

## After the Storm

After a major hurricane like Andrew, Karina, Rita, Charley, Frances, Ivan or Jeanne, our lives can change drastically. These type disasters affect everyone to some extent. Relief supplies and other aid will be arriving as quickly as possible, but it may take several days. Try to remain calm, patient and understanding. Your attitude affects you and everyone around you. Remember that the longest and hardest part of dealing with a hurricane is the recovery quickly as possible, but it may take several days. Try to remain calm, patient and understanding. Your attitude affects you and everyone around you. Remember that the longest and hardest part of dealing with a hurricane is the recovery.

There may be residual flooding and roads may be blocked for days or weeks, making damaged areas inaccessible. This may mean that you will not be allowed back to your home for days, or possibly weeks. Emergency workers want your return home to be as safe as possible and need time to clear safe access and secure hazards. Listen to local media for reentry information and do not go into unsafe areas. Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges. Does not sight see.

If you evacuated out of the area, consider staying away for a few extra days. Before you decide to return, consider the following. Even in the best of conditions, it is possible, if not probable, that: Power will be out for an undetermined period of time. This means no air conditioning, no lights, no refrigeration, no water pump and in many cases no stove.

Telephone service will be out or limited. This includes 911 calling. Lack of power and damaged facilities will affect both landline telephones and cellular telephone service. Even if your phone works, use it only for emergencies.

Municipal water supplies may be unsafe to drink without boiling or chemical treatment. Treat all water as unsafe until you are notified that it is safe.

Sewer lift stations will not work, meaning not only will toilets not flush and sinks not drain, but also they may backup into your home or property.

When you do return, some damage may not be readily apparent, so here are some things to keep in mind for your safety. Inspect your home for damage. Check for water and sewer line damage. Check you home's electrical system. Turn off the main breaker until you are sure the system is safe. Check for natural gas and/or bottled gas leaks. Do not enter or stay in a structure if you smell gas.

### **If electrical power is lost:**

- Call your local power company.

- Use a flashlight or battery-operated lantern. Do not use candles for emergency lighting. Candles and kerosene lanterns are fire hazards.
- Turn off all major appliances. They could overload electric lines when power is restored, causing a second outage.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible. Food can be kept cold for a day or two if the doors are kept closed.

### **Safety tips:**

- Be careful when you go outside and pay attention to where you walk and stand. Avoid any downed wires and standing water. Report downed wires to your utility company or emergency services
- Check above you for low hanging objects or loose things that could fall.
- Beware of wild animals that might be dangerous. Fire ants, bees, wasps, snakes, rodents and wild animals will be seeking high ground. They can create health and safety hazards.
- Be careful of domestic animals, even ones you know. They may be frightened or injured and more dangerous than you expect.
- Do not connect generators to your house wiring! Service personnel can be killed, or fires started elsewhere. Use your generator only in a well-ventilated area and shut it down during re-fueling.
- **REMEMBER:** Insurance companies will send special disaster assistance teams, as will the state and federal governments. Still, it may be more than a week before those teams are able to get into operation. **Take pictures of the damage, both to the house and its contents for insurance claims.** Have all your insurance documents ready and be patient!
- **When help does arrive, some may be in the form of the unscrupulous fortune seekers.** Do not sign repair contracts until you have checked out the contractor. Do not pay for any services until the work has been completed. Ask for a valid county contractor's license. Is the contractor bonded? Does the price seem fair? Are high-pressure tactics being used? Report the suspicious contractor to authorities to be checked out! If you see unfairly high prices being charged, report it! Local authorities want to help our residents by requiring competence and fairness.

### **REVIVING YOUR POOL**

Without electricity to filter and vacuum pools, that shimmering lagoon in your back yard can turn into a fetid mosquito haven.

To maintain reasonable water quality while you wait for the power to be restored or for pool maintenance personnel to fix damage to pumps or filtration systems, follow these steps:

- Remove all debris from the pool bottom. (A device called a leaf master might help) It probably won't be much help if there are large amounts of mud, sand or sludge in the pool.
- Add a chlorinator, as in the form of the 10% sodium hypochlorite granules commonly known as shock.
- Super chlorinate the pool according to the manufacture's instructions.
- Maintain the water in its super chlorinated state, until the power is restored.
- Do NOT allow anyone in the water while it's super chlorinated.
- If your pool needs structural repairs, choose a contractor carefully. You can find out if your contractor is licensed by contacting your local occupational licensing office.
- Get estimates from several contractors and get references.

## **WATER PRECAUTIONS**

After a natural disaster, damaged water pipes can cause pressure to drop, possibly letting in contaminated ground water. The concern with the water is bacterial contamination. The most common offenders, shigella and salmonella, can cause severe diarrhea. If not treated with antibiotics, these diseases can lead to life threatening dehydration. Here are some answers and tips for coping with water problems.

- Disinfect any tap water you use for anything, including for your pets. Boil it for at least ten minutes, or use chemicals: eight drops of chlorine bleach (without scent or other additives) or tincture of iodine per gallon. Let the water sit at least 10 minutes before drinking.
- If you wash dishes in tap water, rinse them in extra-chlorinated water. Use about 15 drops of chlorine on the dishes to keep them clean until next use.
- Showering or bathing in tap water is fine. If you cut yourself shaving, apply a disinfectant such as alcohol or antibiotic cream.

## **FOOD SAFETY RULES**

- Without refrigeration, items such as fresh milk, custards and creamed foods, cream cheese, cheese spread and cottage cheese, hamburger, pork, fish and poultry spoil rapidly and should be discarded if they have been without cooling for several hours. Don't trust your sense of smell.
- Clean out the refrigerator if power has been off for more than two days. Throw away perishables. Wipe the interior with baking soda and water.
- Fill your freezer with plastic jugs of water. A full freezer stays cold longer.

- Keep the freezer door closed as much as possible. Foods will stay frozen longer.
- Meats and solid items stay frozen longer than baked goods.
- Refreezing partially thawed food is risky. Generally, if the foods still contain ice crystals, they're OK to re-freeze, though their quality may suffer.
- Dry ice keeps food frozen for approximately 1 to 4 days.
- Without air conditioning, food waste will start to smell rapidly. Use small plastic garbage bags and tie or seal and place in a larger bag or can outdoors.

### **MAKESHIFT KITCHEN AND POWER SUBSTITUTES**

- A garage, carport or roofed patio would be an ideal spot for a temporary kitchen. This is what you'll need:
- A Surface to prepare food. A small table or improvised table.
- A large cooler and bags of ice to keep food fresh. Buy only the amount of fresh food your family can consume in one meal. Rely on canned foods for safety's sake.
- Use a charcoal or propane grill or a camp stove for cooking. Do not bring these grills inside, a fire could start or fumes could generate.
- Use kitchen cabinets or sturdy boxes for storage.
- For lighting use fuel-based lanterns or candles.

### **CLOTHING AND FURNITURE PRESERVATION**

- Take down wet draperies and spread to dry.
- Take furniture outside to dry, but don't put in the sun. Put under a covered patio or tarp.
- Elevate wet upholstered furniture if it is resting on carpet.
- Hang comforters and blankets out to dry.
- Dry pillows outdoors, but not in direct sunlight.

### **Roof Repair Tips**

While waiting for licensed contractors, there are **two temporary remedies** for leaks you can use. Before climbing onto your home, know this: It is easy to slip, particularly on wet tile and there is danger from tree branches, power lines and ladders. Repairs are made from the outside. On the inside, set up buckets under leaky areas and the leaks to relieve the water pressure. On the outside of the roof, you can use plastic sheeting or tar paper. The smallest holes may be patched by using a trowel to spread roofing plastic cement over them.

## **Plastic Sheeting**

- This is the most temporary measure. Take heavy plastic sheets – a brand name is Visqueen – and use roofing nails to fasten them around the hole.
- If you can find 2 by 4's, square off the hole with the wood first. Then wrap the plastic around the wood and nail down the wood.
- If you can't get wood or nails, use bricks, cement blocks or sandbags to hold down the plastic.

## **Roofing Paper**

- This is known as tar paper or roofing felt. Find it in the building-materials sections of stores. It is applied with trowel-grade roofing plastic cement and a trowel.
- The paper generally is sold in rolls by weight (15-, 30- and 90- weight paper are common) per 100 square feet.
- The paper is best applied in overlapping layers – alternating the cement and paper – from the bottom of the roof upward.

## **Contractor Tips**

The National Roofing Contractors Association can help you find reputable roofing contractors. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (two first class stamps) to the NRCA, Buying a New Roof, 10255 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 600, Rosemont, IL 60018.

### **The NRCA offers these tips:**

- Check for a permanent place of business, telephone number, tax identification number and occupational license. A professional will have these readily available.
- Check for a company with a good track record.
- Ask the contractor for proof of insurance. Insist on seeing copies of both liability coverage and workers' compensation certificates.
- Find out if the contractor is bonded and licensed.
- Be sure the contractor can provide a manufacturer's warranty. Beware of unrealistic, long-term warranties.
- Ask for a list of references and completed projects. Check with past customers to see if they were satisfied with the materials and workmanship.
- Call the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation to check for complaints against a contractor. DPR's number is (850) 487-1395.
- Insist on a written proposal and examine it carefully.

## **Spotting Roof Problems**

Resist the urge to get up on a ladder to take a closer look at your damaged roof. Leave that to a professional.

## **From the Ground**

If you need a closer look, use binoculars. Look for torn or missing shingles and problems in the valleys – where two sloping sections join at an angle. Because water flows heavily in the valleys, they are especially vulnerable.

## **A Closer Look**

If you can't see from a distance, wear non-slip, rubber-soled shoes and use a firmly braced or tied-off ladder equipped with rubber safety feet.

## **Don't Walk on the Roof**

You could dislodge the protective surface granules, diminishing waterproofing effectiveness. You also could fall off or through a weak, damaged roof.

- If you find large accumulations of shingle surface granules in the gutters, it doesn't necessarily mean the roof needs to be replaced. A contractor should inspect the roof, however.
- Tile roofs should be checked for cracked, missing or loose pieces of roofing material. For asphalt or wood-shingle roofs, look for protruding nails.
- On flat roofs, look for bare spots in the gravel surface and check for standing water.
- Take a close look at the flashing on chimneys, vents, skylights, wall/roof junctions and other areas.
- Check television antennas and other add-ons to see if there are leaks that are a result of improper sealing of openings made in the roof.