

WHAT IS A HURRICANE?

Hurricanes are large storms that develop over the ocean, spinning in a counter-clockwise circle and moving across the water. Some hurricanes stay out over the ocean, but others move toward shore and come onto the land.

When a hurricane hits land, it brings very strong winds--more than 75 miles an hour--rain, high waves, flooding and, sometimes, tornadoes. Even places far inland from the ocean may feel the impact of a hurricane with rain and flooding. The National Weather Service watches our ocean waters all the time to spot hurricanes when they begin. Then satellites and special hurricane-hunter airplanes are used to track the storms as they move.

Hurricanes usually occur between June 1 and November 30. This page offers some suggestions on what you and your family can do before, during and after a hurricane. Check this list each spring to be better prepared for the hurricane season.

BEFORE THE HURRICANE SEASON BEGINS

Stock Your Home

It's a good idea to keep a stock of food, water, and supplies in your home. You can help your family be better prepared for any emergency if you have these supplies.

Water

Most people need at least one quart of water or other liquid to drink each day, but more would be better. You should also have extra containers of water for washing. Store water in plastic, airtight containers and change them every two months to be sure the water is pure.

Food

Supplies should include healthy, high-energy foods that do not need to be refrigerated or cooked to eat. Stock enough to feed you and your family for up to five days. A suggested supply of foods for emergencies includes:

- whole dry milk
- canned fruit juices canned meats and fish like Vienna sausage, meat spread, or tuna meat substitutes like beans bread and crackers peanut butter dried fruits dry cereals
- granola bars or cookies
- Place paper or waxed packages in a water-tight container, such as a large plastic bag. This will keep them dry and make them easier to carry.

Supplies and Equipment

- Keep the following items in one place so you can get to them easily:
- A battery-operated radio (with extra batteries)
- A flashlight (with extra batteries)
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Paper plates and utensils, including a bottle and can opener candles and matches (in a waterproof container) or an oil or kerosene lantern
- A toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and other personal grooming items
- Medicines and a first aid kit

Although you have emergency supplies, don't try to "ride out" a hurricane at home if you are told to go to a safer place.

The Town of Surfside Beach will stay in touch with the weather people who track the hurricane. If the hurricane is coming very close to our town, the mayor may decide your family and neighbors should leave and go somewhere safer. This is called Evacuation.

It is very important to leave when an evacuation is ordered. You will hear about an evacuation on your local radio or television station. If you are told to evacuate, your family should leave right away because the heavy rain could flood the roads.

Plan for Evacuation

In South Carolina ONLY the Governor has the authority to order an evacuation. Once an evacuation order has been issued, it can be enforced as law.

When you evacuate, you may want to stay with friends or relatives who live in a safer place, away from the ocean. Or you may go to a public shelter. Public shelters are usually in buildings like schools or churches. People may stay for a few hours or overnight. Volunteers, like the Red Cross, set up these shelters with beds and hot food so people will have a safe place to stay if they must leave their homes in an emergency.

If your family goes to a public shelter, the most important items to take are a portable radio, blankets, an extra change of clothing, and some packaged quick-energy foods like raisins and granola bars. You may also want to take a book or small game.

Your family should plan what they would do if an evacuation is ordered. Some things to do ahead of time include:

- Keeping the gas tank as full as possible during hurricane season. In an evacuation, fuel may be hard to get.
- Arranging a ride with nearby neighbors or relatives if your family does not have a car.
- Planning in advance to stay with friends or relatives who live inland on higher ground if you need to evacuate.
- Learning the recommended evacuation route from your home to safer, higher ground. Local radio and television stations will tell you where to go during an evacuation, but you can learn the safest route ahead of time by calling your local emergency services office.

WEATHER REPORTS

The Weather Service tracks hurricanes and warns people when a hurricane is moving toward shore. They use two different terms to warn us: **HURRICANE WATCH** and **HURRICANE WARNING**.

A **HURRICANE WATCH** means a hurricane might hit our area. If a HURRICANE WATCH is issued for your area, keep listening to local radio or television stations for the latest weather information. There are other things you can help your family do if you hear a HURRICANE WATCH:

- Be sure the car is fueled and ready to go, or call the person who agreed to give you a ride.
- Put emergency supplies in the car or near the front door if you are riding with someone else.
- Put away all those things on your lawn or patio which could be picked up and carried by the wind. Lawn chairs, garbage cans, garden tools, toys, signs, and other harmless items can become dangerous in a hurricane wind.
- Put important papers like birth and marriage certificates, wills, and insurance papers in a waterproof container with your food supply or in a safe deposit box at the bank.

- A **HURRICANE WARNING** is issued when a hurricane is expected to hit the town within 24 hours.

EVACUATION

- When a **HURRICANE WARNING** is issued for your area, you and your neighbors may be asked to evacuate. Local radio and television stations will tell you where to go and the best roads to take. Your family should leave immediately.
- If your family doesn't have a car or a ride with someone else, you can get help.
- Your family should leave right away! Do not wait, especially in areas very near the ocean, because roads can flood quickly and keep you from leaving.
- Just before you leave your home nail boards over larger windows. Fill bathtubs and other clean containers with water in case water lines are damaged by the storm.
- If you live in a building with elevators, don't use them when you leave. The power could go off and leave you stranded.

DURING THE HURRICANE

- If you are unable to leave before the hurricane comes, stay inside your house.
- When you are in the house, stay away from windows and glass doors. Nail boards over windows, and keep curtains and blinds closed. This will protect you if the glass breaks from the wind.
- Do not be fooled by the "eye" of the hurricane. Hurricane winds swirl around in a circle, leaving a hole in the center. In this hole, the weather is very clear and calm. As the hurricane storm moves along, first one side of the storm passes over you, then the "eye," then the other side of the storm. When the "eye" is over you, it means the other side of the storm will be next.
- Keep listening to your radio or television for reports on the hurricane.

AFTER THE HURRICANE

- The Town of Surfside Beach EOC will tell you when it is safe to come back to your home, or to go outside.
- When you get home: Look for damage to your house before you go inside. Watch for loose or dangling electrical power lines and broken sewer, water, or gas lines. Call your local utility companies right away if you see any.
- Make sure all electrical outlets and appliances are dry and free of water before you use them.
- Use your emergency supply of water or boil tap water before drinking it. Do not drink water from the faucet until officially notified that it is safe.
- Check the food in your refrigerator. Without electricity, food in your refrigerator could spoil in a few hours. Don't eat it. Food in a freezer could thaw a little but would be safe to eat for several days. Food should not be refrozen once it begins to thaw.
- Watch for snakes, animals, and insects. They travel inland to higher ground to escape flood waters.
- By being ready with emergency supplies, and knowing what to do during a hurricane, you and your family and friends can be safer if a hurricane comes to your town. Take action now to be better prepared for hurricane season.