

# Hurricane Season

## Emergency Planning and Checklists

Prepare your family by creating a family disaster plan. You can begin this process by gathering family members and reviewing the information obtained with regard to hazards, warning systems, evacuation routes and community plans. Discuss with them what you would do if family members are not home when a warning is issued. Additionally, your family plan should address the following:

- Escape routes.
- Family communications.
- Utility shut-off and safety.
- Insurance and vital records.
- Special needs.
- Caring for animals.
- Safety Skills

### Where to meet...

- Near the home. For example, the next door neighbor's telephone pole
- Outside the immediate area For example, the neighborhood grocery store parking lot

## Family Communications

Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so plan how you will contact one another. Think about how you will communicate in different situations.

Complete a contact card for each family member. Have family members keep these cards handy in a wallet, purse, backpack, etc. You may want to send one to school with each child to keep on file. Pick a friend or relative who lives out-of-state for household members to notify they are safe.

## Utility Shut-off and Safety

In the event of a disaster, you may be instructed to shut off the utility service at your home.

Below is some general guidance for shutting off utility service:

Modify the information provided to reflect your shut off requirements as directed by your utility company.

# Are You Ready?

disasters. It is vital that all household members know how to shut off natural gas.

Because there are different gas shut-off procedures for different gas meter configurations, it is important to contact your local gas company for guidance on preparation and response regarding gas appliances and gas service to your home.

When you learn the proper shut-off procedure for your meter, share the information with everyone in your household. Be sure not to actually turn off the gas when practicing the proper gas shut-off procedure.

If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone out quickly. Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve if you can, and call the gas company from a neighbor's home.

**CAUTION** - If you turn off the gas for any reason, a qualified professional must turn it back on. NEVER attempt to turn the gas back on yourself.

## Water

Water quickly becomes a precious resource following many disasters. It is vital that all household members learn how to shut off the water at the main house valve.

- Cracked lines may pollute the water supply to your house. It is wise to shut off your water until you hear from authorities that it is safe for drinking.
- The effects of gravity may drain the water in your hot water heater and toilet tanks unless you trap it in your house by shutting off the main house valve (not the street valve in the cement box at the curb —this valve is extremely difficult to turn and requires a special tool).

## Preparing to Shut Off Water

- Locate the shut-off valve for the water line that enters your house.
- Make sure this valve can be completely shut off. Your valve may be rusted open, or it may only partially close. Replace it if necessary.
- Label this valve with a tag for easy identification,

## Natural Gas

Natural gas leaks and explosions are responsible for a significant number of fires following

and make sure all household members know where it is located.

## Electricity

Electrical sparks have the potential of igniting natural gas if it is leaking. It is wise to teach all responsible household members where and how to shut off the electricity.

### Preparing to Shut Off Electricity

- Locate your electric circuit box.
- Teach all responsible household members how to shut off the electricity to the entire house.

**FOR YOUR SAFETY:** Always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit breaker.

## Insurance and Vital Records

Obtain property, health, and life insurance if you do not have them. Review existing policies for the amount and extent of coverage to ensure that what you have in place is what is required for you and your family for all possible hazards.

### Flood Insurance

If you live in a flood-prone area, consider purchasing flood insurance to reduce your risk of flood loss. Buying flood insurance to cover the value of a building and its contents will not only provide greater peace of mind, but will speed the recovery if a flood occurs. You can call 1 (888) FLOOD29 to learn more about flood insurance.

### Inventory Home Possessions

Make a record of your personal property, for insurance purposes. Take photos or a video of the interior and exterior of your home. Include personal belongings in your inventory.

You may also want to download the free Household and Personal Property Inventory Book from the University of Illinois at: <http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/vista/abstracts/ahuseinv.html> to help you record your possessions.

### Important Documents

Store important documents such as insurance policies, deeds, property records, and other important papers in a

## Special Needs

If you or someone close to you has a disability or a special need, you may have to take additional steps to protect yourself and your family in an emergency.

### Planning for Special Needs

If you have special needs: Find out about special assistance that may be available in your community. Register with the office of emergency services or the local fire department for assistance so needed help can be provided.

## Safety Skills

It is important that family members know how to administer first aid and CPR and how to use a fire extinguisher.

### Learn First Aid and CPR

Take a first aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information about this type of training. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides, under the "good Samaritan" law, protection for those giving first aid.

### Learn How to Use a Fire Extinguisher

Be sure everyone knows how to use your fire extinguisher's and where it is kept. You should have, at a minimum, an ABC type.

## Information for Pet Owners

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.

**Be FloodSmart!  
Get Covered Today**

safe place, such as a safety deposit box away from your home. Make copies of important documents for your disaster supplies kit.

### **Money**

Consider saving money in an emergency savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash or traveler's checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly access them in case of evacuation

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