



PART 2

PLAN, PREPARE, AND ACT

This part of the handbook covers the topic of preparing yourself and your family for natural hazards. In particular, it is important that your household has a stock of emergency supplies, an evacuation kit, and an evacuation plan. You should discuss and practice the plan with your family once a year, or whenever there is a major lifestyle change (for example, when a member of the family goes to a new school or is working in a different location).

For a community to be resilient (i.e., able to bounce back quickly from a hazard event), it is important that all individuals and organizations prepare. Get to know your neighbors. Contrary to popular belief, the most likely immediate assistance you will get after a hazard event that turns into a disaster is not

from the local, state, or federal government. It is likely to be from your neighbors or local community members. This is because the government may be overwhelmed in responding to life-threatening emergencies or maintaining critical infrastructure. Your community will be better able to cope with a disaster when you work with your neighbors and local government agencies as a team.³¹ To get more involved, join a local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). More information can be found in this FEMA resource: www.fema.gov/pdf/areyouready/areyouready_full.pdf.

DIGITAL TIP:
Download these phone apps now to see and utilize disaster advice:
fema.gov/mobile-app
redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps

PART 2.1

EMERGENCY SUPPLIES FOR THE HOME

Along with reading the information below, please see Appendix D (page 112) for a full list of disaster supplies.

The general rule when preparing for a hazard event is to be self-sustaining for a minimum of 72 hours.³² Depending on the severity and impact of the event, basic supplies from the government may be unavailable or inaccessible for several days thereafter. If you are sheltering in place or returning home while utilities are still disrupted, a week or two weeks' worth of supplies is advised. However, it is always advised to evacuate when told to do so.

Emergency supplies should be assembled as soon as possible; do not wait until an emergency to gather supplies. For food items, it is advised to purchase non-perishable products. A good rule of thumb is to check the expiration dates and batteries for electronics (including smoke alarms) when changing your clocks for Daylight Savings. See Appendix D for a complete emergency supply list. You can copy this document and use it as a checklist to update your kit every year!



FIGURE 2-1 - SOURCE: FEMA

PART 2.2

EVACUATION KIT (A.K.A. “GO BAG”)

An evacuation kit differs from a stock of emergency supplies because this kit should be taken with you if an evacuation is necessary. Be mindful that this kit is subject to the space available in a car, public transportation, or at an evacuation shelter. The components of the evacuation kit should be stored in one place so that they are ready to go at a moment’s notice. Be sure to keep your kit prepared all year round in case of late-season storms or other emergencies. Keep this kit in a designated place and make sure all family members know where the kit is kept. It is still recommended that you pack enough supplies to last at least 72 hours. The kit should include the following at a minimum:

PRO TIP:

Write a list of kit items on the side of empty totes as a reminder of what to gather quickly when evacuating.

- Map of your evacuation route
- Cash, since ATMs may not be working
- Key personal records – driver’s license, birth certificate, proof of residence, homeowner’s insurance, and health insurance, etc.
- Cell phone and charger
- List of emergency telephone numbers, in case cellphones are not working
- One gallon of potable water per person per day
- Supply of nonperishable foods
- Change of clothes, personal hygiene items, towels
- Prescription medications and list of any medical care directives
- First aid kit
- Flashlights, portable radio, batteries
- Pillows, blankets, sleeping bags, or air mattresses
- Gas tanks for refueling a car, if applicable
- Pet supplies and documentation

If you go to a shelter, keep in mind that there will be limited space, so bring only what is recommended unless you are instructed otherwise by your emergency management agencies. There is a fine line between bringing too many supplies that overload the limited shelter space of 10 square feet per person and not bringing enough. If you have pets or special medical needs, contact the shelter before you leave to find out if it can accommodate them (not all shelters allow pets) or if there is another shelter you should go to (pet-friendly or medical needs shelter). floridadisaster.org/planprepare/shelters/

DIGITAL TIP:
Buy a pre-made kit online at the start of hurricane season, or search for “emergency preparedness supplies” on Amazon.

PART 2.3

EVACUATION PLANNING

2.3.1 PREPARE YOUR FAMILY

An evacuation plan should be created and reviewed with your family every year. When forming an evacuation plan, here are some things to consider:

PRO TIP:

2020 Hurricane Evacuation Zones:
flash.org/pdf/2020_Hurricane_Evacuation_Zones.pdf



FIGURE 2-2 - SOURCE: iSTOCK

- The Florida Department of Transportation has hurricane information and evacuation routes on their website. Visit these web pages for assistance: floridadisaster.org/planprepare/disaster-preparedness-maps/
- If you may need assistance evacuating, check with your local government to see if any assisted evacuation programs or resources exist (e.g., New Orleans City-Assisted Evacuation Plan).
- Evacuation plans should consider all members of a household, especially those with special health needs. Practice evacuation procedures annually and when major changes occur, like moving.
- Make sure to know what your company's or organizational evacuation plan consists of.
- Parents should learn their children's school evacuation plans and confirm where students will be held and for how long in the event of a disaster. Parents should not drive to school to pick up their children unless directed to do so by school officials.
- If needed, include special needs family members or those with limited mobility. If people with special health needs are with a care-provider, confirm that the care-provider has an evacuation plan. Also, you can contact your local/state government to see if a Special Needs Registry has a list of special needs shelters. snr.floridadisaster.org/Signin?ReturnUrl=%2f

DIGITAL TIP:

While creating your evacuation plan, save the addresses as favorites in your phone's map app.

- Develop a plan for your pets at floridadisaster.org/planprepare/pet-plan/. Be advised that not all shelters take pets. Service animals, which assist people with disabilities, are the only animals allowed in Red Cross shelters. Check with the American Red Cross, county emergency management, and floridadisaster.org to determine if there are any pet-friendly shelter locations nearby. You may also want to identify pet-friendly hotels along your evacuation route. Microchip pets at your veterinarian's office or local Humane Society well in advance of a storm event to aid in the quick identification and return of your pet in case you are separated during an emergency.

- Consider how family members and friends will communicate if they become separated. Create a list of telephone numbers and email addresses of everyone in the family and phone numbers of a few contacts outside of the family.
- Vehicles should be kept in good operating condition, and gas tanks should be full. Ensure all emergency kits are packed.
- Plan on going to a shelter? There are a limited number of hurricane shelters and spaces that offer protection from wind, rain, and coastal waters. Because there may be a shortage of shelters, there may be a possibility you cannot get in. Therefore, plan to use a shelter only as a last resort.

PREPAREDNESS TIP:

Print paper copies of your zones and maps to include in your home evacuation kit.

2.3.2 PREPARE YOUR PROPERTY

In addition to preparing a stock of emergency supplies, an evacuation kit, and an evacuation plan, there are preparations you and your family should make to secure your property before you evacuate.

- **Wedge sliding glass doors with a brace or broom handle** to prevent them from being lifted from their tracks or being ripped loose by wind vibrations.
- **Deploy window protections well in advance of the arrival of any winds** (Section 3.4).
- **Bring in any outdoor objects** such as patio furniture, hanging plants, trash cans, large planters, and barbecue grills.
- **Adjust refrigerator temperatures to the coldest settings** to reduce the potential for food spoiling if the power is temporarily lost. If power is lost during the event, try not to open the refrigerator unless necessary. Put several containers of water in the freezer — this will help keep items frozen or cold longer. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, any food above 40 degrees F for two hours or more should be discarded.

Without power, an unopened refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours, and a full freezer will keep food cold for about 48 hours (24 hours if half full).³³

- **Package valuables**, such as jewelry, titles, deeds, insurance papers, licenses, etc., for safekeeping in waterproof containers. Do not forget to protect your family photos. Large plastic zipper seal bags make for quick and secure storage of your irreplaceable family memories.
- **All digital information should be fully backed up**, preferably offsite, such as a cloud-based service. If you leave your home, it is wise to take your hard drive with you. If you have everything already backed up on an external drive, take that with you as well. Store any hard drives that remain in your home in a high, protected location.
- **Learn how to safely turn off your utilities** in advance (check with your utility provider) and ensure you have a shutoff wrench at your breaker box.
- **Shut off electricity** at the main switch near the meter, turn off gas to prevent leaks from occurring, and turn off water to prevent flooding from broken pipes.
- **Store chemicals, fertilizers, or other toxic materials** in a safe section or secure area off the premises. Propane tanks should not be stored near sources of heat.
- **Store boats securely or move them** to designated safe areas well in advance of hurricanes. Do not attempt to tow a trailer or boat in high winds.
- **Shut all interior doors.** Research has shown that if a door or window is breached, shutting interior doors helps to compartmentalize the wind pressures and can reduce the overall forces on your home.³⁴

PREPAREDNESS TIP:

FEMA needs to see your historical home and/or rental bills (e.g., utilities, phone) to provide you with assistance to pay those bills.

2.3.3 EMERGENCY ALERTS

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is the official source of natural hazard information and instructions. This information can originate from county, state, or federal agencies. The statewide network will be activated by the National Weather Service to announce weather-related watches or warnings.

If a public alarm sounds, turn on the radio. Some radios with the NOAA weather radio band turn on automatically when an emergency broadcast through the EAS is activated. The NOAA weather radio station broadcasts round-the-clock weather information. Many local radio stations voluntarily agree to participate in the EAS system (see the radio stations in Table 2-1). Apps are also available for download that will deliver weather alerts to your smartphone. Additional information may be issued on local or cable television networks and through local community websites or social media.

Florida Public Radio Network		
Ft. Myers	WGCU	90.1 FM
Ft. Pierce	WQCS	88.9 FM
Gainesville	WUFT	89.1 FM
Jacksonville	WJCT	89.9 FM
Orlando	WMFE	90.7 FM
Panama City	WFSW	89.1 FM
Panama City	WKGC	90.7 FM
Tallahassee	WFSU	88.9 FM
Tampa	WMNF	88.5 FM
Tampa	WUSF	89.7 FM
West Palm Beach	WXEL	90.7 FM

TABLE 2-1

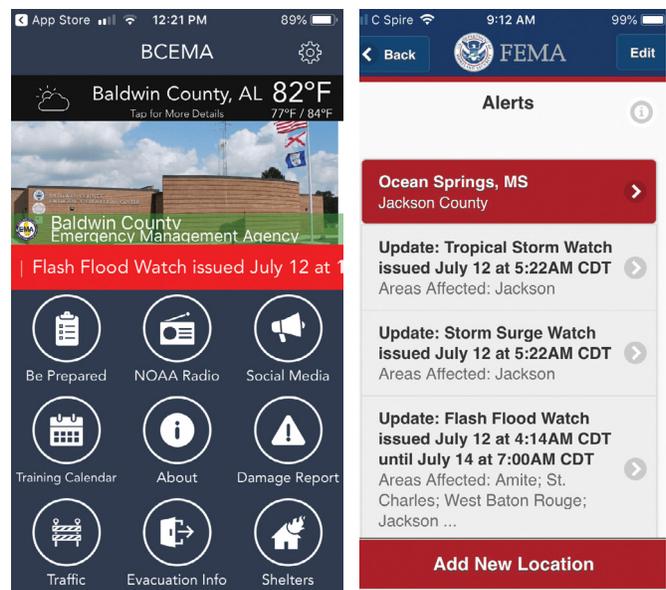


FIGURE 2-3 - SOURCE: MISSISSIPPI-ALABAMA SEA GRANT CONSORTIUM

When listening to alerts, note the difference between a hazard watch and a hazard warning. Definitions of watches, warnings, and hazards are provided on page 25 from NOAA (Table 2-2). Depending on the alert, there are different actions to take. Also, note that civil defense or emergency management agencies may issue a mandatory evacuation in the case of a hurricane warning. Familiarize yourself with these terms.³⁵

TABLE 2-2

FLOODING, TROPICAL STORM, AND HURRICANE ADVISORIES

Flood Watch	Issued when flash flooding or flooding is possible within the designated watch area. Homeowners should be prepared to move to higher ground and should listen to NOAA weather radio, local radio, or local television stations for information.
Flood Warning	Issued when flash flooding or flooding has been reported or is imminent. Take necessary precautions at once and avoid going through flooded areas as the force of the water may cause your vehicle to drift into the water. Turn around, don't drown. If advised to evacuate to higher ground, do so immediately.
Tropical Storm Watch	Issued when there is a good possibility of tropical storm conditions and associated damaging winds, surf, and flooding rains occurring anytime within 36 hours. Homeowners should prepare their homes and review plans for evacuation in case a tropical storm warning is issued.
Tropical Storm Warning	Issued when there is a high probability of tropical storm conditions (sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph) occurring anytime within 24 hours. Homeowners should complete all storm preparations and leave the threatened area if directed by local officials. A tropical storm warning may not always be preceded by a tropical storm watch.
Hurricane Watch	Issued when there is a good possibility of hurricane conditions and associated damaging winds, surf, and flooding rains occurring anytime within 36 hours. Homeowners should prepare their homes and review plans for evacuation in case a hurricane warning is issued.
Hurricane Warning	Issued when there is a high probability of hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or greater) occurring anytime within 24 hours. Homeowners should complete all storm preparations and leave the threatened area if directed by local officials. A hurricane warning may not always be preceded by a hurricane watch.
Extreme Wind Warning	Extreme sustained winds of a major hurricane (115 mph or greater), usually associated with the eyewall, are expected to begin within an hour. Take immediate shelter in the interior portion of a well-built structure.

UPDATED

Tropical Storm & Hurricane Preparedness



IBHS Last Minute Checklist

OUTSIDE SURROUNDINGS



- ✓ Secure any parts of a fence that appear weakened or loose.
- ✓ Trim trees and shrubbery away from structures and remove any weakened sections of trees that might easily break off and fall onto structures.
- ✓ Move lawn furniture, toys, potted plants, garden tools and other yard objects inside; anchor heavier yard objects deep into the ground.

WINDOWS AND DOORS



- NEW** ✓ Close all interior doors, in addition to all windows and exterior doors.
- ✓ If you have shutters, closely monitor local weather conditions and make sure you have enough time to deploy them before the storm is expected to hit your area.
- ✓ Check doors, windows, and walls for openings where water can get in; use silicone caulk to seal any cracks, gaps, or holes – especially around openings where cables and pipes enter the house.

WATER DAMAGE REDUCTION



- ✓ Place all appliances that are on the ground floor, including stoves, washers and dryers on masonry blocks or concrete.
- ✓ Move furniture and electronic devices off the floor, particularly in basements and first floor levels.
- ✓ Roll up area rugs, and get them off the floor to reduce the chances they will become wet and grow mold or mildew. This is particularly important if the property will be left unattended for an extended period of time and if long-term power outages are a possibility.
- ✓ Put fresh batteries in sump pumps.
- ✓ Shut off electrical service at the main breaker if the electrical system and outlets could possibly be under water.

[DisasterSafety.org](https://www.DisasterSafety.org)

FIGURE 2-4 - SOURCE: IBHS

PART 2.4

EVACUATION PROCEDURES

If an evacuation has been called, follow the order issued by officials. Emergency and rescue services may not be available during the storm, and other communications may be rendered inoperable. Get out of the danger area as soon as authorities indicate it is time to do so. Leave as early as possible to avoid traffic, preferably in daylight, and have your destination planned well in advance. However, evacuate only when it is your area's time — not before!

Stay alert, stay calm, and be informed. Tuning in to local radio and television stations is important. Listen to your local radio and television stations carefully as there may be additional or modified directions based on the best available information at that time.

You can also search for open shelters on an interactive map online on the Red Cross webpage, [redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter](https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter), or text "SHELTER" and your zip code to 43362 (FEMA's dedicated number). Evacuation shelters have a maximum space of 10 square feet of bare floor per individual. Bedding, food, water, and other essentials may or may not be provided, so your evacuation kit (see Section 2.2) should contain these important items.

2.4.1 EVACUATION FOR A HURRICANE

Do not be deceived into disregarding an evacuation order for a Category 1 or 2 hurricane. For example, Category 1 Hurricane Hermine in 2016 pushed water six feet higher than average high tide in Cedar Key. "Run from the water, hide from the wind" is a hurricane adage that has been used from Florida to Texas by emergency management teams for hurricane response. Despite the adage, you should always follow an evacuation order, especially if any of the following conditions apply:

- You live in a mobile home or temporary structure.
- You live in a high-rise building.
- You live on the coast, in a floodplain, near a river, or on a peninsula or barrier island.

- You live in a Special Flood Hazard Area (Zone A) or a high-velocity wave/storm surge zone (Zone V).
- You live in an older home with wood frame construction.
- You live in an area that has been directed to evacuate by local authorities.

Your local emergency management office or top elected official has the authority to order an evacuation. When you evacuate, locate a place that is far from flood or inundation zones and far from the projected track of the storm. Also, be sure to stay in a structure that is able to withstand strong winds and rain. To implement a large-scale, multi-jurisdictional evacuation, evacuation zones have been designated by the Florida Division of Emergency Management and are based on the severity of the storm.

2.4.2 EVACUATION FOR A FLOOD

The general rule for evacuating from a flood is to stay away from floodwaters and head to higher ground. In flooded areas, you may not be able to perceive the depth of the water, the condition of the ground under the water, or debris contained in the water. This is especially true at night when vision is limited. **Never attempt to cross through flooded roadways!** Roadbeds may be washed out. If caught in a home during a flood, go to the second floor or the roof, but do not go into the attic where ventilation is limited unless you have an ax or other means of escaping to the roof.

Basic Safety Tips

- **Turn Around, Don't Drown!®** - Do not drive through closed/flooded roads.
- **Avoid walking or driving through floodwater.** Just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away. Water may also contain dangerous debris, chemicals, or insect swarms.
- **Do not drive on bridges that are over fast-moving floodwater.** Floodwater can scour foundation material around the footings and make the bridge unstable.
- If there is a chance of flash flooding, **immediately move to higher ground.**

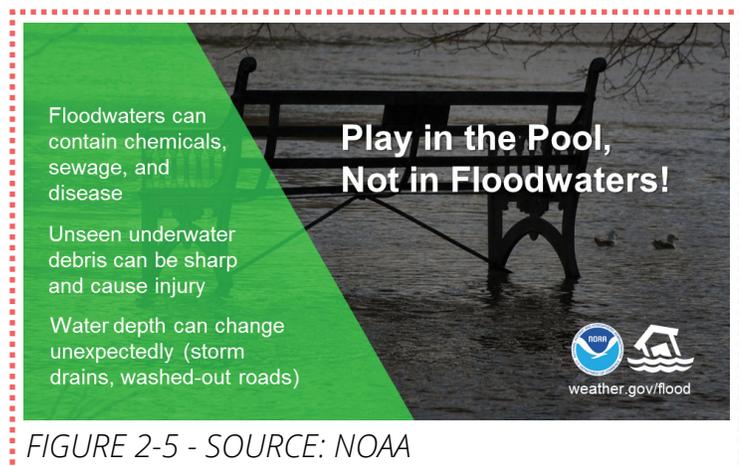


FIGURE 2-5 - SOURCE: NOAA

- If flood water rises around your car and the water is not moving, **abandon the car** and move to higher ground. However, **do not enter moving water**.
- **During heavy rainfall, avoid camping or parking along streams, rivers, and creeks.** These areas can flood quickly and with little warning. Obey all road closures and never drive across barriers; the majority of flooding deaths occur when vehicles attempt to drive through flooded roadways.³

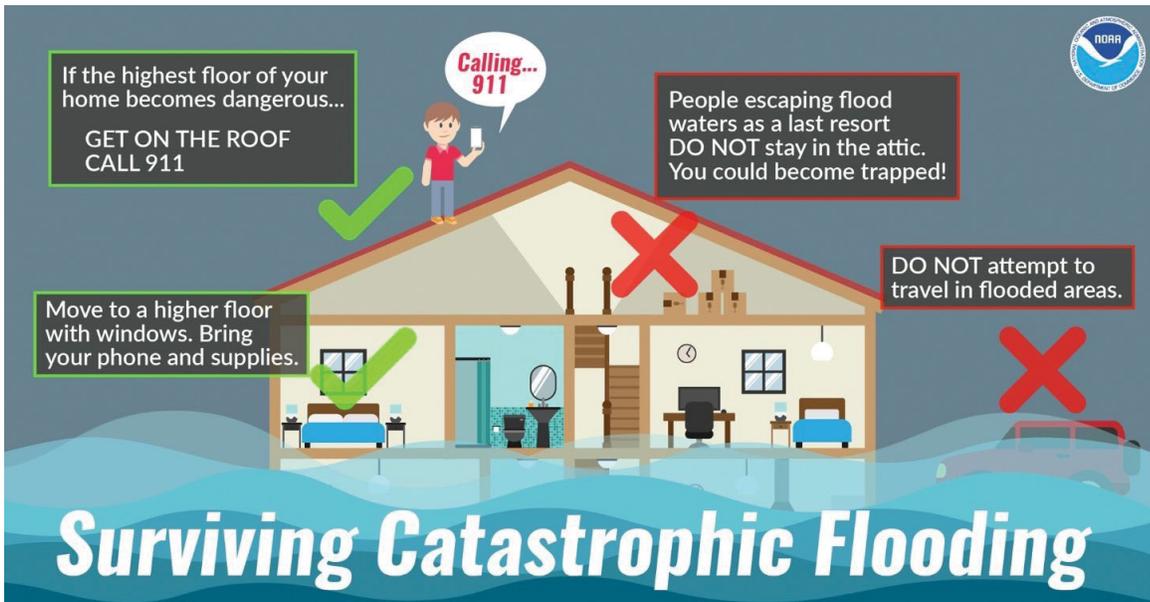


FIGURE 2-6 - SOURCE: NOAA

2.4.3 AFTER THE STORM

- Keep listening to radio, TV, or NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards.
- Wait until the area is declared safe before entering.
- Never use generators indoors or in other non-ventilated areas.
- Avoid weakened bridges and washed-out roads.
- Once home, inspect the outside of your property first. If you notice or suspect structural damage, have a building inspector determine that the home is safe before you enter.
- If you notice or suspect a gas leak, a downed power line, or electrical hazard, move to a safe location first and then call 9-1-1 followed by the utility company.

- If your home is safe to enter, check gas, water, and electrical appliances for damage.
- Use a flashlight to check for damage; do not use a candle for inspecting.
- Wear proper shoes (fully enclosed) to prevent cutting feet on sharp debris.
- Do not drink or prepare food with tap water until officials say it is safe.
- Discard all food that may have been contaminated by flood waters or spoiled due to a power outage.
- See Section 4.6 for information about the inspection and rebuilding process.
- See Section 5.4 for information about making a claim.

PART 2.5

EMERGENCY INFORMATION AND CONTACTS

The NOAA Extreme Weather Information Sheet (NEWIS) for each state, including Florida, is updated each year with current information, phone numbers, and websites relevant to weather emergencies. To download the latest version of this sheet, go to ngdc.noaa.gov/newis/. For general emergency information, contact your local Office of Emergency Management.

5 Actions to Reduce Water Damage
after a Flood

- 1 Disconnect Electronics**
As soon as it is safe to do so, disconnect all electronics/electrical equipment and move it to a dry location.
- 2 Address Standing Water**
Remove as much standing water as possible from inside the building.
- 3 Save Salvageable Materials**
Remove water-damaged materials immediately.
- 4 Dry Out Soaked Areas**
Ventilate with fans or use dehumidifiers to dry out the house.
- 5 Act Quickly**
Acting quickly can increase the chance of salvaging usable materials, reduce the amount of rust and mold that might develop, and limit the likelihood of structural problems.

ADDITIONAL FLOOD GUIDANCE IS AVAILABLE AT DISASTERSAFETY.ORG/FLOOD

Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety

FIGURE 2-7 - SOURCE: IBHS





Extreme Weather
INFORMATION SHEET



To download the latest updated version of this sheet: www.ngdc.noaa.gov/news/

STATE INFORMATION	
State Assistance Information Line (Only activated during emergencies).....	1-800-342-3557
Florida Division of Emergency Management (www.FloridaDisaster.org).....	850-815-4000
Ready.Gov.....	www.ready.gov/florida
Official State Website.....	www.myflorida.com
Florida Department of Transportation (www.flot.gov).....	1-886-374-FDOT (3368)
Florida Highway Patrol (www.flhstv.gov/florida-highway-patrol).....	(*FHP from any cell phone)
Florida Department of Health (www.floridahealth.gov).....	850-245-4444
Florida Office of Insurance Regulation (www.flor.com).....	850-413-3140
Florida Office of Tourism (www.visitflorida.com/en-us.html).....	1-888-735-2872
Florida Department of Law Enforcement (www.fdle.state.fl.us).....	850-410-7000
Governor's Office (www.flgov.com).....	850-717-9337
Florida Attorney General (www.myfloridalegal.com).....	850-414-3300
Florida Department of Environmental Protection (http://www.floridadep.gov).....	850-245-2118
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (http://www.myfwc.com).....	850-488-4676
Florida Department of Veterans Affairs (http://www.floridavets.org).....	1-844-693-5838
Florida Department of Elder Affairs (http://elderaffairs.state.fl.us).....	1-800-96ELDER (963-5337)
Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (www.fldacs.gov).....	1-800-435-7352
National Weather Service Forecast Office (Mobile, AL Office) (www.weather.gov/mob).....	251-633-6443
National Weather Service Forecast Office (Tallahassee, FL Office) (www.weather.gov/tae).....	850-942-8851
National Weather Service Southern Region.....	www.weather.gov/srh
StormSmart Coasts.....	http://gom.stormsmart.org
US Coast Guard, 7th District.....	www.atlanticea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/District-7
US Coast Guard, 8th District.....	www.atlanticea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/District-8
Gulf Power Company (www.gulfpower.com).....	1-800-487-6937
West Florida Electric Cooperative (www.westflorida.coop).....	1-800-342-7400
Duke Energy (www.progress-energy.com).....	Outage 1-800-228-8485
Escambia River Electric Cooperative (www.eres.com).....	1-800-235-3848
Choctawhatchee Electric Cooperative Inc. (CHECO) (www.checo.com).....	Outage 850-307-1211
Gulf Coast Electric Cooperative (www.gcec.com).....	Outage 1-800-568-3667 or 1-800-333-9392
Florida Public Utilities (http://fpuc.com).....	1-800-427-7712
FOR EMERGENCIES CALL 911 • FOR NON-EMERGENCIES CALL 211	
COUNTY INFORMATION	
BAY	JACKSON
Emergency Management..... 850-784-4000	Emergency Management..... 850-482-9678
https://baycountyfl.gov/166/Emergency-Management-Division	www.facebook.com/jacksoncountyfl
Sheriff (www.bayso.org)..... 850-747-4700	Sheriff (www.jcsheriff.com)..... 850-482-9624
CALHOUN	OKALOOSA
Emergency Management..... 850-674-8075	Emergency Management..... 850-651-7150
http://calhounflorida.org	www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/ps/emergency-management
Sheriff (www.calhounsheriff.com)..... 850-674-5049	Sheriff (www.sheriff-okaloosa.org) 850-689-5705 or 850-651-7400
ESCAMBIA	SANTA ROSA
Emergency Management..... 850-471-6400	Emergency Management..... 850-983-5360
www.myscambia.com/our-services/public-safety/beredy	www.santarosa.fl.gov/664/Emergency-Management
Sheriff (www.esCambia.com)..... 850-436-9620	Sheriff (santarosasheriff.org)..... 850-983-1100
GULF	WALTON
Emergency Management..... 850-229-9110	Emergency Management..... 850-892-8065
www.gulfcountyfl.gov/county-government/emergency-management	www.co.walton.fl.us/1063/Emergency-Management
Sheriff (www.gulfsheriff.com)..... 850-227-1115	Sheriff (http://waltonso.org)..... 850-892-8111
HOLMES	WASHINGTON
Emergency Management..... 850-547-1112	Emergency Management..... 850-638-6325
https://holmescountyem.org	www.washingtonfl.com/departments/ems/about
Sheriff (http://holmescoheriff.org/index.html)..... 850-547-3681	Sheriff (www.wcso.us)..... 850-638-6111

PART 2.6

ELECTRICAL AND POWER ISSUES

By following key safety precautions when dealing with electricity during and after disasters, you can help prevent death, injuries, and property damage. Take care when stepping into a flooded area, and be aware that submerged outlets or electrical cords may energize the water, potentially creating a lethal trap.

In case of an emergency, the power to your house should be turned off through the main breaker switch, circuit breaker panel, or fuse box. In addition, all homes should be equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). GFCIs are inexpensive electrical outlets that, if installed to existing wiring, are designed to protect people from severe or fatal electric shocks. GFCIs could prevent over two-thirds of electrocutions.³⁷ Because a GFCI detects ground faults, it can also prevent some electrical fires and reduce the severity of others by interrupting the flow of electric current. GFCIs are commonly found in kitchens, bathrooms, laundry rooms, or other places where water and electricity are close together. If you do not have them, consider having them installed by a licensed electrician.

2.6.1 WET ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

Do not use electrical appliances that have been wet. Water can damage the motors in electrical appliances, such as furnaces, freezers, refrigerators, washing machines, and dryers. For more information, the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) has produced a brochure, *Guidelines for Handling Water Damaged Electrical Equipment*, to provide advice on the safe handling of electrical equipment that has been exposed to water for use by suppliers, installers, inspectors, and users of electrical products. It outlines which items will require complete replacement and which can be reconditioned by a trained professional. The NEMA brochure can be downloaded free of charge at www.nema.org/Products/Documents/guidelines-handling-water-damaged-elect-equip.pdf.

2.6.2 DOWNED POWER LINES

Downed power lines can still carry an electric current strong enough to cause severe injury or possibly death. These tips can help you avoid injury:³⁸

- Don't touch any downed powerlines or anything in contact with them.
- Move away from the line by shuffling away with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This will lower your risk for a strong electric shock. Do not touch a person directly or indirectly in contact with a power line. You could become the next victim. Call 9-1-1.
- Do not attempt to use another object such as a broom or stick to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line. Even nonconductive materials like wood or cloth, if slightly wet, can conduct electricity and electrocute you.
- Be careful not to put your feet near water where a downed power line is located.
- If you are in your car and it is in contact with the downed line, stay in your car. Tell others to stay away from your vehicle.
- If you must leave your car because it is on fire, jump out of the vehicle with both feet together and avoid contact with the car and the ground at the same time. This way you avoid being the path of electricity from the car to the earth.
- **Do not drive over downed lines!**



FIGURE 2-8 - SOURCE: FEMA

2.6.3 ALTERNATE POWER SOURCES



SOURCE: Energy Star

Energy efficient equipment will be especially useful during an emergency when you may be on alternative forms of power with limited supply. For example, a regular 100-watt lamp running off an emergency power station (essentially built around a car battery) may run for two hours. That same emergency station can run a fuel-efficient 23-watt compact fluorescent light for about 8-9 hours with the same light output. As another example, a refrigerator with the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency's (EPA) Energy Star label can run on a fuel-efficient generator for 16 hours on one gallon of gas. Since most refrigerators do not need to run continuously, it may be possible to run the efficient refrigerator on one gallon of gas for one or two days.

Making your house as energy efficient as possible as you replace equipment and appliances at the end of their normal life will save you money during daily life and make life easier during a disaster. For example, if the lights, television, or refrigerator need replacing, consider products with the EPA Energy Star label. These products may cost slightly more, but over their lifetime, the energy savings will far outweigh the initial small cost increase.

2.6.4 GENERATORS

Some households may require uninterrupted power because of the critical needs of some family members. For example, family members that are elderly, disabled, or sick may require a respirator, dialysis machine, or other medical equipment. Some medicine such as insulin, which is stored over a month, may need to be refrigerated. For many families, the most important major power requirement is to run a refrigerator or freezer. If your family cannot get by without the refrigerator, or there are other critical power needs for medical or other purposes, then you may want to consider a portable generator.



SOURCE: Deposit Photos

While portable electric generators can provide a good source of power, if improperly installed or operated, they can become deadly. Do not connect generators directly to household wiring. Power from generators can backfeed along power lines and electrocute anyone coming in contact with them, including utility workers making powerline repairs. A qualified, licensed electrician can install your generator directly to your home's breaker box and ensure that it meets local electrical codes.

Most importantly, **never run a generator indoors, in your garage, or near an open window** because of the possibility of carbon monoxide gas accumulation, which cannot be detected by smell. Good ventilation is required. Operate your generator outside away from your home.

Other generator-related tips include:

- Check to ensure you have enough fuel for your generator as part of your pre-storm preparations.
- Keep the generator dry and on firm ground.
- Make sure extension cords used with generators are rated for the load, are free of cuts or worn insulation, and have three-pronged plugs.
- Do not overload the generator. Only run essential appliances at the time you need them. Alternate the electrical supply to appliances if necessary.

In general, when running your refrigerator with a generator, keep the refrigerator and freezer at the coldest setting. Refrigerators may only need to run a few hours a day to preserve food. You should aim to maintain 40 degrees in the refrigerator compartment and 0 degrees in the freezer. Open the refrigerator door as little as possible.

2.6.5 POWER STATIONS

Power stations are found in many hardware stores and may have a radio, flashlight, air compressor, battery jump starter, AC outlet, or DC outlet built around a modified car battery. These units can come in handy during a power outage since they fulfill part of your stock of emergency supplies and provide limited emergency power.

2.6.6 PORTABLE CHARGERS

Several models of small, portable chargers are available that can be used to charge electronic devices like smartphones, tablets, or laptop computers. It should be noted

that during or after an emergency there might be other reasons, despite being charged, that these types of devices do not have a cellular or data/Wi-Fi signal that are beyond your control, such as heavy traffic or a disrupted internet connection. Solar chargers have added the benefit of the ability to recharge once depleted even if power has not yet been restored.



2.6.7 BATTERY CHARGERS

Your car battery can be an important source of DC and AC power with an inverter. To keep the car battery charged, you should consider a battery charger as part of your emergency supplies. The charger only works when there is household power or backup power through a generator, but it can recharge your car battery if it is needed. New units are small and portable and provide a quick charge to a dead battery in only a few minutes and a total charge in a few hours.

2.6.8 INVERTERS

Inverters take the 12-volt DC power from your car battery and convert it to 115-volt AC power that can run small tools and appliances. This can be very important if you need to use power tools in an emergency, and the power is out. The inverter will drain your car battery, so look for inverters that have a low battery shutdown feature to prevent total battery drain. **You should not run an inverter with the car running unless the manufacturer provides specific instructions with safety guidelines.**

PART 2.7

MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

Resilience doesn't just apply to building methods. It also applies to your personal resilience. After a disaster, the main focus of disaster victims may not be their mental and physical health. However, dealing with what is left after a hurricane, tornado, or other events can be extremely hard on anyone emotionally, physically, and mentally. The following suggestions will help you be prepared before an event so you can reduce the strain of a disaster. The less you have to worry about during recovery, the easier it will be to sustain positive mental and physical health.

Physically, you should make sure before and after a disaster that you have everything you and your family need to stay healthy. Necessary over-the-counter and prescription medicines, medical devices, and other health-related items should be part of your disaster kit. Additionally, water and food may be contaminated after a disaster, so be sure to keep yourself updated on where there is known contamination. Staying healthy will help minimize stress during and after a disaster.

Emotionally and mentally, condition yourself to respond properly to a disaster by practicing your disaster plans, knowing where your disaster kits are, what they consist of, and collecting everything you could need after a disaster. This can help you feel more secure during and after a disaster happens. This is one of the best ways to reduce pre-disaster stress and help minimize post-disaster stress.

If you are hit by a disaster, there are many common reactions that people experience. These can really take a toll on you and your family if you are not prepared. Reactions can occur immediately following an event as well as weeks and months after. Some of these reactions include:³⁹

- Disbelief and shock
- Fear and anxiety about the future
- Disorientation, difficulty making decisions or concentrating
- Apathy and emotional numbing
- Nightmares and recurring thoughts about the event
- Irritability and anger
- Sadness and depression
- Feeling powerless
- Changes in eating patterns, loss of appetite, or overeating

- Crying for “no apparent reason”
- Headaches, back pains, and stomach problems
- Difficulty sleeping or falling asleep
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs

These reactions and feelings can be hurtful to your recovery process, but there are ways to successfully cope with them after a disaster. You can minimize the impact of these feelings and reactions by doing things like: ⁴⁰

- **Talking about it.** By talking with others about the event, you can relieve stress and realize that others share your feelings.
- **Spending time with friends and family.** If your family lives outside the area, stay in touch by phone. If you have any children, encourage them to share their concerns and feelings about the disaster with you.
- **Taking care of yourself.** Get plenty of rest and exercise, and eat properly. If you smoke or drink coffee, try to limit your intake, since nicotine and caffeine can also add to your stress.
- **Limiting exposure to images of the disaster.** Watching or reading news about the event over and over again will only increase your stress.
- **Finding time for activities you enjoy.** Healthy activities can help take your mind off the disaster and keep the stress in check.
- **Taking one thing at a time.** For people under stress, an ordinary workload can sometimes seem unbearable. Pick one urgent task and work on it. Once you accomplish that task, choose the next one. “Checking off” tasks will give you a sense of accomplishment and make things feel less overwhelming.
- **Doing something positive.** Give blood, prepare “care packages” for people who have lost relatives or their homes or jobs, or volunteer in a rebuilding effort. Helping other people can give you a sense of purpose in a situation that feels ‘out of control.’
- **Avoiding drugs and excessive drinking.** Drugs and alcohol may feel helpful in the short term but may actually cause more problems on your road to recovery.
- **Asking for help when you need it.** There are things after a disaster that are out of your control. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness.

DIGITAL TIP:

If you need help coping with a disaster, call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Disaster

Distress Hotline:

1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

PART 2.8

GUIDANCE FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA

To be informed before, during, and after a disaster, social media can be a valuable tool. In the recent past, Twitter and Facebook became communication tools after Hurricane Harvey and other disasters. You should follow accounts like:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- State Emergency Management Departments
- Local police, sheriff, fire, and other first responder organizations
- Local utilities
- Local and national news organizations
- NOAA National Hurricane Center
- Local National Weather Service office
- Organizations involved in disasters preparedness and response
- Florida 511 (Up-to-the-minute real traffic conditions for state of Florida)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	@fema @Readygov
State Emergency Management Departments	@FLSERT
NOAA National Hurricane Center	@NHC_Atlantic
Organizations involved in disasters preparedness and response	@redcross
Florida National Guard	@FLGuard
Florida Public Radio Emergency Network	@FloridaStorms

You can also make sure your family members know how to use social media to their advantage during and after a disaster. Teach them how to search for specific organizations that may be useful for information. Also, teach them how to use Facebook's Safety Check to mark themselves safe after a disaster. Make sure you are using the preferred social channels to contact emergency services. Remember, some organizations may prefer you to call them for help rather than tweet at them.