

Make a Plan

Planning ahead will help you have the best possible response to disaster.

Talk. Discuss with your family the disasters that can happen where you live. Establish responsibilities for each member of your household and plan to work together as a team. Designate alternates in case someone is absent. If a family member is in the military, also plan for how you would respond if they are deployed. Include the local military base resources that may be available.

Plan. Choose two places to meet after a disaster:

- ❑ Right outside your home
- ❑ Outside your neighborhood, in case you cannot return home or are asked to evacuate your neighborhood.

Choose an out-of-area contact for all members of the family to call in case of disaster. The selected contact person should live far enough away that they would be unaffected by the same event, and they should know they are the chosen contact. Remember that during a disaster, it may be easier to make a long distance phone call than to call across town.

Having predetermined meeting places will save time and minimize confusion should your home be affected or if the area is evacuated.

Learn. Each adult in your household should learn how and when to turn off utilities such as electricity, water and gas. Ask your local fire department to show you how to use a fire extinguisher.

Tell everyone in the household where emergency information and supplies are kept. Make copies of the information for everyone to carry with them. Keep the information updated.

Practice evacuating your home twice during the hurricane season. This should be done on 1 June and again when a hurricane has potential impact.. Drive or simulate your planned evacuation route and plot alternate routes on a map in case main roads are impassable or gridlocked.

Don't forget the Kids. Children't fears can stem from their imaginations and adults should take these feelings very seriously. Don't under estimate their perceptions and imaginations.

Include special needs and those with disabilities. If you have family members with a special need or disability, extra measures to ensure their preparedness must be taken. Don't forget the pregnant spouses who must report to the hospital during a storm (those seven months or more gestation).

Include your pets. If you must evacuate, take your animals with you. If it is not safe for you to remain, it is not safe for them. Most shelters will not accept pets and most hotels don't either. Pet kennels may be available but fill up fast so arrangements must be mad at the beginning of hurricane season.

Prepare your home. Ensure your home is hurricane-ready by trimming trees prior to hurricane season, putting up shutters, picking up loose items around the yard, and having a disaster kit with tools, tarps, trash bags, etc. at the beginning of hurricane season. Video tape the interior/exterior at the beginning of hurricane season and when you make large purchases.

Prepare your vehicle. Keep your vehicle in good repair and with at least half a tank of gas during the hurricane season.

Prepare your boat. Boats are especially vulnerable as the geography offers little protection. Consider how you would protect your boat during a hurricane.

Recordkeeping. When developing a plan, make sure your important documents have been safeguarded.

Disaster supply kit. Ensure a “family disaster survival kit: with enough food per person to sustain you for several days if you are planning on staying through the storm. The disaster kit should be taken with you if you evacuate.

Evacuation and Safe Havens. When making your plan, determine if you are in a mandatory evacuation zone. Attend your unit’s hurricane training to learn more about the Coast Guard evacuation process and the safe haven location for your geographic area.