Hurricane Safety – Staying at Home Meeting Kit



WHAT’S AT STAKE

While evacuation is often the safest option during a hurricane, there may be situations where staying at home is the only viable choice. This could be due to factors like being outside of designated evacuation zones, not having access to transportation, or specific personal circumstances. However, staying home during a hurricane is inherently dangerous and requires careful preparation and adherence to safety precautions.

WHAT’S THE DANGER

Staying put during a hurricane can be really risky. One of the biggest dangers is the high winds. We’re talking winds strong enough to rip off roofs, shatter windows, and even damage walls. And it’s not just the structures themselves; think about everything that can get picked up and tossed around like toys in those winds. Tree branches, signs, patio furniture, even trash cans—they all become dangerous flying debris that can cause serious injury.

Then there’s the flooding. It’s not just a coastal problem; heavy rains from hurricanes can cause flash floods and rivers to overflow, even miles inland. Water can quickly rise and flood homes, making them unlivable and creating all sorts of hazards, like electrical shorts and structural damage. Plus, when roads flood, it can cut you off from everything, making it impossible for emergency services to reach you if you need help.

And let’s not forget about power outages. Hurricanes often knock out power for extended periods, meaning no lights, no air conditioning, no refrigeration, and no way to easily communicate with the outside world. This can be especially tough if you rely on medical equipment or have specific medical needs. On top of all that, the combination of strong winds and flooding can weaken buildings, making them more likely to collapse. That’s a serious threat to anyone sheltering inside.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

If you must stay home during a hurricane, thorough preparation is crucial. This is broken down into two phases: preparing before hurricane season and the immediate actions you take when a hurricane threatens.

How to Prepare Before Hurricane Season:

Getting ready for hurricane season isn’t something you can do overnight; it takes time and planning. Here’s what you should focus on before a storm is even on the horizon:

- **Strengthen Your Home:** This is about making your home as resistant to high winds as possible. Boarding up windows with properly fitted plywood or using hurricane shutters is essential. Reinforce your doors, especially double entry doors and garage doors, as these are often vulnerable points. Trimming trees and shrubs around your house can prevent them from becoming projectiles or damaging your home during high winds. Secure any loose roofing materials or siding.
- **Clear Your Yard:** Anything that isn’t tied down or stored securely can become a dangerous projectile in hurricane-force winds. This includes lawn furniture, grills, trash cans, potted plants, decorations, etc. Bring these items inside or secure them in a shed or garage.
- **Assemble a Disaster Supply Kit (Go-Bag):** This is your lifeline if you lose power or become isolated. It’s more than just a few cans of food; it needs to sustain you and your family for several days. Here’s a more detailed breakdown:
    - **Water:** At least one gallon of water per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation.
    - **Food:** A supply of non-perishable food, such as canned goods, granola bars, and dried fruit. Don’t forget a manual can opener.
    - **Medications:** A supply of prescription and over-the-counter medications, as well as any necessary medical supplies.
    - **First-Aid Kit:** A well-stocked first-aid kit to treat minor injuries.
    - **Flashlight and Batteries:** A reliable flashlight and plenty of extra batteries. Avoid using candles due to the fire risk.
    - **Battery-Powered or Hand-Crank Radio:** To stay updated on weather reports and emergency information.
    - **Important Documents:** Copies of important documents such as insurance policies, identification, and bank records, stored in a waterproof container.
    - **Other Essentials:** Consider items like a whistle to signal for help, dust masks to filter contaminated air, plastic sheeting and duct tape for shelter-in-place repairs, moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation, and a wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- **Develop a Communication Plan:** Power outages can disrupt phone and internet service, making it difficult to communicate with family and friends. Establish a communication plan beforehand. Make sure everyone knows the contact information and how to reach them.

When a Hurricane Beckons (Immediate Preparation):

So, the hurricane’s on its way, and you’re planning to ride it out at home. Time

to get moving! Let’s make sure you’re as prepared as possible. First things first: stay glued to the weather updates. Keep an eye on the National Hurricane Center (NHC) and local news for the latest info. Things can change quickly, so you want to be in the loop.

Next up: a final sweep of your place. Bring anything loose from outside indoors – patio furniture, grills, flowerpots, you name it. Double-check that your windows and doors are boarded up or shuttered. Pick your safe spot. This should be an inside room on the lowest floor, away from windows and outside walls. That’s where you’ll hunker down when things get rough.

Last but not least, get ready for potential power and water outages. Charge up your phones, laptops, everything. And fill up your bathtubs and sinks with water – you might need it for flushing toilets or cleaning.

FINAL WORD

If you absolutely must stay home during a hurricane, you need to be ready. That means strengthening your home, having a solid supply kit, and knowing what to do when the storm hits. Taking these precautions can make all the difference.