

# HURRICANE EVACUATION

## Questions & Answers

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### **How do I know when to evacuate?**

Listen regularly to your local radio or television stations when the threat of tropical storms or hurricanes exists. Pay close attention when such storms threaten your local area. If it appears that a storm may affect the local area, local officials may order or recommend that residents evacuate and also provide instructions about what people in those areas should do. Be ready to follow the instructions given by local officials. Because it takes time to evacuate heavily populated areas, evacuations may be recommended well before the storm makes landfall.

### **Who should consider leaving before hurricane evacuation is recommended for the general public?**

- People who live in low-lying or flood-prone areas or on barrier islands. Tropical storms and hurricanes often produce heightened seas and tides that may affect these areas long before the storm makes landfall.
- People who live mobile homes near the coast, or are concerned about the structural stability of their home, should plan to evacuate any time a storm threatens. Even less powerful hurricanes can produce high winds capable of damaging or destroying mobile homes.
- People towing boats or trailers or driving recreational vehicles or other high-profile vehicles should leave early. Some roads and bridges may be closed to high-profile vehicles due to high winds before they are closed to cars.
- People traveling with young children, elderly family members, or people with special needs. If you wait to leave until a general evacuation is recommended, traffic will be heavier and the weather may be worse, lengthening the time you will have to spend in your car getting to your destination.

### **What should I do if I need help to evacuate?**

- Preferably make arrangements with your family members, friends, or neighbors to assist you before you need to evacuate. Most people will be glad to help if they know you need assistance.
- If you do not have friends or family to assist you, listen to your radio or TV for information on provisions being made to assist those who need assistance in evacuating. If necessary, contact your local emergency management office to let them know who you are, where you live, and what kind of help you need. Do not wait until the last minute to call for assistance or local authorities may be unable to assist you.
- If you are experiencing a life-threatening situation, call 9-1-1.

### **What should I take with me?**

- License or Identification card with photo
- Your medications, extra eye glasses, hearing aids and other essential items
- A flashlight with batteries, if you don't already have one in your car
- A battery-operated portable radio, if you don't have a car radio
- Water or other beverages to drink on your trip
- Non-perishable foods to eat on your trip
- Spare clothes and shoes
- Soap, shampoo, and other toiletries
- Important papers, including deeds and wills
- Contact numbers of friends, family members, physicians, and your insurance agent
- Money, checks, travelers' checks or credit cards
- An inventory of your personal belongings and any photographs or videotapes of your possessions

### **If I plan on going to a public shelter, what additional items should I take?**

Public shelters are austere facilities that provide temporary housing for evacuees. Most shelters do not have beds or cots, so you will probably be sleeping on the floor. So pack as if you were going camping. Bring:

- Sleeping pads or air mattresses
- Blankets or a sleeping bag for each person
- Robe & shower shoes

- Books, cards, games and QUIET toys for children

### **What should I NOT take to a public shelter?**

Alcoholic beverages, weapons, and drugs are not allowed in public shelters.

### **Why should I carry food and drinks in my car?**

Stopping for food or drinks during a large-scale evacuation may significantly delay you in getting to your destination. Some restaurants and stores along hurricane routes may be closed and those that are open are likely to be very crowded. Additionally, once you leave the evacuation route to purchase food or drinks, it may be difficult to re-enter the flow of traffic.

### **What can I do to help others?**

Check on friends and neighbors to make sure they have transportation or to see if they need help in getting essential items together so they can be ready to evacuate. Assist them if you can. If you cannot, help them get in touch with the local emergency management office.

### **How do I know where to go in an evacuation?**

Decide early on where you will go when a hurricane threatens so that you can make preparations. Your general objective should be to move away from the coast and well inland.

- If you want to stay at a hotel or motel, make reservations as soon as it becomes apparent that you may have to leave. If you are trying to find a suitable hotel or motel:
- If you've previously stayed somewhere that was satisfactory, call that place.
- If prefer a particular hotel or motel chain but need help in finding a location within reasonable driving distance, call Toll-free Directory Assistance at 1-800-555-1212 and ask for the toll-free number for that hotel/motel chain. You may also make reservations at most major hotel/motel chains and many bed and breakfast facilities over the Internet.
- For major cities, the local Convention and Visitors Center can usually provide you information on hotels and motels; many Convention and Visitor Centers can also be accessed through the Internet. In smaller towns, the local Chamber of Commerce can generally tell you what accommodations are available locally.

- If you plan to stay with family or friends, call them in advance so they may plan for your arrival. If your plans change, be sure to inform the person with whom you intended to stay so that they don't worry.
- Let your family and friends know where you can be reached.
- Make sure you choose an alternative destination in the event you are unable to get to your first choice.

### **What if I want to stay in my RV or camping trailer?**

Keep in mind that both tropical storms and hurricanes often produce torrential rains and tornadoes well inland. If you plan to stay in an RV or trailer, you might want to avoid campgrounds located adjacent to streams and rivers or whose only access is via a low water crossing. And you may want to seek a campground that has some sort of stout building that could be used as a tornado shelter.