

WESTPARK PRESERVE HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS PACKET

Hurricanes are severe tropical storms that form in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico and in the eastern Pacific Ocean. People who live in hurricane prone communities should know their vulnerability, and what actions should be taken to reduce the effects of these devastating storms. The information on this page can be used to save lives at work, home, while on the road, or on the water.

One of the most dramatic, damaging, and potentially deadly events that occur in this country are hurricanes. Hurricanes are products of the tropical ocean and atmosphere. Powered by heat from the sea, they are steered erratically by the easterly trade winds and the temperate westerly winds, as well as by their own energy. As they move ashore, they bring with them a storm surge of ocean water along the coastline, high winds, tornadoes, torrential rains, and flooding.

Each year on average, ten tropical storms develop over the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, or Gulf of Mexico. About six of these typically strengthen enough to become hurricanes. Many of these remain over the ocean with little or no impact on the continental United States. However, about five hurricanes strike the United States coastline every three years. Of these five, two will be major hurricanes measuring a category 3 or higher (defined as having winds above 111 miles per hour) on the [Saffir-Simpson Scale](#). These storms can end up costing our nation millions, if not billions, of dollars in [damages](#).

During a hurricane, homes, businesses, public buildings, and infrastructure may be damaged or destroyed by many different storm hazards. Debris can break windows and doors, allowing [high winds](#) and rain inside the home. In extreme storms (such as Hurricanes Hugo, Andrew and Katrina), the force of the wind alone can cause tremendous devastation, as trees and power lines topple and weak elements of homes and buildings fail. Roads and bridges can be washed away and homes saturated by [flooding](#). Destructive [tornadoes](#) can also be present well away from the storms center during landfall. Yet, [storm surge](#) alone poses the highest threat to life and destruction in many coastal areas throughout the United States and territories. And these threats are not limited to the coastline -- they can extend hundreds of miles inland, under the right conditions.

The information provided in this packet is to ensure the residents of Westpark Preserve are better prepared in the case of a common natural disaster. If you have any further questions, your neighborhood Disaster Relief Chairperson, Daniel Brown, can be reached at 813-943-6082 or daniel.steven.brown@us.army.mil.

Links to Storm Information

National Hurricane Center <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>

National Weather Service <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>

Storm Prediction Center <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/>

Steps to Ensure You are Ready

Step 1: Build A Kit / "To-Go Bag"

Get an Emergency Supply Kit, which includes items like non-perishable food, water, a battery-powered or hand-crank radio, extra flashlights and batteries. You may want to prepare a portable kit and keep it in your car in case you are told to evacuate.

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger

Additional Items to Consider Adding to an Emergency Supply Kit:

- Prescription medications and glasses
- Infant formula and diapers
- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Cash or traveler's checks and change
- Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container.
- Emergency reference material such as a first aid book or information from www.ready.gov.
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Complete change of clothing including a long sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider additional clothing if you live in a cold-weather climate.
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
- Fire Extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

Step 2: Make a Plan

Prepare your family

Make a Family Emergency Plan. Your family may not be together when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and what you will do in case of an emergency. You should also consider:

- Evacuation plans
- Family communications
- Utility shut-off and safety
- Safety skills

Family Emergency Plan

- Identify an **out-of town contact**. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an **out-of-town contact** may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- Be sure every member of your family **knows the phone number** and has a cell phone, **coins**, or a **prepaid phone card** to call the emergency contact. If you have a cell phone, program that person(s) as "ICE" (In Case of Emergency) in your phone. If you are in an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know. Make sure to tell your family and friends that you've listed them as emergency contacts.
- Teach family members how to use text messaging (also known as SMS or Short Message Service). Text messages can often get around network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.
- Subscribe to **alert services**. Many communities now have systems that will send instant text alerts or e-mails to let you know about bad weather, road closings, local emergencies, etc.

Planning to Stay or Go

Depending on your circumstances and the nature of the emergency, the first important decision is whether you stay where you are or evacuate. You should understand and plan for both possibilities. Use common sense and available information, including what you are learning here, to determine if there is an immediate danger. In any emergency, local authorities may or may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for information or official instruction as it becomes available.

Staying Put

Whether you are at home, work or elsewhere, there may be situations when it's simply best to stay where you are and avoid any uncertainty outside.

There are other circumstances when staying put and creating a barrier between yourself and potentially contaminated air outside, a process known as "sealing the room," is a matter of survival. Use available information to assess the situation. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated, you may want to take this kind of action.

To "Shelter in Place and Seal the Room"

- Bring your family and pets **inside**.
- **Lock** doors, **close** windows, air vents and fireplace dampers.
- **Turn off** fans, air conditioning and forced air heating systems.
- **Take your emergency supply kit** unless you have reason to believe it has been contaminated.
- **Go into an interior room** with few windows, if possible.
- **Seal** all windows, doors and air vents with plastic sheeting and duct tape. Consider measuring and cutting the sheeting in advance to save time.
- Be prepared to **improvise** and use what you have on hand to **seal gaps** so that you create a barrier between yourself and any contamination.
- Local authorities may not immediately be able to provide information on what is happening and what you should do. However, you should **watch TV, listen to the radio or check the Internet often for official news** and instructions as they become available.

Emergency Information

Hurricanes and severe floods are the types of disasters that are most likely to occur in the Westpark Preserve area. The best route to receive emergency information is to broadcast via **emergency radio** and **TV broadcasts**.

Plan to Protect Property

Hurricanes cause heavy rains that can cause extensive flood damage in coastal and inland areas. Everyone is at risk and should consider flood insurance protection. **Flood insurance is the only way to financially protect your property or business from flood damage.** Our neighborhood is just within the last coastal flood zone. While chances of a flood are small, flood insurance would be a prudent measure. Ed. Note

In addition to insurance, you can also:

- Plan to bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans and anything else that is not tied down.
- Keep all trees and shrubs well trimmed so they are more wind resistant.
- Secure your home by securing outdoor objects or bringing them inside.
- Turn off utilities as instructed. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Install a generator for emergencies
- Reinforce your garage doors; if wind enters a garage, it can cause dangerous and expensive structural damage.
- Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water.
- Find out how to keep food safe during and after an emergency by visiting www.FoodSafety.gov.

Step 3: Be Informed

Hurricane hazards come in many forms: lightning, tornadoes, flooding, storm surge, high winds, even landslides or mudslides can be triggered in mountainous regions. Look carefully at the safety actions associated with each type of hurricane hazard and prepare your family disaster plan accordingly. But remember this is only a guide. The first and most important thing anyone should do when facing a hurricane threat is to use common sense.

Familiarize yourself with the terms that are used to identify a hurricane.

- A **hurricane watch** means a hurricane is possible in your area. Be prepared to evacuate. Monitor local radio and television news outlets or listen to NOAA Weather Radio for the latest developments.
- A **hurricane warning** is when a hurricane is expected in your area. If local authorities advise you to evacuate, leave immediately.

Hurricanes are classified into **five categories** based on their wind speed, central pressure, and damage potential. Category Three and higher hurricanes are considered major hurricanes, though Categories One and Two are still extremely dangerous and warrant your full attention.

Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale		
Scale Number (Category)	Sustained Winds (MPH)	Damage
1	74-95	Very dangerous winds will produce some damage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minor damage to exterior of homes• Toppled tree branches, uprooting of smaller trees• Extensive damage to power lines, power outages
2	96-110	Extremely dangerous winds will cause extensive damage <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Major damage to exterior of homes• Uprooting of small trees and many roads blocked• Guaranteed power outages for long periods of time – days to weeks
3	111-130	Devastating damage will occur <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extensive damage to exterior of homes

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many trees uprooted and many roads blocked • Extremely limited availability of water and electricity
4	131-155	<p>Catastrophic damage will occur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of roof structure and/or some exterior walls • Most trees uprooted and most power lines down • Isolated residential due to debris pile up • Power outages lasting for weeks to months
5	More than 155	<p>Catastrophic damage will occur</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high percentage of homes will be destroyed • Fallen trees and power lines isolate residential areas • Power outages lasting for weeks to months • Most areas will be uninhabitable

Recommended Training

FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) has developed a training program to encourage community hurricane preparedness. This computer-based course provides basic information about dealing with tropical cyclones and hurricanes.

Federal and National Resources

Find additional information on how to plan and prepare for a hurricane by visiting the following resources:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- NOAA Hurricane Center
- American Red Cross
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control

Encourage Electronic Payments for Federal Benefit Recipients

Keep in mind a disaster can disrupt mail service for days or even weeks. For those who depend on the mail for their Social Security benefits, a difficult situation can become worse if they are evacuated or lose their mail service – as 85,000 check recipients learned after Hurricane Katrina. Switching to electronic payments is one simple, significant way people can protect themselves financially before disaster strikes. It also eliminates the risk of stolen checks.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury recommends two safer ways to get federal benefits:

- **Direct deposit** to a checking or savings account is the best option for people with bank accounts. The **Direct Express® prepaid debit card** is also available for people who don't have a bank account. Federal benefit recipients can sign up by calling (800) 333-1795 or at www.GoDirect.org.