

Disaster Readiness: Hurricanes

Hurricane Watch vs. Warning

A **watch** is issued when hurricane conditions **are possible** within 36 to 48 hours. A **warning** is issued when hurricane conditions **are expected** within 24 to 36 hours.

Being Prepared, what to do when a hurricane is expected.

Clearly, you cannot prevent a hurricane from striking your facility if it is in the storm's path. You can, however, do quite a bit to curtail the damage the hurricane causes.

- Secure your property. Close all interior doors—secure and brace external doors. Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection for windows.
- A second option is to board up windows with 5/8" plywood. Please note that tape does not prevent windows from breaking. It just helps to hold together the flying shattered glass pieces if the window does break.
- When installing shutters, consider a quick-exit plan in case you need to evacuate for a fire, etc. You don't want to have to fight your way OUT of a completely shuttered building where all doors and windows are blocked.
- Before you buy any protective system, make sure it will be easy for you to install quickly. If you already have shutters, make sure they are working before the first storm of the season. Know where everything is so you can quickly get to it.
- Install straps or additional clips to securely fasten your roof to the frame structure to reduce roof damage.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around your building are well-trimmed. Make trees more wind resistant by removing diseased and damaged limbs, then strategically removing branches so that wind can blow through.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Stay indoors! Go to the safe areas inside your facilities: interior rooms without windows, closets and basements. Lie on the floor under a table or another sturdy object.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed. Do not be fooled if there is a lull; it could be the eye of the storm. Winds will pick up again.
- Prepare a personal hurricane survival kit for each person who is regularly in the church, in case you and your staff must wait out the storm. Each kit should contain:
 - Enough non-perishable food and bottled water for three days. Fill large containers with water as well.
 - Important papers (insurance, identification, financial)
 - Flashlights and batteries
 - NOAA Weather Radio
 - First-aid kit and toiletries
- Everyone should know where the water, gas and electric shutoffs are to turn them off before a hurricane.
- Bring in lawn furniture, outdoor decorations or ornaments, trash cans, hanging plants, and anything else that can be picked up by the wind.
- Fill your gas tank.
- Have cash available.
- Avoid using the phone, except for serious emergencies.

So you have done all of that, but you want to know if you should evacuate, and if so, what else to do. You should evacuate under the following conditions:

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- If you are directed by local authorities to evacuate, do so. Be sure to follow their instructions.
- If you feel you are in danger.
- If you are on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river, or on an inland waterway evacuate.
- Have maps and an evacuation route planned.
- Let others know that you are leaving and where you are going.
- Take your personal hurricane survival kit with you.

Now the hurricane is over, there's still work to be done. Once local authorities have authorized you to return, or have given the all clear, here's a list of things to think about:

- If your facility has suffered damage, report the loss to the Insurance Board (if we are your insurance provider) by calling 800.437.8830 and selecting option 4.
- Before entering the building, check for structural damage.
- DO NOT go in if it looks unsafe or if there is a chance of falling debris.
- Once inside, make a thorough inspection for damage and potential hazards.
- While you are inspecting the building, use battery-powered flashlights instead of matches, candles, lighters or other open flames as gas may be trapped inside.
- If you smell gas, leave immediately and call the gas company. You should have already turned off the electricity at the main circuit panel. If you have not and you smell gas, do so immediately. Keep the power off until an electrician has inspected your system.
- Do not start the heating, cooling or boiler systems until the systems have been inspected.
- Check for sewage and waterline damage. If you suspect damage, avoid using toilets and faucets. Turn off water at the meter and call a plumber.
- Make temporary repairs to protect the property from further damage by covering holes in the roof, walls or windows with tarps, boards or plastic sheeting. Keep receipts!
- Contact utility companies and a reputable contractor to secure the building.
- Require a certificate of insurance from all contractors coming on site.
- Take photographs of the damage to help document your claim.
- Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves and other protection during cleanup.
- Clean walls and hard-surfaced floors with soap and water. Disinfect with one cup bleach to five gallons of water.
- Remove and discard materials that cannot be disinfected such as wall coverings and drywall.
- Throw away any food items, including canned goods, that have come into contact with floodwaters.
- Until local authorities declare the water supply to be safe, do not drink tap water or use it in food preparation unless it is boiled first.

Additional resources: *National Weather Service*
www.nws.noaa.gov

*United States Department
of Health & Human Services*
www.hhs.gov/disasters

Homeland Security Readiness
www.ready.com

FEMA Hurricane Information
www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane

National Hurricane Center
www.nhc.noaa.gov

To search for your state's information: www.ready.gov/america/local/index