

Hurricane preparedness checklist.

Plan & Prep for Hurricanes

This checklist will help you prepare for a hurricane's effect on your organization, employees and community by highlighting the tasks you should complete before, during and after a storm. When the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Hurricane Center issues a watch or warning, use the time available to take the following steps.



BEFORE THE HURRICANE



Contact your recovery service provider and place them on alert status.



Stay up-to-date on the storm's progress via radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards receiver. Ensure your mobile device settings allow WEA (wireless emergency alerts).



Determine a safe evacuation route as well as alternative routes.



Review your shelter-in-place plan, making sure your disaster kit is fully stocked and fresh batteries and supplies are included.



Ensure you have an emergency communication plan in place prior to the storm, evacuation or threat and begin implementing notifications.



Back up all data on servers and personal computers. If the backup site is within the area that may be affected by the storm, consider backing up to a more remote site or the cloud.



Ensure remote access to your company website and establish a team to manage updates to the site during and after the storm.



Turn off all non-critical devices such as server monitors and workstations and other non-essential electrical equipment. Make sure any equipment is raised above potential flood levels or removed from threatened sites.



Check the integrity of the uninterruptible power supply (UPS). Move the UPS to the highest level possible above the floor.



Inspect and make emergency repairs to drains, gutters and flashing.



Strap or anchor to the roof deck support assembly (e.g., the joists) all roof-mounted equipment such as HVAC units and exhaust vents.



Apply for or request re-entry credentials from local law enforcement.



Obtain petty cash supply to allow for purchases in the event power or connectivity is lost at merchant locations.



Review your insurance policies to mitigate any possible gaps in coverage.

Hurricane preparedness checklist (cont.)

✓ BEFORE THE HURRICANE

- Close all threatened office locations well in advance to allow time to evacuate if needed.
- Have contact information for all employees, vendors and clients on hand.
- Use an alert notification system to keep all parties posted on status updates and next steps.
- In the event of an evacuation or office closure, redirect your business phones. Consider redirecting business lines to cell phones, or use an answering service or Google Voice.

✓ TAKE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO ENSURE ITEMS OUTDOORS WILL NOT BLOW AWAY OR CAUSE DAMAGE

- Remove all loose debris.
- Anchor or relocate all nonessential equipment to a safe indoor location.
- Secure storage of flammable liquid drums, or move them to a sheltered area (but never into main facility areas).
- Anchor all portable buildings (e.g., trailers) to the ground.
- Secure all heavy equipment.
- Make sure outdoor signs are properly braced.

✓ DURING THE HURRICANE

- Patrol the property continuously and watch for roof leaks, pipe breakage, fire or structural damage. During the height of the storm, personnel should remain in a place that has been identified as safe from wind and flood.
- Monitor any equipment that must remain connected to a power source.
- Update employees when possible as part of your communications plan.
- During power failure, turn off electrical switches to prevent reactivation before necessary checks are completed.

Hurricane preparedness checklist (cont.)

✓ AFTER THE HURRICANE

- Keep listening to radio, TV or NOAA Weather Radio All Hazards to make sure the storm has passed.
- Wait until an area is declared safe before entering to secure the site and survey damage.
- Obtain 24-hour security if needed.
- Watch for closed roads. If you come upon a barricade or a flooded road, turn around.
- Look for safety hazards such as live wires, leaking gas or flammable liquids, poisonous gases and damage to foundations or underground piping.
- Continue to communicate with all key audiences until the crisis has passed. Consistency is important, especially with members of the media.
- Call in key personnel and notify contractors to initiate repairs. Make sure safety systems are fully implemented before work is allowed to begin. This means controlling smoking and other open flame sources. Require contractors to share responsibility for establishing fire-safe conditions before and during the job.
- Clean roof drains and remove debris from roof to prevent drainage problems.

✓ BEGIN SALVAGE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO PREVENT FURTHER DAMAGE

- Cover broken windows and torn roof coverings immediately.
- Separate damaged goods, but beware of accumulating too much combustible debris inside a building.
- Following the storm, notify all critical people of next steps, based on damage.

Hurricane preparedness checklist (cont.)

Know the Terms

Tropical Depression: An organized system of clouds and thunderstorms with a defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 38 MPH (33 knots) or less. Sustained winds are defined as one-minute average winds measured at about 33 feet (10 meters) above the surface.

Tropical Storm: An organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39–73 MPH (34–63 knots).

Hurricane: An intense tropical weather system of strong thunderstorms with a well-defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 MPH (64 knots) or higher.

Storm Surge: A dome of water pushed onshore by hurricane and tropical storm winds. Storm surges can reach 25 feet high and be 50–1000 miles wide. A storm surge is by far the greatest threat to life and property along the immediate coast.

Storm Tide: A combination of a storm surge and the normal tide (i.e., a 15-foot storm surge combined with a 2-foot normal high tide over the mean sea level would create a 17-foot storm tide).

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Watch: Hurricane/tropical storm conditions are possible in the specified area of the watch, usually within 48 hours. Tune in to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio or television for information.

Hurricane/Tropical Storm Warning: Hurricane/tropical storm conditions are expected in the specified area of the warning, usually within 36 hours of the onset of tropical storm force winds. Complete storm preparations and immediately leave the threatened area if directed to do so by local officials.

Extreme Wind Warning: Extreme sustained winds of a major hurricane (115 MPH or greater), usually associated with the eye wall, are expected to begin within an hour. Take immediate shelter in the interior portion of a well-built structure.

Short-Term Watches and Warnings: These warnings provide detailed information about specific hurricane threats, such as flash floods and tornadoes.

Storm Threat Details

The National Weather Service rates hurricanes by their sustained wind speed using the Saffir–Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale of 1–5. This scale was developed in the 1970s to help scientists communicate storm risk more effectively to the public. You should, however, not ignore the risks of any oncoming storm, regardless of category. The simplified scale, somewhat controversially, only considers wind speed, not other damaging and deadly threats like storm surge, rainfall rates and tornadoes. Just because a storm is slow moving, does not mean it won't cause significant damage.

SAFFIR-SIMPSON HURRICANE WIND SCALE

WIND SPEEDS		
CATEGORY	MPH	KNOTS
5	>156	>135
4	131–155	114–134
3	111–130	96–113
2	96–110	84–95
1	74–95	65–83

Non-Hurricane Classifications

Tropical Storm	39–74	34–64
Tropical Depression	0–38	0–33