



# Hurricanes

**U**tilities prepare for storm season and encourage their customers to prepare as well. The main concern is to keep your family safe with a plan that includes evacuation routes, special medical needs, important phone numbers, and emergency supplies.

## How it Might Impact Your Utility Service

- Electric and natural gas utilities, have seen their systems hit hard by hurricanes in the last decade. Customers suffer from the blackouts hurricanes cause, and utilities are left with a mess to clean up. Hurricanes and other severe storms are dangerous and destructive—destroying homes and compromising communities.
- Floods and power outages from hurricanes can cut off electricity, gas, and water supplies
- Cell phone towers can be knocked down or damaged.
- Of course with no power, you can't charge your cell phone. You can charge it from your car if needed, but for only so long before you end up with a dead car battery. If your house phone uses cordless handsets, and the power goes out, those sets won't work.. A corded phone needs only a little "juice" and receives it from the current in the telephone lines, so it still works even when the power is out.



## ALERTS

**The National Weather Service (NWS) provides automatic weather alerts and warnings over the radio and TV, but it doesn't send e-mail or SMS alerts. This can be a problem if you didn't evacuate and you're left with nothing but a phone. For hurricane-specific information, see Hurricane Information.**

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## HOW TO PREPARE AFTER THE HURRICANE

### Develop an Emergency Plan

- Emergency operations officials urge residents to prepare to be self-sufficient for up to 14 days—without running water or electricity.
- Review your emergency plan with your family.

### Address Special Needs

- If you or anyone you know has special needs in case of evacuation, contact your local emergency management office. Find the number at FEMA.gov. If someone in your home is dependent on electric powered, life-sustaining medical equipment, review your family emergency plan for back-up power or make arrangements to relocate when a storm warning is issued.

### Properly Trim Trees

- Before storm season begins, have your trees properly trimmed to minimize their impact on your home and neighborhood. Only specially trained line-clearing professionals can trim trees and vegetation around power lines. If you are not sure whether a tree is too close to a power line to trim it yourself, contact your utility company.

## BEFORE A HURRICANE

Ensure you and your family are prepared before the next disaster impacts your community. Following an emergency or disaster, you may lose access to basic services, such as power and water, and be subject to limited or no access to essentials like food and water. With that in mind, stock up on essentials early and build a disaster supply kit to last you and your family for a **minimum** of 3 days.

### If You Stay Home:

- Stock non-perishable food supplies, bottled water, a first-aid kit, a battery-powered radio or a hand-crank radio, flashlight, slight sticks, and an off the grid communication device such as GoTenna, flashlights and extra batteries in air-tight containers.
- Adjust refrigerator temperatures to the coldest settings to reduce the potential for food spoiling if the power is temporarily lost.
- Have a non-electric analog telephone or a fully charged cell phone available in case you need to make an emergency call during a power outage.
- Fill bathtubs and sinks with water to ensure you have enough to flush the toilet, cook, etc. in case of a power outage.

### If You Need to Evacuate:

- Take the advice of local authorities. Evacuate if ordered.
- If an evacuation is necessary, unplug all appliances, TVs, and computers before leaving your home.
- If possible, move important items to a higher floor or surface such as a counter or shelf to protect expensive equipment from flooding.
- Remove fuses from the air conditioning system to prevent damage.
- Turn off water to prevent flooding from broken pipes.
- Turn off gas to prevent leaks from occurring.
- Ensure that vehicles are in good running condition and have a full tank of gas, extra emergency supplies, and a change of clothes.

### Necessary Precautions to Protect Your Home

- Keep important documents (passports, deeds, insurance policies, medications' list, birth certificates, list of important phone numbers, utility account numbers) in a stormproof container in case of flooding.
- Back up important digital assets and keep them on a USB or other portable device to keep with you if you need to quickly evacuate.

## DURING A HURRICANE

During the storm, howling winds, driving rain, and the threat of tornadoes make riding out a hurricane a scary ordeal. Follow these tips for staying safe in your home during a hurricane:

- Stay inside and away from windows, skylights, and glass doors. Find a safe area in your home (an interior room, a closet, or bathroom on the lower level).

- If flooding threatens your home, turn off electricity at the main breaker.
- If you lose power, turn off major appliances such as the air conditioner and water heater to reduce damage.
- Do not use electrical appliances, including your computer.
- Beware of lightning. Stay away from electrical equipment. Don't use the phone or take a bath/shower during the storm.

## **AFTER A HURRICANE**

The storm has passed. What do you do now?

- When power returns to your home, do not start all major appliances at once. Turn them on gradually to reduce damage to sensitive equipment.
- Avoid downed, damaged, or loose power lines and report them immediately to the local police and fire department, as well as to the local utility in your area.
- Even if you have ventilation, never use a generator indoors. This includes garages, basements and crawlspaces. Exhaust fumes contain high levels of carbon monoxide, which can be deadly if inhaled. Even when left outside, keep generators away from doors and windows and at least 10 feet away from your home. Also, allow your generator to cool off before refilling it with gas. Splashing gas on hot generator components can lead to a fire.
- Do not use electrical or gas appliances that have been wet and do not turn on damaged appliances because of the hazards of electric shock or fire.
- Never use charcoal indoors because burning charcoal produces high levels of carbon monoxide that can reach lethal levels in enclosed spaces.
- Follow post-storm food and water safety precautions to protect your family from contamination. Check food for spoilage; 'if in doubt, throw it out.'
- Stay away from flood waters as they can contain harmful contaminants and hide dangerous debris.
- Take photographs of or videotape any damage incurred.
- If flooding or water damage occurred, begin cleanup and repairs as soon as possible to avoid mold and be sure to wear protective gear.