?
- What will you need to bring with you? (Think 3-day survival kit)
- How will you care for your pets?
- What property security needs to be done?
- Will you need to notify other family members where you will be?

If you are going to stay:

- Do you have shutters for all windows and openings?
- How long will it take to put up shutters or boards?
- Is rising water an issue in your home?
- How will you cope with any family members with special medical needs?
- What special supplies and food will you need to have on hand?
- Do you need to have any special equipment available for after the storm?
- Do you have a safe place for important documents?
- Should you notify any out-of-area relatives that you are staying?



- Are you prepared to live without utilities and normal services for as long as two weeks after the storm?

**Step 4: Prepare your property in advance.** The time to begin acquiring shutters and protection for your home is now. All openings of your home need to have protection to keep fierce winds and rain out of the building. Experience proves that a home that does not have protected openings is at grave risk for serious damage. Trees need to be trimmed to minimize the damage they may cause to your home or someone else's. Vehicles left out in the open are often overturned by high winds. If you do not have a garage or carport, locate a protected spot to park your vehicles. A good location might be on the leeward side of the house, away from the main force of the wind. Identify loose items located outside, such as lawn furniture, grills, toys, yard equipment, etc., that should be brought inside before a storm. When picked up by high winds, these items can become deadly missiles. Examine your home to see if hurricane straps and connectors were installed to roof trusses, rafters and raftering members. Homes that do not have such protective reinforcements are at risk of losing roofs and walls to strong hurricane force winds.

**Step 5: Store up to 14 days of supplies and equipment.** Most of us are ill-prepared to do so. It is not immediately obvious what we would need for such an adventure. A useful exercise may be to try to live for one day without your utilities and begin making a list of essential items that become evident. Parents should try an occasional "one-day camp-in" with their children. This will make it less traumatic for children (and their parents) when they are forced to live without all the things we take for

granted. It is also important to fuel all vehicles before the storm hits.

**Step 6: Rehearse your plan.** The best plan in the world will not do you or your family any good if no one can remember it. When a major storm approaches, things need to happen fast. There are usually too many tasks to be done by one person. Many people will be tied up at their workplace for some time prior to the storm's arrival. (Emergency Management personnel and emergency responders will be tied up during and for several days following any major weather event.) The only real way to ensure that everything gets done is to assign everyone in your family a list of preparation activities, or allot a substantial amount of lead time if you do not have anyone to help you.

**Step 7: Watch Weather Reports Closely.** Storms and weather fronts, especially tornadoes and hurricanes, can move very quickly. Hurricanes typically move at a forward speed of 8 to 25 miles per hour. While this may seem quite slow, such movement can advance an approaching storm up to 200 miles during the course of a normal work day. As a hurricane or other storm moves closer to your area, begin monitoring the weather reports every hour. Do not get caught by surprise by not taking advantage of the excellent media coverage of weather related events.

**Step 8: Take Action.** A growing concern of hurricane forecasters and emergency management officials is the problem of many people refusing to take action until a definite hurricane or severe storm warning is issued. Do not cut it too close. Numerous hurricanes have brushed by the coast or hovered off-shore for days. Such storms would have been within one day of landfall if their



directions had changed. This does not allow adequate time for preparation or evacuation. Good judgment and early action are everyone's responsibility! When the time comes for action, do so without hesitation. There is never enough time to get ready for nature's fiercest weather. Give yourself and your family a head start. It's worth it!