EXTREME WEATHER: Preparation and Recovery

Weather Terms to Know

**Hurricane Watch**
An announcement that a hurricane is possible in the area

**Hurricane Warning**
An announcement that a hurricane making landfall is expected in the area

**Storm Surge**
Potentially dangerous inundation from rising sea waters moving inland from the shore

**Tropical Storm**
A rotating system of thunderstorms with sustained winds of 39 mph to 73 mph

**Atlantic Hurricane Season**
Hurricane Season takes place between June 1 and November 30

**Nor'easter**
A cold storm that can cause heavy snow or rain, strong winds, and/or flooding

**Get Prepared Early**

**Determine Risk**
You should determine how at-risk your neighborhood is to the impact of a weather event. You can use the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s [Historical Hurricane Tracks Tool](https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/gphists.php) to find and act on your level of risk.

**Evacuation Plan**
Determine your evacuation zone and make an evacuation plan with your household. Ready.gov contains a page dedicated to providing guidelines for before, during, and after evacuation.
- [NYC Hurricane Evacuation Zone Finder](#)
- [NJ Coastal Evacuation Routes](#)
- Westchester, Suffolk County, and Nassau County Evacuation Zones

**Insurance Check**
Make sure you have the appropriate insurance to help cover all potential damage from a storm, including flood insurance. No home is completely safe from potential flooding. When just one inch of water in a home can cost more than $25,000 in damage, flood insurance can be the difference between recovery and financial devastation. You can obtain insurance from the National Flood Insurance Program through [Floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov) and learn why flood insurance is so important by visiting the FloodSmart website. Additionally, FloodHelpNY breaks down everything you need to know about flood insurance on their [Understanding Flood Insurance](#) page.

**Sign Up for Emergency Alerts**
Get regular alerts and warnings about hurricanes in your area to best understand where you stand in relation to a storm and how to be most protected. The [FEMA App](https://www.fema.gov/fema-app) provides real-time, localized storm alerts, as well as emergency safety tips and nearby evacuation shelters.

If you’re in New Jersey:
The [New Jersey Office of Emergency Management](https://www.state.nj.us/emergency/) provides links to their social media pages and sites that regularly provide hurricane information.

If you’re in New York:
New Yorkers can sign up for [NY-Alert](https://www.govdelivery.com/subscribe/nyalert) and choose to be notified of emergency information via phone, text, e-mail, or fax.

In New York City, you can sign up for [NotifyNYC](https://www.notifynyc.gov) – the city’s free emergency communications program.

**Emergency Contacts**
Establish emergency contacts in case of evacuation or disaster. The [NYCEM Pocket Guide](#) contains emergency reference cards that each household member can fill out with emergency contact information.

**Save for an Emergency Fund**
Well before a storm, it’s recommended to save some money, if you can, to cover the financial surprises of weather emergencies. [Operation Hope](https://www.operationhope.org) provides a Financial First Aid Kit within their Personal Disaster Preparedness Guide you can fill out to keep your emergency finances organized and easily accessible in times of disaster. You can learn more about financial preparedness for emergencies at [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov).
What to Do Before a Storm Arrives

Gather Supplies
Since access to stores and supplies may be limited by a hurricane, you should prepare a “Go Bag” and emergency supply kit once you become aware of a potential storm. A Go Bag is a collection of items packed in an easy-to-carry bag that you may need during an evacuation. It should be easy to assemble if you have to leave your home in a hurry. An emergency supply kit, on the other hand, should keep enough supplies to survive at home in case you are instructed to shelter in place.

Protect Documents
Make copies of important documents – like personal ID and financial information – and keep them in a safe place. FEMA has a checklist of critical documents and valuables you should safeguard before a storm.

Secure Your Space
Once a hurricane or tropical storm watch has been issued, you should take steps to secure, and strengthen the structural integrity, of your space to prevent storm damage. The four most important structures to secure are your roofs, doors, windows, and garage doors, according to the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management. Other steps to secure your home include keeping any trees near your property trimmed, moving any outdoor furniture indoors, cleaning your gutters, and moving your vehicles to a sheltered area.

Other Helpful Resources

Pets
Make special preparations for your pets since their needs and resources differ from ours. Many evacuation shelters don’t accept pets. Use the ASPCA’s Disaster Preparedness Guide for Pets to take the right measures to keep your pet(s) safe.

For Kids
Explaining disaster preparedness to children can be a difficult topic to navigate. To help, HelpNJNow has compiled educational resources on preparedness tailored to youth in their Kids Corner. NYCEM’s Ready Girl is an award-winning comic book program about a superhero that teaches children how to prepare for emergencies. NYCEM also offers an interactive kids guide, a tweens guide, a parent’s guide, and a teacher’s guide for emergency preparedness.

Connect Digitally
Use social media and technology to stay connected to your community to help each other get through the storm. Follow Waterfront Alliance on Twitter at @OurWaterfront for more preparedness information and updates.
Stay Safe During a Storm

Evacuating
If you live in an evacuation zone and are ordered to evacuate by local officials, do so immediately. Try to leave early enough to avoid the most severe weather. Follow your plan and your local evacuation route. Pay attention to evacuation information and alerts provided by local radio and news outlets. Avoid wading, swimming, or driving through flood waters as much as possible. Turn Around, Don’t Drown! Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

Sheltering
Go to a designated storm shelter or space protected from high winds. This will typically be a small interior room, closet, or hallway. Whether there is a “shelter in place” order in effect or not, it’s a good idea to stay in the most secure spaces of your home.

Stay away from glass windows, doors, and skylights. Put as many walls between you and the outside as possible. Go to the highest point of the building if trapped by flooding, but avoid entering any closed attic. If you climb into a closed space, you risk being trapped if the flooding rises that high.

What to Do After a Storm

Returning Home
If you evacuated, do not return home until you are told it is safe. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio and your local news to get updates. Be sure to follow guidance from your local emergency management and government office.

Document Damage and File a Claim
Be sure to document and photograph any damages before moving flood-damages items from your home. Contact your insurance company with this documentation. The National Flood Insurance Program does not require a disaster declaration for you to make a claim. For best practices on how to document damages and start cleaning up, visit FEMA’s Flood Smart page.

Cleaning Up
Wear protective clothing, including goggles, gloves, boots, and masks or face coverings for mold and debris. Always work with a partner. Be mindful of overworking and take appropriate rest time. Don’t touch any electrical equipment, especially if it is wet or in water.

Flood Safety
Flood water carries risks of illness and injury, so avoid wading in any standing water. Drive only if necessary. On the road, avoid flooding, bridges, and washed-out areas. Watch out for weakened or fallen structures and electrical wires.

Home Safety
Check the outside of your home for structural damage as well as loose power lines or gas leaks. Be sure to throw out all wet or warm food items and avoid drinking tap water until it is declared safe by local officials. Use battery-powered flashlights rather than candles and turn your flashlight on before you enter a building in case there is leaked gas in the space.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is one of the leading causes of deaths after storms. Gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices should not be used inside. If you start to feel dizzy or faint, go outside immediately and breathe fresh air. Never use a portable generator in a closed space such as your home or garage. Review the CDC’s generator safety guidelines before you use a back-up generator.

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