

Before it hits

Around The House

- Board up your windows
- Set freezer and refrigerator to the coldest settings to make the food last as long as possible without electricity (a half-full freezer will keep food for 24 hours, a full freezer for 48). Put containers of water in your freezer if there's room.
- Fill your bathtub with water, which can help with cleaning and flushing toilets.
- Bring all loose objects from the backyard indoors.
- Secure awnings, garage door and porch doors.
- Buy extra batteries for flashlights and TV/radio.
- Stock heavy duty garbage bags for post-storm cleanup
- Prune your trees (this should be done before a storm approaches)
- Move furniture and appliances away from exposed windows and doors; elevate if possible.
- Turn off main gas valve and electricity before the storm hits; use flashlights.
- If you have a pool, keep water filled to 12 inches below the edge; cover the filter pump and turn off the electricity; add additional chlorine.
- Get Cash
- Refill special medications
- Charge your cell phone and an extra battery.
- Get a car charger for your cell phone.
- Use your land line if it works to save cell phone batteries.
- If you evacuate, forward your home phone to your cell phone so you can get calls.
- Program emergency contact numbers into your phone.
- Choose one central contact outside the storm area so family members can check in on your group.

Protect Documents

Store these important documents in a waterproof container that you can take with you. Make sure everyone in the family knows where it is.

- Identification: Passports and Social Security Cards.
- Medical: Prescription information and immunization records, especially if you need to relocate and enroll your children in a new school.
- Financial: Account numbers and/or statements for banks, credit cards and other services. Have the customer-service numbers handy.
- Family records: Birth, marriage and death certificates.
- Other: insurance policies, contracts, deeds, stocks, and bonds, inventory of valuables.
- Contact Information: Telephone numbers, e-mail and physical addresses.

Containers

Tips for storing your valuables during a hurricane.

- Start by picking containers that are air and water-tight. Most large containers are not, so you'll probably need to buy several small ones.
- Select clear containers so you can easily find items.
- Place boxes off the floor so they don't flood if there's water in your home. Consider installing emergency shelving.

Communication Plans

During and immediately after a crisis, people become separated and communication lines can be jammed. Avoid the panic by developing a communication plan beforehand.

- Establish a place to meet near home (this may prove impossible during a hurricane).
- Select a friend or relative who lives outside Texas to be your contact; calling long distance is usually easier after a disaster. Everyone should inform this person of their post-hurricane location as soon as possible.
- Take a cell phone charger when you evacuate.

Prepare Your Pantry

Stock up now. Avoid the madness before an approaching storm.

- Plan for one gallon per person daily for at least three days (half for drinking, half for cooking and sanitation). Store the water in sturdy plastic containers such as soda bottles.
- Survey the pantry. If a canned goods expiration date has passed but the can is still in good condition and was stored in a cool, clean and dry place, it is probably still "safe, wholesome and of good quality," according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Unopened, shelf-stable ham usually lasts two years, while other canned meats, poultry and fish can last up to five years. High-acid foods such as canned tomatoes and pineapples have a shelf life of 12-18 months, but most vegetables will keep for two to five years.
- Purchase enough nonperishables, such as canned meats, fruits and vegetables that require no cooking and little or no water, for at least three days. (Check the expiration date before you buy).
- Don't forget a can opener and sterno if you need to heat your food.

After it hits

Around The House

Power

- Unplug appliances and electronics. When it's dark, use only flashlights, not candles.

Water Damage

- Remove wet carpets, padding, mattresses and upholstered furniture. Ventilate with fans and air-conditioning. Open blinds but not windows, because air encourages mold.
- If floodwaters reached your walls, remove drywall and insulation 12-18 inches above the waterline. If water only reached the baseboards, remove them and drill holes in the bottom of the wall.
- Disinfect floors with a solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water.
- If ceilings are sagging, it could be water. DO NOT poke holes in the middle of the sag – poke them at the sides of the sag to release water.
- If you suspect sewer or water-line damage, don't use the toilets or drink tap water. Call a plumber for the sewer fix, and your water provider for the water-line repair.

Electrical

- If your home has been flooded, have your electricity checked by a licensed electrician before turning it back on.

Gas

- If you smell gas or hear hissing noises, open a window and leave quickly. Call the gas company.

Using A Generator

Portable generators can be an asset if a hurricane causes your power to go out, but they can also be deadly if not used properly. Take these steps to protect your family against carbon monoxide poisoning associated with generators:

- Find a spot for your generator outside the house, away from doors, windows and vents. Running a generator inside, even in your garage, basement or shed, can be deadly.
- Do not begin using your generator until rain has passed, and make sure to set it in a dry area.
- Use heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cords to attach appliances to the generator.
- Place carbon-monoxide detectors in your home and test the alarms frequently.
- If you feel dizzy or weak, get fresh air immediately and call 911.