

SURVIVING HURRICANES

What to do before and after a storm hits

Here are some tips to help you get through a hurricane or storm.

It is important to know the difference between a hurricane warning and hurricane watch. A hurricane watch is issued when there is a threat of hurricane conditions within 24-36 hours. A hurricane warning is issued when hurricane conditions are expected within 24 hours. Hurricane conditions are winds greater than 74 mph or high water.

Short-term watches and warnings may also be issued. These provide detailed information on specific hurricane threats, such as floods, high winds and tornadoes.

Before a storm strikes:

Plan a flood-free evacuation route. Shelters fill quickly. If possible, go to a friend's or relative's home which is far inland. Discuss this with your family so everyone will know where to go.

Be sure to plan more than one route and expect it will take longer than normal.

Have emergency supplies on hand and make arrangements for pets.

Take precautions to protect your property. Trim back dead wood from trees.

During a hurricane watch be sure to:

1. Listen to your radio.
2. Fuel your car.
3. Check emergency supplies.
4. Remove all objects from lawn such as toys, furniture and tools.
5. Put up storm shutters.
7. Review evacuation plans.
6. Secure garage and entry doors.
9. Place valuables and important papers in a secure box for removal with you.
8. Secure trailers and boats.

During a hurricane warning:

1. Listen carefully to radio or television for official instructions.

If you're staying at home and not ordered to evacuate:

2. Stay inside and away from windows, skylights and doors.
3. Store drinking water in clean bath tubs, jugs, bottles and containers.
4. Keep flashlights and battery operated lanterns handy.
5. If electricity is lost, turn off major appliances to reduce power surges later.

If you are ordered to evacuate:

6. Leave as soon as possible.
7. If instructed by officials, turn off gas, electric and water service at the main shut-off.
8. If time permits, elevate furniture and electronics to the highest floor of the home.
9. Call an out-of-area relative or friend and let them know where you're going.
10. Lock your home and leave promptly.

After the Storm:

- Return home only when advised by local authorities that it's safe.
- Stay tuned to local radio stations for important instructions.
- Drive only when necessary. Sight-seeing will not be tolerated in damaged areas.
- Enter your home or block with caution.
- Open windows and doors to ventilate and dry your home.
- Do not restore utilities until it is deemed safe by fire or utility crews.
- If you smell gas, leave house immediately and contact the fire dept.

In a major hurricane, it may take several weeks to restore services and open roads. It may be months to remove all debris from your neighborhood.

- Be patient and keep in mind the more prepared you are the less inconvenienced you will be.
- Be sure to replenish your emergency supplies kit when things return to normal.

A counselor is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To schedule an appointment, or for inquiries, our office is open between 7:30 am and 6:30 pm PST.

