

A GULF COAST HURRICANE SCENARIO

It has been said the “Where preparations are being made there will be little difficulty, but where no preparation has been made, suffering and difficulties will come.”

Hurricane season in North America is June 1 to November 30 but it can be April through December. Gulf Coast hurricanes are historically the worst mid-August to mid-September. No matter what the forecast is, though, it only takes one hurricane or tropical storm for it to be a bad weather year.

WHAT do you do in April and May?

- Check and update 72-hour kits and important household information.
- Start purchasing extra supplies (food, water, batteries, repair materials, etc.) to last for 2 weeks or more.
- If you have a land line (not fiber optics or cable), get a wired phone.
- Determine alternate cooking methods (both indoor and outdoor) for use during power outages.
- Start saving empty plastic bottles and jugs to make ice in.
- Decide if you need to start using up the food in your freezer; or develop a plan to preserve or use up the food if the power is out for an extended period.
- Know evacuation routes and have an evacuation plan.
- Clear out drains and downspouts.
- Trim trees and bushes away from the house
- Check insurance.
- Apply for flood insurance, if needed or desired (there is a 30-day waiting period before it will take effect). For information see www.floodsmart.gov.
- If shutters do not protect windows, stock boards to cover glass.
- Determine an out-of-state emergency contact.

It's September 7. You turn on the TV and a tropical depression in the Gulf of Mexico has been upgraded to a tropical storm. That means the sustained winds are at least 39 mph. It's still too early for hit predictions but the entire Texas and Louisiana Coasts are put under tropical advisory.

WHAT do you do? (DO NOT wait! But don't do more than you are willing to undo if it doesn't hit)

- Check supplies:
 - 72-hour kit
 - batteries for 2 weeks
 - extra water
 - masking tape, duct tape, heavy plastic sheeting
 - extra canned goods and other stored food
 - camera (for insurance purposes)
- Start making ice in saved plastic bottles and jugs.
- Keep a minimum of 1/3 tank of gas in your car.

The tropical storm is upgraded to a hurricane (74 mph) and is moving north to Louisiana; the upper Texas coast and Louisiana are under a Hurricane Watch (hurricane possible within 48 hours).

WHAT do you do?

- Put extra ice in the freezer and freeze more jugs of water.
- Be sure to have adequate diapers, formula, and prescription medication.
- Fill the gas tanks in your vehicles.
- Fill portable propane tanks.
- Secure or move boats, RV's, etc.
- Shock the swimming pool.
- Get extra cash.
- Watch and listen to weather updates.
- If evacuating, make plans and begin to prepare your home (Check mobile home tie-downs, and start packing small valuables and important papers.)

WHO should evacuate? "Run from the water; hide from the wind."

- if you live in a storm surge area (90% of hurricane deaths are by water)
- if you live in a mobile home, poorly constructed home, or high-rise building
- if you live near a river or in a 100-year flood plain

WHEN should you leave?

- whenever you want UNTIL evacuation orders are issued and then
- when authorities tell you to

Those who desire to leave for the “convenience factor” should leave AFTER the storm is over if not well before official evacuation orders (about 3 days). Remember, evacuation is not without risk or expense.

If you live in a safe structure and don't fit into the above three categories, you should plan to stay. Wind is the least likely cause of death in a hurricane. Most homes can withstand 130 mph winds.

The hurricane changes direction and increases in strength rapidly. It is a category 3 hurricane (sustained winds of 111 to 129 mph). Houston and Galveston are under a Hurricane Warning (within 36 hours winds will be 74 mph or higher and coastal waters and waves will be high).

WHAT do you do?

- Secure outside objects.
- Remove spa and pool covers.
- Put pool furniture in the pool.
- Turn off electricity to the swimming pool.
- Bring pets inside.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Turn the refrigerator and freezer to the coldest setting.
- Unplug small appliances.
- Get coolers ready for often used food items.
- Consolidate supplies; have tools, etc. easily available.
- Fill bathtubs with water for flushing toilets.
- Close drapes and blinds.
- Wedge sliding glass doors to prevent their lifting from their tracks.
- In strong storms consider boarding up windows; tape doesn't prevent breakage and could cause larger more dangerous pieces of glass to fly into the room.
- Watch and listen to weather updates.
- Stay home if it is secure; stay indoors on the downwind side; stay on the first floor in a small interior room, closet, or hallway.
- If evacuating, let someone know; leave early in daylight; don't go any further than necessary; shut off utilities only if told to do so by authorities (Gas companies may request that you leave the gas on to maintain proper pressure in the pipelines and to prevent water from entering the lines if flooding takes place. To turn off natural gas service, turn gas off at each appliance.); take small valuables, important papers, emergency contact information, and proof of residency; take 72-hr kits, bedding, lawn chairs, baby needs, medications, and

something to keep busy (games, books, needlework, etc.); take pets and their emergency kits to a predetermined shelter; lock up the house.

DURING the hurricane:

- Stay inside, even if the eye moves over you, except to make emergency repairs.
- Be aware that tornadoes can be near the eye of the storm as well as in thunderstorms embedded in rain bands far from the storm center.
- Do not use phones except in an emergency.
- Keep away from windows and doors.

The storm is over, but there has been major damage.

NOW WHAT do you do?

- Stay off the streets.
- Stay out of standing water and away from flowing water.
- Avoid loose or dangling wires.
- Notify utility companies of damage (use cell phones).
- Prevent fires; water pressure may not be sufficient to extinguish them.
- Avoid open flames indoors.
- Do not use your water source during flooding unless it has been cleared for use.
- Use phones only in an emergency (if they work).
- Text instead of calling on cell phones.

A major side effect of tropical storms and hurricanes is flooding.

- Stay out of flood waters and flowing water.
- Be aware of animals, reptiles, and insects escaping flood waters.
- Water weighs 62.4 lbs/ft³ or 1 metric ton/yd³.
- Water flows downstream at 6 to 12 miles an hour.
- For each foot the water rises, 500 lbs. of lateral force is applied; cars can float in 18 inches of water.
- Be prepared for last minute evacuations; upstream rain can cause downstream flash flooding.

Please prepare!
We can lessen the trauma of any emergency
if we have taken the time to prepare for its eventuality.