

# **2022 All Hazards Preparedness Guide**

## **Text-only edition**

- **Know your risk**
- **Make a plan**
- **Stay informed**
- **Get involved**

The 2022 All Hazards Preparedness Guide is the product of a partnership between Pinellas County Emergency Management and the Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education Program (NIE) to give students and their families the tools of All Hazards Preparedness and serve as a resource throughout the year.

For more information on all hazard preparedness, visit [pinellascounty.org/emergency](https://pinellascounty.org/emergency).

## **KNOW YOUR RISK**

### **Know Your Zone**

There are several ways to find out your evacuation zone:

- [pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone](http://pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone)
- Ready Pinellas mobile app
- Utility bill (Pinellas County Utilities customers, some cities)
- Property Appraiser records
- 727-453-3150 (landlines only)

If you live in or have a business in a “non-evacuation zone,” you will not be ordered to evacuate (except for mobile and manufactured homes).

### **Hurricanes**

Tropical depressions, tropical storms and hurricanes are considered tropical cyclones. When sustained, or constant, winds reach 74 miles per hour (mph), the storm is considered a hurricane. The storm categories are based on wind, with Category 1 (up to 95 mph), up to a Category 5, which is 157 mph or higher. Hurricanes usually form during hurricane season, which runs June 1 to Nov. 30.

Tropical storms and hurricanes can include high winds and flooding from heavy rainfall, storm surge and hazardous surf. The effects can be felt hundreds of miles from the center of the storm. If a storm threatens our area, you will find real-time information on the Emergency Management website at [pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency), including evacuation orders, shelters that may have opened and the current status of the community.

#### **A hurricane has the following characteristics:**

- 74 mph or higher winds.
- Can be hundreds of miles wide.
- Spins counter-clockwise around the eye.

For more information about hurricanes and the potential threats associated with them, current systems being monitored and historical information, go to the National Hurricane Center’s website at [nhc.noaa.gov](http://nhc.noaa.gov).

## **What's in a Name?**

For more than 50 years, hurricanes have been given human names. While this is done to help identify individual storms, it turns out that each hurricane is as individual as its name. Hurricanes come in different sizes and shapes and often display very different behaviors. It is important to understand these differences as you prepare. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) notes that a big mistake people make in preparing for hurricanes is to assume that just because you've been affected in a certain way by one hurricane, every storm will affect you the same way.

## **Did You Know?**

The 2021 Hurricane Season:

- Was the third most active on record in terms of named storms.
- Was the sixth consecutive above-normal Atlantic hurricane season.
- Was the first time in history that all 21 storm names were used in back-to-back storm seasons.
- Had 21 named storms (with winds of 39 mph or greater), including seven hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or greater) of which four were major hurricanes (winds of 111 mph or greater).

## **Storm Surge**

Storm surge is a dome of water that is pushed ashore by powerful winds. Storm surge can be life-threatening and cause extensive damage and not just along the immediate coastline. It is important to know your risk from storm surge and determine if you live in an area that may be called to evacuate. The National Hurricane Center issues watches and warnings if there is a threat to Pinellas County. To see how high storm surge could be at your location, visit the Storm Surge Protector App at <https://egis.pinellas.gov/apps/StormSurgeProtector>.

## **Protective measures:**

- Determine if you live in an area that may be impacted by surge.
- Monitor the impact of storm surge on your area.
- Know if your location is included in the evacuation order.

## **High Winds**

Tropical storm force winds (35 mph or greater) and hurricane force winds (more than 74 mph) can cause widespread damage. People living in mobile and manufactured homes and people on life-sustaining medical equipment that require electricity can be vulnerable to high winds. The stronger the storm, the more likely structural damages will occur from high winds that can produce flying debris, breach structure openings such as windows and doors, or topple mobile homes that are not anchored properly.

### **Protective measures for high winds may include:**

- Hardening or protecting your roof, doors (including your garage) and windows from wind damage.
- Signing up for the Special Needs Program at [pinellascounty.org/specialneeds](http://pinellascounty.org/specialneeds) for residents of all ages who are dependent on electricity or require medical assistance such as oxygen or assistance with routine care.
- Evacuating to a safer location not in the evacuation area or to a stronger structure when an Evacuation Order is given.
- Sheltering in place when conditions are no longer safe to drive around.

Though newer mobile homes may be built to higher wind codes, surrounding homes may not be. Mobile homes are vulnerable to flying debris/trees and, if not anchored properly, can become dislodged.

## **Tornado**

A tornado is a violent windstorm characterized by a twisting, funnel-shaped cloud. It can be spawned by a thunderstorm, a cold front moving into the area or as a result of severe weather associated with hurricanes. Tornadoes can happen with only a few minutes' notice, so having a weather radio or signing up for Alert Pinellas for alerts to your cellphone could save your life.

### **You can protect yourself by:**

- Conducting an annual tornado safety drill with your family or workplace.
- Identifying a safe room in an interior windowless room.
- Practicing your plan and being ready to put it into action when you receive a tornado warning.

For more information about tornado safety, go to the National Weather Service website at [weather.gov/safety/tornado](http://weather.gov/safety/tornado).

## Severe Thunderstorms

Severe thunderstorms are storms that are capable of producing hail that is an inch or larger or wind gusts over 58 mph. Hail this size can damage property such as plants, roofs and vehicles. Wind this strong can break off large tree branches, knock over trees or cause structural damage to trees. Some severe thunderstorms can produce hail larger than softballs or winds more than 100 mph. Thunderstorms also produce tornadoes and dangerous lightning. Heavy rain can cause flash flooding.

### You can protect yourself by:

- Finding interior spaces to shelter in during the storm.
- Securing outdoor furnishings or items.

### Going beyond the text: Tropical recipe

Florida's tropical atmosphere and sea breezes provide the perfect recipe for thunderstorms! All three ingredients are needed: 1) moisture, 2) an unstable atmosphere, and 3) unstable air that is pushed upward. Thunderstorms are part of life in Florida. They are nature's way of providing badly needed rainfall. Research the hydrologic cycle on the Internet. Write a well-developed paragraph, based on your research, discussing the importance of thunderstorms to Florida's hydrologic cycle. Create a poster representing the hydrologic cycle and showing the importance of thunderstorms to the hydrologic cycle. Next, use the *Tampa Bay Times* to track thunderstorms throughout the summer months. Keep a chart of your results.

## **Pinellas County Evacuation Zones**

This year, some properties have a different evacuation zone level due to updates in the risk maps. You can find your zone and more about why there was a change at [storm.pinellascounty.org](http://storm.pinellascounty.org).

Evacuation Zone A: Up to 11 feet above ground level

Evacuation Zone B: Up to 15 feet above ground level

Evacuation Zone C: Up to 20 feet above ground level

Evacuation Zone D: Up to 28 feet above ground level

Evacuation Zone E: Up to 35 feet above ground level

## **Know Your Zone**

There are several ways to find out your evacuation zone:

- [kyz.pinellascounty.org](http://kyz.pinellascounty.org)
- [www.pcpao.org](http://www.pcpao.org)
- Ready Pinellas mobile app (Android, iOS)
- (727) 453-3150 (for Pinellas County landline phones only)
- Utility Bill (Pinellas County Utility customers)

## **Mobile Home Info**

Pinellas County residents in mobile homes, recreational vehicles and manufactured homes must always evacuate no matter where in the county they are located.

## **Flood**

Flooding can occur from excessive rainfall due to tropical cyclones, seasonal rain, or other weather patterns and conditions. Pinellas County is highly susceptible to flooding, including inland flooding (stream, creek, river overflow, flash floods) and coastal flooding (including tidal flooding and storm surge).

### **Protective measures may include:**

- Getting flood insurance for your home. Flood losses are not covered by homeowner insurance policies. If you are a renter, you can get a policy for your belongings.
- Elevating belongings in your home/business to reduce the impacts of flooding.
- Using sandbags or another type of barrier to help keep water from coming into your home. (Sandbags do not work well against storm surge.)

Not all insurance policies are created equal. Check your policy or talk to your agent to make sure you have sufficient coverage and to determine if any home improvements would qualify for a discount on premiums.

- Homeowner insurance policies do not cover damage from rising floodwaters or storm surge. If you own a home in an area prone to flooding or a storm surge zone, your mortgage company will likely require you to carry a separate flood policy.
- Anywhere it rains it can flood. About 25 percent of flood insurance claims occur outside of high-risk flood zones. If your home is in a low- or moderate-risk area take advantage of a highly discounted Preferred Risk Flood Insurance Policy. Ask your insurance agent.
- A new policy takes 30 days to take effect, so don't delay. Purchase flood insurance for your home, business, rental and property.

Learn more about flooding and insurance:

- Pinellas County's Flood Information Services at [pinellascounty.org/flooding/insurance](http://pinellascounty.org/flooding/insurance).
- Insurance Information Institute at [iii.org](http://iii.org).

## **Flood Zones vs. Evacuation Zones**

**Flood zones** are mapped by FEMA for use in the National Flood Insurance Program and based upon flooding from rains, rivers, creeks and lakes.

**<https://floodmaps.pinellascounty.org/pages/current-flood-zones>**

**Evacuation zones** are based upon the storm surge models created by the National Hurricane Center. Pinellas County Emergency Management, along with other subject matter experts, assess the areas expected to have storm surge to determine evacuation zones. When a storm threatens, Pinellas County may issue an Evacuation Order for one or more of the zones. **[pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone](http://pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone)**

## **Going beyond the text: Tracking natural disasters**

A NOAA Weather Radio can alert you to dangerous weather just like a smoke detector can warn you about dangerous smoke. NOAA Weather Radio alerts are broadcast from the local National Weather Service office serving Pinellas County. Your weather radio can alert you to potential dangers.

Weather and natural disasters affect our daily lives, health and economy. For example, tsunamis, hurricanes, typhoons and tornadoes can be very costly to an individual or the community. Many of these disasters occur only in certain parts of the world, but their occurrence can impact lives of those who have not experienced firsthand the stress and tragedy accompanying these events.

Use the *Tampa Bay Times* to keep track of natural disasters over a two- or three-week period. Keep a natural disaster journal. Identify the disaster and its location in your journal. Create a chart listing all the natural disasters. Choose a disaster that did not happen in your area and make a list of some of the ways in which you or other people in your community would be affected by this kind of disaster. Write a brief essay outlining the disasters and how they affect communities. Share your information with your class.

## **Be Aware. Be Prepared.**

### **Additional Hazards**

**Be aware, prepare, and act when it happens.**

### **Lightning**

[www.weather.gov/safety/lightning](http://www.weather.gov/safety/lightning)

- Avoid open high ground and isolated large trees.
- Avoid water — swimming pools, lakes and rivers, beaches and boats.
- Seek shelter inside a building or an automobile but not a convertible or golf cart.
- Stay away from doors, windows and metal objects such as pipes and faucets.
- Stay off corded telephones and away from electrical devices.

### **Extreme Heat**

[weather.gov/safety/heat](http://weather.gov/safety/heat)

- Find an air-conditioned space.
- Avoid strenuous activities.
- Wear light clothing.
- Check on family members and neighbors.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Watch for heat cramps, exhaustion and stroke.
- Never leave people or pets in a closed car.

## **Epidemic, Pandemic**

[dhs.gov/epidemicpandemic](https://dhs.gov/epidemicpandemic)

- Quarantine.
- Practice social distancing.
- Wear a mask.
- Get tested if you think you've been exposed.
- Get vaccinated, if possible.
- Seek treatment from your doctor.

## **Red Tide**

[pinellascounty.org/environmental/red-tide.htm](https://pinellascounty.org/environmental/red-tide.htm)

- Avoid affected areas.
- See Pinellas County Environmental Management for more information on Red Tide, including status and resources, at [pinellascounty.org/environmental/red-tide.htm](https://pinellascounty.org/environmental/red-tide.htm).
- Report fish kills to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

## **Fire**

[nfpa.org/public-education](https://nfpa.org/public-education)

- Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Have a fire evacuation plan.
- Be safe around backyard grills and firepits.
- Observe restrictions on fires during dry seasons.
- Visit the National Fire Protection Association website at [nfpa.org/public-education](https://nfpa.org/public-education).

## **Wildfire**

[weather.gov/safety/wildfire](https://weather.gov/safety/wildfire)

- Use Firewise, [fdacs.gov](https://fdacs.gov), practices around your home.
- Shelter in place for respiratory issues.
- Evacuate if there is a threat of fire spreading.
- Visit the National Weather Services website at [weather.gov/safety/wildfire](https://weather.gov/safety/wildfire).

## **Emergency Information**

Pinellas County will provide up-to-the-minute updates and important information that you need to help you protect yourself, your loved ones and your property, and to keep you informed before, during and after an emergency. During an emergency, check the Emergency Information page at [pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency) frequently for the latest official information.

## **County Information Center**

During emergencies, the County Information Center is opened to answer your questions. Call 727-464-4333. The hours will be announced through alerts, social media and the Pinellas County website at [pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency).

## **Live Chat**

Operators are available Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. to answer your questions. Live Chat becomes part of the County Information Center during emergencies and may be preferable for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. It can be found on any page on the Pinellas County website at [pinellascounty.org](http://pinellascounty.org).

## **Cyber Incident**

Cyberattacks involve computers, networks, information, or services that affect daily operations on a large scale. These attacks can cause loss of money or the theft of personal, financial and medical information. Those who work in cybersecurity put safeguards in place to prevent, detect and respond to these threats.

### **Protective measures may include:**

- Regular maintenance of computer and online devices for security and use of strong passwords or even two-step verification.
- Monitoring of your bank and credit accounts, or if you are a business, monitoring your system for theft of your client's information.
- Disconnecting from the internet and working with computer experts or even law enforcement to report concerns.

See the Federal Emergency Management Agency for more information on cybersecurity and how to protect yourself against cyberattacks, [ready.gov/cybersecurity](https://www.ready.gov/cybersecurity).

## **Geological**

Sinkholes are a geological occurrence that can happen in Florida. Sinkholes are caused by a collapse of near-surface ground due to the formation of cavities or fissures. Sinkholes can form in minutes or over the course of years. It is important to note that not all holes in the ground are real sinkholes. Extended periods of drought and/or inland flooding could lead to more sinkholes due to changes under the surface.

### **Protective measures may include:**

- Having the area assessed by a certified home inspector or foundation specialist.
- Leaving your home or the area if the sinkhole poses a risk to the structure.

For more information on sinkholes, see the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, [floridadep.gov/fgs/sinkholes](https://www.floridadep.gov/fgs/sinkholes).

## **Hazardous Materials Incident**

A hazardous material is any substance that poses a threat to humans, animals or the environment – usually it is a biological, chemical or radiological hazard. Hazardous materials can produce an array of effects on humans, animals, and the environment with both short-term and long-term impacts. Hazardous materials are regulated within the United States by a variety of agencies at the federal, state and local level.

A hazardous materials incident can occur practically anywhere within Pinellas County, as these incidents can occur anywhere during the production, transportation, storage, and/or use of hazardous materials. Depending on the hazardous material and the conditions present, harmful effects may be isolated to the immediate vicinity or may cause impacts for many miles.

### **Protective measures may include:**

- Sheltering in place.
- Evacuation.
- Decontamination if you have been exposed to the hazardous material.

See the Federal Emergency Management Agency for more information on Hazardous Materials Incidents, [ready.gov/hazardousmaterials-incidents](https://www.ready.gov/hazardousmaterials-incidents).

## **Terrorism or Attacks in Public Places**

Terrorism is the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to threaten, or coerce, a government, the civilian population, or a segment of the population for political or social gain. The effects of terrorism can vary from loss of life and injuries to property damage and disruptions in services such as electricity, water supply, public transportation and communications.

### **Types of attacks can include:**

- Active shooter: Individuals using firearms to cause mass casualties.
- Individuals using a vehicle to cause mass casualties.
- Individuals using homemade bombs to cause mass casualties.
- Other methods of mass attacks may include knives, fires, drones or other weapons.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office is encouraging participation in Florida's "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign, [flseesay.org/S4/Tools.aspx](https://flseesay.org/S4/Tools.aspx), which is dedicated to educating the public on the indicators of terrorism-related suspicious activity and emphasizes the importance of reporting such activity to local law enforcement. Residents are encouraged to download the Florida See Say mobile app to report suspicious activity. The app is available on the Apple App Store and Google Play.

**Protective measures may include:**

- Reporting suspicious activity to local law enforcement.
- Training the community about recognizing acts of terrorism and how to report them.
- See the Department of Homeland Security, [dhs.gov](http://dhs.gov), for information on types of threats to report.

**Going beyond the text: Shocking energy**

Static electricity is a fixed electric charge that is built up on a material. A common example of static electricity is the slight electrical shock that we can get when we touch a doorknob during dry weather. The static electricity is formed when we gather extra electrons, (negatively charged particles, which we rub off carpeting) and they are discharged onto the doorknob.

Try this: Rub a wool (not acrylic) cap on your hair (on a dry day). This removes some of the electrons from your hair, giving each hair a slight positive electrical charge. Like charges repulse one another, so each hair resists the other hairs. The result is your hair will stand straight up on your head.

Did you know that static electricity and lightning are both forms of energy? There are many different forms of energy. Look in the newspaper for pictures and words that are forms of energy. Cut out the words and pictures you find and create an energy collage to share with your class. Write a paragraph explaining the importance of energy to your life.

## **MAKE A PLAN**

Once you know your risk, you can make a plan for what you will do if one of these hazards occurs. Your plan should include everyone in your family: children, people with special needs and your pets. You can also include your neighbors, friends or extended family in your plan.

### **Prepare your home**

If you are doing repairs or renovations to your home, consider strengthening your home against wind and water intrusion. There are four critical areas: roof, windows, foundation and garage doors. Learn how to mitigate at [pinellascounty.org/emergency/RebuildRight](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency/RebuildRight).

### **Prepare your condo**

If you live in a condo, understand what your responsibility is and what the responsibility of the condo association is when it comes to insurance and mitigation measures.

- Ensure you bring in all items from your porch/balcony before the storm.
- If you live in an evacuation zone and are ordered to evacuate, you need to leave. Even if you live on a floor that is above the expected surge, your building and the surrounding area will be impacted, and it may be days before anyone can get to you.
- When you return to your building, you may need to use the stairs, as the power or the elevators may not be in service.
- Fire safety systems such as sprinklers may not be working after an event, especially if there was a drop in water pressure.

### **Prepare mobile homes**

Mobile homes, manufactured homes and recreational vehicles are not sturdy enough to withstand the strong winds of a hurricane. You can strengthen your home, but you still must leave your home when an evacuation order is given in Pinellas County.

#### **To strengthen your mobile home:**

- Add anchors and straps if needed.
- Replace rusted anchors and connections.
- Tighten straps.
- Fix wood rot and termite damage at connections, joists and trusses.

### **Before you evacuate:**

- Place shutters/plywood over windows.
- Remove loose items from around your unit.
- Lower TV and radio antennas.
- Lower/remove awnings.
- Elevate belongings if your park often floods.
- Shut off power and/or breakers.

### **Prepare your yard**

Getting your yard ready to weather the storm can help keep you and your home safe. High winds can turn even the heaviest items into deadly projectiles that can break through your windows, doors and even walls.

#### **To prepare:**

- Properly prune trees and shrubs before any storms threaten. Do not leave piles of branches that can become missiles in high winds.
- Keep your gutters and downspouts clear and in good working order.
- Replace rock/gravel with lightweight mulch.
- When a hurricane warning is issued, bring in all yard items such as furniture, toys, bird baths/ feeders and barbecue grills.
- Do not drain your pool. Superchlorinate the water and turn off all electricity to the pool for the duration of the storm.
- For more information, see the Trees and Hurricanes webpage at [hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes](http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/treesandhurricanes).

### **Prepare your boat**

- Keep insurance up to date.
- Create a hurricane plan for your boat and file a copy with the marina operator.
- Take a photographic inventory of your boat and its contents.
- Purchase and stow a mooring line - it should be about twice the thickness of normal line. Allow extra length for tide and storm surge.
- When a storm is approaching, remove loose items on the deck and store them on land.
- Shut off fuel lines at the tank.
- Keep batteries charged; make sure bilge pumps are operating properly.
- Secure hatches and doors.
- Use several cleats to distribute the load on the boat.
- Use chafing gear, such as a reinforced radiator hose, where lines will rub for protection – several feet on each side.
- Disconnect electric, water, fuel and other dock connections.

## **Land storage**

- Store boat and trailer in a secure, covered building, such as a garage, if possible.
- If left outside, secure using ground hooks and straps.
- Put wooden blocks between trailer frame and springs for extra support with added weight.

## **Anchored storage**

- Anchor on the lee side of protective land rather than mooring to a dock.
- Use two anchors and no stern anchor.
- Line length should be six to nine times water depth for storm surge shift.
- Keep batteries charged and bilge pumps operating properly.

## **Check Your Insurance**

Most forms of disaster assistance require a specific declaration from the President. This is not always offered after a disaster, and it often comes in the form of loans that must be repaid. Having the proper insurance policies means that coverage and assistance is available regardless of disaster declarations. Property and casualty insurance covers your belongings and also provides you with liability coverage in case you are found at fault for injury or property damage in an accident. If you own property, such as a home, rental property, boat or business, ask your insurance agent about the options for insuring that property against financial loss.

- Understand your policy, coverages, deductibles, exclusions, and responsibilities after a loss and the statute of limitation for filing a claim.
- Loss Assessment coverage is an option that you can add onto your homeowners or condo insurance policy. This coverage helps protect you if you live in a shared community and are responsible for a portion of damage or loss in a common area.
- Loss of Use, also known as Additional Living Expense, protects you if you must live somewhere else while your home is being repaired. Most flood insurance policies do not cover Loss of Use.

### **Before the event:**

- Take photos or video and inventory your property. You will need this if you have to make a claim.
- Make sure you have all of your important documents together.
- Back your photos and documents up electronically using cloud-based storage.

### **After the event:**

- Take photos or video of the damage to document your losses for your insurance claim before you move any debris or remove damaged belongings.
- Make a list of damaged contents.
- File your insurance claims promptly. There are time limitations on submitting claims with many insurance companies.
- Do not sign an Assignment of Benefits. In Florida, there's a rapidly growing scam in which some unscrupulous home repair vendors pressure homeowners to sign away the rights and benefits of their insurance policies as a condition of performing work. This practice has led to grossly inflated claims and an explosion of Assignment of Benefit lawsuits against insurers, which is driving up the cost of homeowners' coverage for consumers.

**Disaster restoration companies:**

- From homeowners insurance to commercial insurance for your business, many restoration companies offer special or “preferred” programs for clients that contract prior to hurricane season for their services. Often, this includes a no-cost evaluation to determine the specific risks and needs associated with your property.
- Establishing this relationship during “blue skies,” or prior to hurricane season, ensures you will be able to secure the assistance you need after sustaining a loss from a storm. Once the storm has hit, these companies are overwhelmed with calls requesting bids for service. These “preferred” programs not only secure you as a client but can also protect you from the increase in cost due to the demand for restoration service throughout the county.
- In addition, restoration companies are familiar with the insurance claims process and work with insurance companies regularly.
- It is important to confirm the company you contract with is licensed, bonded and insured.

**Retrofit guides and information:**

- Disaster Safety, [disastersafety.org](http://disastersafety.org)
- Federal Alliance for Safe Homes, [flash.org](http://flash.org)
- Florida Division of Emergency Management’s Hurricane Retrofit Guide, [apps.floridadisaster.org/hrg](http://apps.floridadisaster.org/hrg)

## Going beyond the text: Being prepared

As hurricane season approaches, look through the pages of the *Tampa Bay Times* for information about hurricane safety and preparedness. Print or cut out any articles you find and paste them on separate sheets of paper. Keep them handy with the checklists that you have created. Get help with your checklist on page 10. Checklists are a good way to make sure you have everything you need to be prepared. Divide your class into groups. Assign one of the following tasks to each group:

- Create a complete checklist for pets.
- Create a checklist of important papers.
- Create a checklist of items for small children, disabled persons, or elderly family members.
- Create a list of items that you must take with you or store safely in waterproof bags or boxes if you evacuate.
- Make a list of tasks to perform outside of your home.
- Make a list of tasks to perform inside of your home.

You can also do a lot of research online through websites for: Pinellas County Emergency Management, Florida Division of Emergency Management, Pinellas County chapter of the American Red Cross and the National Hurricane Center. You may want to put all the information you gathered into a notebook for reference when a hurricane is threatening.

## Build Your Kit

Assembling an emergency kit now can help you make sure you and your family have what you need in an emergency. To simplify the process, Pinellas County Emergency Management recommends that you keep these items ready to go in case you need them on a moment's notice.

### Basic Supplies

- Sanitation: Wipes, antibacterial hand gel, soap, toilet paper, hygiene supplies, feminine supplies, diapers, cloth face covering. Enough for each family member.
- Water: At least one gallon of water per person per day for drinking, and an additional one gallon per person per day for hygiene and cooking, for seven days.
- One-week supply of nonperishable food that does not require cooking. For example: dried fruit, canned tuna fish, peanut butter, etc. Remember comfort foods.
- Non-electric can opener.
- Medications and copies of prescriptions. Ask your pharmacist for a printout.
- Rain gear.
- Flashlight or lantern.
- Battery-operated or hand-crank radio.
- Extra batteries.
- First aid supplies: Over-the-counter pain reliever, antidiarrhea medicine, laxative, antihistamine, anti-itch cream, antiseptic.
- Insect repellent.
- Extra batteries for medical devices such as hearing aids.
- Eyeglasses and extra contact lenses.
- Extra bottled oxygen if needed.
- Small generator for electrically-dependent equipment like an oxygen concentrator or nebulizer.
- Cash for when ATMs are out of service. Small bills will make purchasing easier.
- Emergency Access Permit (for barrier islands).
- Books, cards, board games for entertainment.
- Full tank of gas in vehicle.
- Extra gas cans.
- Cellphone with charger, extra battery backup, solar charger.
- Emergency contacts in mobile device and printed for backup.
- Information downloaded to your mobile device (contacts, maps).
- A paper map.
- Paper and pencil.
- Sunscreen.

## **Important Documents**

- Take photos of your documents for backup.
- Put paper copies together in a sealed plastic bag.
- Driver's license or ID card.
- Emergency Access Permit for barrier island residents and businesses.
- Social Security card.
- Important numbers and emergency contacts.
- Medical records: Pharmacy prescription record, doctors, medications, dosages, blood type.
- Insurance policies for home, health, flood, auto, renters.
- Titles to house, cars and boats.
- Pay stubs for disaster assistance eligibility.
- Household inventory for insurance claims: Photo or video documentation stored online.
- Other irreplaceable papers: Birth, marriage, divorce, death and adoption certificates; passports; military records; wills, trust documents.
- Account numbers for bank, credit cards, savings and investments.
- All Hazards Preparedness Guide.

## **Basic Supplies for Babies**

- Diapers.
- Wipes.
- Clothing.
- Plastic bags.
- Formula.
- Sterilized bottles.
- Bottled Water.
- Pacifier.
- Comfort items.
- Blanket.
- Thermometer.

## **Basic Supplies for Pets and Service Animals**

- Enough pet food and water for two weeks.
- Identification/chip (remember to update).
- County license.
- Immunization records.
- Photo.
- Collar and leash.
- Medications for two weeks with instructions.
- Toys/blanket.
- Cat litter, pan, scoop.

- Plastic waste bags.
- Disinfectant.
- Paper towels.
- Carrier or crate.
- Newspaper or other lining.

### **Supplies to Add If You Go to a Host Home or Hotel**

In addition to basic supplies:

- Pillow and blankets.
- Air mattress, sleeping bag, floor mat or other as needed.
- Food and water. Find out from the host what you can bring, including perishable food.
- Paper plates, plastic cups and utensils.
- Complete change of clothing for several days.
- Check with your host to see what they need.

### **Public Shelter – General**

In addition to basic supplies:

- Wearable medical alert tag.
- Blanket, pillow, cot, folding chair or twin-size air mattress.
- Complete change of clothing for several days.
- Special dietary items (sugar-free, low sodium, gluten-free, etc.) with can opener if required. Common food and water is supplied.
- Flashlight.
- Ear plugs.
- Eye mask/covering for sleeping.
- Battery-powered fan.
- Battery-powered radio.

### **Public Shelter - Special Needs**

In addition to basic supplies:

- Any durable medical equipment or supplies you may need such as: Portable oxygen.
- Wheelchair, walker or cane.
- Oxygen concentrator.
- Nebulizer.
- Medications in the original container (two-week supply).
- Personal hygiene: Toothbrush, wipes, soap, hairbrush, adult diapers.
- Written instructions or orders regarding your care.
- Pet emergency kit. Pets will not be staying with you.

## Supplies to Add If You Shelter in Place (or When You Return)

### A kit for home

- Two weeks of fluids to drink and nonperishable food that does not require cooking. For example: dried fruit, canned tuna fish, peanut butter, etc. Remember comfort foods.
- Paper plates, plastic cups and utensils.
- Cooler with ice. Make extra ice in plastic bags and plastic food storage containers, and keep those in the freezer to keep food cold longer.
- Insect repellent.
- Sunscreen.
- Tarps with rope or elastic cord.
- Whistle to signal for help.
- Tools: Wrench to shut off water; utility knife for sheeting; and duct tape, hammer and nails to make temporary repairs.
- Dust mask.
- Sheets of plastic and duct tape to seal windows and doors if ordered to do so.
- Matches or lighter in waterproof container.
- Large garbage bags.
- Portable toilet: Use one from a boat or camper, or make one using a five-gallon bucket with lid, trash bags, chlorine bleach.
- Household chlorine bleach with medicine dropper to disinfect or treat water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleach with added cleaners.
- Extra gas for a generator and somewhere safe to store it.
- Extra propane or charcoal for outdoor grill.
- Battery-powered fan.
- Camera to take photos/video of damage.
- Disinfectant to prevent mold.

## **Pet Disaster Preparedness**

When disaster strikes, it is vital that you and your family stay safe – and that includes your pets. By having a plan and practicing it, you can be prepared to act at a moment's notice should a major storm come your way. Here are some ways to keep your furry family members safe, courtesy of the Humane Society of the United States:

### **Preparing for your pets**

Pets are an important part of your family, and it will be up to you to plan for them.

- Make sure they are up to date on their vaccinations and their county license is valid.
- Microchip your animal in case you get separated and be sure to update your contact information if it changes.
- Take a photo of you and your pet together. Keep it with your important documents and on your phone.
- Build a pet emergency kit.
- If you must evacuate, take your pet with you. Keep them on a leash or in their crate.
- Wherever you end up evacuating to during the event, ensure your destination is pet-friendly.

### **Before the storm**

- Microchip pets or put a tag on their collar with your name, address and cellphone number.
- Have a plan established detailing which family member is responsible for your pet's needs (who will grab the pet, the food, water, emergency kit, carrier, etc.).
- Know a safe place where your pets can go if you need to evacuate or seek shelter.
- Evacuate your family and pets as early as you can and remember to take your disaster preparedness kit for your pets (First Aid kit, leashes, and pets' carrying cases, bowls, sanitation materials, chew toy, minimum three days, ideally 7-10 days of food, medications, water, your veterinarian's contact information, a photo of your pet).
- Bring pets inside; bring outdoor animals inside with a carrier ready that is large enough to turn around and lie down comfortably.
- If your family must evacuate, take your pets with you.

### **During the storm**

- Choose a safe room for riding out the storm — an interior room without windows.
- Stay with pets. If crated, they depend on you for food and water. Don't leave pets in vehicles.
- Keep your emergency kit in that room with you (food, water, litter, meds, etc.).
- Know your pet's hiding places. That's where they may run; keep them with you.
- Secure exits and cat doors so pets can't escape into the storm.
- Do not tranquilize your pets. They'll need their survival instincts should the storm require that.

## **After the storm**

Make sure the storm has fully passed before going outside and assess damages before allowing children or animals out.

Keep dogs on a leash and cats in a carrier. Displaced objects and fallen trees can disorient pets and sharp debris could harm them.

Give pets time to become reoriented. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and cause a pet to become confused or lost.

Keep animals away from downed power lines and water that may be contaminated.

Your pet's behavior may change after a crisis, becoming more aggressive or self-protective. Be sensitive to these changes. Animals need comforting, too.

## **Going beyond the text: Thirty-second warning**

The 30-30 Rule determines the threat of lightning to you. Start counting as soon as you see a lightning flash and keep counting until you hear the thunder associated with the flash. Sound travels at about five seconds per mile. How many miles away is the lightning if you hear thunder 30 seconds after you see the strike?

Did you know that lightning is a form of energy? There are many different forms of energy. Look in the *Tampa Bay Times* for pictures and words that are forms of energy. Cut out the words and pictures you find and create an energy collage to share with your class.

## Prepare Your Business

It is critical to have a business continuity plan so that you can resume offering your services to the community as soon as possible after a storm.

- Get help with business disaster planning by contacting the Florida Small Business Development Center at Pinellas County Economic Development online at [pced.org](http://pced.org) or at 727-453-7332.
- Make a plan for doing business without power: alternate locations, cloud-based storage of your documents, and creating an employee, vendor and key client communication plan.
- Ensure your employees are prepared and know what the plan is to report back to work after the storm.
- Review your business insurance coverage.
- Visit St. Pete/Clearwater provides information and resources to help those in the tourism industry before, during and after a disaster. For information, call 727-464-7200.
- All businesses in Pinellas that have sustained damage or economic injury due to a disaster should complete the Florida Business Damage Assessment. The state uses this information to assign resources to our area. See [FloridaDisaster.biz](http://FloridaDisaster.biz).
- Once a disaster has been declared, disaster loan assistance may be available. Pinellas County Economic Development can help businesses with applications for business emergency bridge loans and loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

## Preparing Kids for Disasters

Once you know your risk, you can make a plan for what you will do if one of these hazards occurs. Your plan should include everyone in your family, especially children. Disasters are scary for everyone but even more so for young kids. Here are some ideas to help them be prepared:

- Young children should have a “go kit” with items to keep them busy and give them comfort. A favorite toy, teddy bear or even favorite snacks should be included in the kit.
- Involve older kids in your planning, such as helping to check supplies or making a shopping list.
- Have family drills on fire, tornado and hurricane safety and know where to go if a disaster happens.

Learn more about weather and all-hazard preparedness:

- Weather Wiz Kids – [weatherwizkids.com/weatherhurricane.htm](http://weatherwizkids.com/weatherhurricane.htm)
- HowStuffWorks – [science.howstuffworks.com/nature/natural-disasters/disaster-preparedness-quiz.htm](http://science.howstuffworks.com/nature/natural-disasters/disaster-preparedness-quiz.htm)
- Pinellas County Kids Activity Booklet – [pinellacounty.org/kids/pdf/hurricane\\_activity\\_book.pdf](http://pinellacounty.org/kids/pdf/hurricane_activity_book.pdf)

### **Going beyond the text: Kids Kit**

Disasters typically give little warning and can leave confusion and devastation in their wake. That is why it is important to be prepared by having an emergency kit for your home and for use during an evacuation.

For this activity, create an emergency kit in the form of a poster or diorama. Look through the *Tampa Bay Times* for words, images – cartoons, advertisements and photos – to create your disaster supply art project. You can include any of the items listed on page 10. Send a photo of your poster to [ema@pinellascounty.org](mailto:ema@pinellascounty.org) with the subject line: Kids Kit Contest. One winner will be chosen for elementary, middle and high school. The winner of the contest will receive a NOAA Weather Radio and a pizza party for the class to enjoy. Be sure to email your submissions by May 16.

### **Going beyond the text: Learning new words**

When you study meteorology and weather, you come up against some tough vocabulary words! Most vocabulary words are learned from context clues or good old-fashioned dictionary work. While you read this publication, be sure to highlight or circle words you don't know. Try to figure out their meanings by looking for clues in the sentences around these unknown words. Write down your best guess and then look the words up in a dictionary. As a group activity, make a list of the words you and your classmates have identified and see which ones stumped the class. See how many of these words you can find in the *Tampa Bay Times*.

### **Going beyond the text: Challenge your classmates**

Much damage is done to homes and businesses each year by extreme weather. Using the classified ads in the *Tampa Bay Times*, compete with classmates to see who can identify the most businesses and services that might be of use to a community that has experienced any of the following disasters: tornadoes, hurricanes or floods. For example, you might select a disc jockey who could entertain the volunteer workers and residents of a tent city set up to house those who lost their homes as a result of a major hurricane. Think outside the box, be creative, and be prepared to explain your selections. Create a poster letting everyone know what services are available.

## **Staying Safe**

**Should I stay or should I go? Use this tool to see if and when you would have to evacuate.**

### **Do you live in a mobile home?**

- If you answer NO, go to the next question.
- If you answer YES, GO. You are considered to be Zone A and must always evacuate when Level A or higher is ordered.

### **If you do not live in a mobile home, do you live in an evacuation zone?**

- If you answer NO, STAY. You will not have to evacuate. Consider being a host home to friends and family. Invite people to stay with you and together you can secure your home and stock up on all the essentials you will need to ride out the storm and survive the days that follow.
- If you answer YES, go to the next question.

### **Are you in a zone ordered to evacuate?**

- If you answer NO, STAY.
- If you answer YES, GO. You must always evacuate when your zone is ordered to evacuate. Always evacuate outside of the zone ordered to evacuate.

## **Shelter in place**

A shelter-in-place order means conditions are not safe outside, and you should shelter where you are until it is safe for you to go outside again.

This may be due to a hazardous materials spill or incident, severe weather, such as tornadoes or tropical storms and hurricanes. If it is a hurricane, you should plan to shelter in place outside of an evacuation area in a strong structure.

### **Sheltering in place may include:**

- Closing and securing your windows and doors.
- For high wind events, securing outside furniture and other items that may become projectiles.
- For hurricanes, hardening your home with window and door protection to minimize damages.

You may need your emergency kit supplies during this time, so know where to find them. Sheltering in place could be at your own home, at a friend's home, in a hotel/motel, at a local business or church, at school or at a public shelter. If public shelters are open for an event, they will be posted on the Emergency Information page on the Emergency Management website, [pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency), or announced through the media and alerts. See the many ways to stay informed on the Emergency Management website at [pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency) or download the mobile app, Ready Pinellas.

## **Safe room**

A safe room is an interior room, closet or a stairwell, preferably without windows. This room will provide the maximum safety during tornadoes and hurricanes when winds are the highest. FEMA offers information on how to set up a safe room at [fema.gov/emergencymanagers/risk-management/safe-rooms](https://www.fema.gov/emergencymanagers/risk-management/safe-rooms).

## **Sandbags**

Sandbags are available at home improvement stores and may be provided by Pinellas County and local municipalities at certain times prior to flooding emergencies. If they are offered, the separate municipalities and the unincorporated areas of Pinellas County operate individual sandbag sites, so check with your own city to find out the details for your area.

Residents of unincorporated areas can check the website for updates or call the County Information Center during emergencies only at 727-464-4333.

There are options available other than sandbags. Local home improvement stores and online vendors may have flood barriers available. Be aware that the use of sandbags does not mean that you will be protected from storm surge.

## **Important: Disposal of sandbags**

Sand and sandbags that have been in contact with floodwaters may be contaminated with sewage or septic waste, animal waste, oil and gasoline residue, lawn chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides, or other hazardous chemicals. Caution should be used to avoid direct human contact when handling sand or sandbags. Wear gloves and a dust mask if there is loose or blowing material. Do not place used sand in or near bodies of water, playgrounds, sandboxes, or other areas of direct human contact.

## Going beyond the text: Being aware

Many people die from freshwater flooding because they try to drive through water that covers roads. Moving water only as deep as a car's hubcaps can be enough to move the car, possibly into a river or a stream. Remember, when you approach water covering a roadway, turn around... don't drown! Did you know that just 6 inches of fast-moving floodwater can knock you off your feet and 2 feet of water can sweep an SUV off a road?

Each year, more deaths occur due to flooding than from any other thunderstorm-related hazard. Of these deaths, many are preventable, but too many people continue to drive around the barriers that warn you the road is flooded. Floods can happen in most of the places where people live.

Look in the archives of the *Tampa Bay Times*, using the digital edition, to find information about when and where the risks of flooding were high. Write a blog post in response to the following questions. How did the weather create those conditions? How quickly did the water level rise? Did people prepare for the possibility in some way? Was there any property damage or loss of life? Who is responsible for monitoring and predicting these conditions in your area? Write a second paragraph explaining how people can avoid injuries due to flooding.

## **Evacuation**

An evacuation order may be given when it is not safe for people to remain in an area and there is time to have them move to safety. The time to get to safety may be limited, so you need to know where you will go and what you need to take with you. As a hurricane approaches, you should be putting your final preparations in place. If you are going to a host home, help them secure their home and bring emergency supplies there.

## **Locally**

Evacuating close to home, but outside of the hazard area is the best option. Have a plan for the following situations:

- When you are asked to evacuate outside of your immediate area, you could go stay with family or friends or at a hotel.
- For strong tropical storms and hurricanes, public shelters will be opened. This information will be posted on the Emergency Information page at [pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency) or announced via the media or alerts. Public emergency shelters are available to the general population. There are special needs shelters for people of any age who are electric-dependent or who need minimal medical care. Pet-friendly shelters are for dogs and cats only. Their owners must be at the shelter with them to care for their needs. The shelter listing is updated on an ongoing basis to keep you informed about which ones are open for that evacuation. If you plan to leave the area as a hurricane approaches, leave days in advance of the predicted landfall to avoid crowded roads, filled hotels and canceled flights.

## **Out of the area**

For large events, like hurricanes, many people want to leave the area altogether. If you do plan to do this, here are some key points to keep in mind:

- Other counties may be evacuating, too, and what is normally an hour drive may take you much longer. You may need to consider leaving when a watch is issued (36 hours in advance of impact) or sooner. Flights may be canceled or hard to find.
- Hurricanes may end up impacting the area you are headed to. Watch forecasts frequently to monitor for any changes.
- Know where you will go. Plan to stay with friends or family or in a hotel outside of a hazard area.
- Ensure your car is in good working condition and filled with gas. Gas may be hard to find along the evacuation routes, or lines may be very long.
- Prepare for delays in getting back to the county and your home after the event.
- Download the Florida 511 mobile app for up-to-the-minute, real-time traffic conditions and incident information for the State of Florida.

## **Vertical evacuation**

In some cases of flooding, it may be necessary to move to higher areas within your house. It is not recommended to stay in your home if it is vulnerable to storm surge from hurricanes, even if you live in a high-rise building. If you find yourself in a situation where you must vertically evacuate, consider the following:

- Shut off water service, gas service and electricity to your home.
- Move to the second floor or higher if needed.
- Stand on top of a counter or substantial piece of furniture to stay above the rising water.
- If you must go into your attic, take an axe or something in case you need to break through the roof.

## **Personal vehicle**

If you will be evacuating, the most convenient way to go is to be able to pack up your car and drive to your destination. Remember to take your emergency kit with you so you have what you need for all the people/pets included in your plan.

## **Public transit**

If you need transportation assistance from someone else, make sure you plan for this early on. For tropical storms and hurricanes, drivers will need to be off the roads and seek their own safety well before a storm impacts us. Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) will run buses during an evacuation, although some routes could vary from their regular schedule. Check for updates at [psta.net/riding-psta/schedulesmap/](http://psta.net/riding-psta/schedulesmap/).

- Rides are free during an evacuation and there are transfer stations to help you get to a shelter, if needed.
- Pets are allowed on the buses, but they must be in a crate or large dogs must be on a leash with a muzzle.

## **Public Shelters**

Not all shelters open for every storm. To see what shelters are open, see [pinellascounty.org/emergency/shelters.htm](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency/shelters.htm).

## **What to expect**

The space you are allocated will be limited.

- Cots are not provided, so it is recommended that you bring a one-person air mattress.
- Come prepared for an environment that is noisy and well-lit throughout the night.
- With the exception of special needs shelters, the public shelters do not have generators. It is helpful to bring a flashlight, battery-powered fan and battery-powered radio to use if power is lost.
- Often, there is food and water served, but you may want to bring your own food if you are on a special diet.

## **Pet-friendly shelters**

There are pet-friendly shelters available for you to go to with your dogs and cats. You must stay at the shelter to have them there.

- Food is available for the pets at the shelter, but you may want to bring your own.
- Bring a carrier or crate and have a leash and collar, food and water bowls, litter box and litter, medicine and any comfort items.
- Pets will be in a crate in a separate area of the shelter from you.
- Put a picture of you and your pet, along with any special needs, on your crate.
- Pre-registration is not required.
- A Pet Shelter Enrollment Form is available on the Pinellas County Animal Services website at [pinellacounty.org/animalservices](http://pinellacounty.org/animalservices). Fill it in and tape it to your pet's crate. It will make registration easier once you get to the shelter.

## **Special needs shelters**

Special needs shelters are for those who need minimal medical assistance or who are dependent on electricity for life-sustaining equipment. Please preregister for special needs shelters by calling (727) 464-3800 or visiting: [pinellascounty.org/specialneeds](http://pinellascounty.org/specialneeds).

Keep in mind that not all special needs shelters have cots for everyone, so bring a one-person air mattress with you if needed. You will need to bring your own medical equipment for each person in your party.

### **If you have a pet**

- If you are staying at a special needs shelter, your pet cannot stay with you unless it is a service animal.
- If you do not have a family member or friend who can take care of your cat or dog while you are in the special needs shelter, the staff and volunteers at Pinellas County Animal Services will care for your pet. Simply bring your dog or cat with you to the special needs shelter. Animal Services will bring them to their site on Ulmerton Road in Largo. You will need to provide a leash, carrier, license, health records, medication and any special instructions for your pet. Food is supplied, but you may supply your own if you prefer. Once you return home, Animal Services staff will bring your pet home to you. If you have a pet other than a cat or dog, you will need to make plans for someone to care for it while you are staying in the shelter.

### **Special transportation needs**

If you need assistance with transportation, you must be registered. Use the special needs shelter form on [pinellascounty.org/specialneeds](http://pinellascounty.org/specialneeds) to indicate your transportation needs.

- If a hurricane is being monitored, you may get a phone call to make sure you still would need help with transportation. This phone call does not mean there is an evacuation.
- When an evacuation is planned, you will get a phone call to let you know that emergency personnel will be picking you up to transport you to a shelter.
- You will not be given an exact time for pickup, so please be packed and ready to go once emergency personnel come to your home.
- To request a registration form for special needs and transportation assistance, call Pinellas County Emergency Management at 727-464-3800. During activations, call the County Information Center at 727-464-4333.

## STAY INFORMED

### Taking protective measures

Knowing when severe weather or a hurricane may strike is important. With tornadoes you may have only minutes after a warning is issued. For tropical storms and hurricanes, you may have days.

### Evacuation Orders

For hurricanes, evacuation orders are given based upon how long it will take to evacuate people to safety in advance of the arrival of tropical storm-force winds. Statewide evacuation studies are done to model the clearance time based on the size and strength of the storm. For Pinellas County, the estimated times that it takes to evacuate are:

- 17 hours:** Zone A and mobile homes
- 20 hours:** Zone B, Zone A and mobile homes
- 26 hours:** Zone C, Zone B, Zone A and mobile homes
- 42 hours:** Zone D, Zone C, Zone B, Zone A and mobile homes
- 50 hours:** Zone E, Zone D, Zone C, Zone B, Zone A and mobile homes

Know your evacuation zone and be ready to evacuate if your zone is ordered to do so.

If the hurricane is Category 4 or 5, you may need to take action sooner than these guidelines suggest.

### Hurricane Watch

Forty-eight hours ahead of the onset of tropical storm-force winds:

- Fill vehicle gas tank.
- Get cash, secure papers and valuables.
- Refill medications.
- Fill containers and tubs with water, even if you are evacuating. You may need it when you return.
- Secure yard equipment and furniture.
- Shutter your windows.
- In case your area is ordered to evacuate, secure your home so that you can be ready to leave when the order is issued. If you are registered for a special needs shelter and will be getting transportation, be sure you have everything you need for your emergency kit., See the checklist on page 10.
- Be prepared for an evacuation order to be issued at any time.
- Check news sites and the Pinellas County website for updates to evacuation zones and shelter information.

## **Hurricane Warning**

Thirty-six hours ahead of the onset of tropical storm force winds:

- Stay tuned to local news and get your weather radio ready.
- Complete final preparations to evacuate or to shelter in your home.
- If your plan is to travel out of the area and you can leave at this point, go. You can expect traffic to get heavier as the hurricane nears.
- If you are registered for a special needs shelter and will be getting transportation, be ready to leave. Emergency personnel will begin pick-ups shortly after an evacuation order is issued.
- If you are going to a host home, assist with home preparations and bring your emergency kit there.
- You do not need to wait for an evacuation order. Just remember: If you plan to evacuate to somewhere else in Florida, there is no guarantee that area will not be hit by the storm if its path changes.
- Be prepared for an evacuation order to be issued at any time. Knowing where you will stay is key.

## **Alerts**

### **Alert Pinellas**

Sign up for Alert Pinellas at [pinellascounty.org/alertpinellas](http://pinellascounty.org/alertpinellas) to receive free notifications about emergencies and other important community news.

### **NOAA Weather Alert Radio**

Get automatic alerts from the National Weather Service with a NOAA Weather Alert Radio. You will need to set the radio to receive alerts only for Pinellas County using the Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME). Each model of the radio has different instructions for setting it up so check your owner's manual. For Pinellas County, use SAME code: 012103.

## **Going beyond the text: Become a reporter**

Select several stories from the Tampa Bay Times that report on how people have coped with severe weather. Next, pretend you are a reporter and take notes as you interview someone in your class, family or community who has survived a close encounter with wild weather or water. Then, use your notes to create a news story. Remember to include facts that answer the questions: who, what, when, where, why and how.

## **Free Mobile Apps**

### **Ready Pinellas**

Ready Pinellas is designed to help residents prepare themselves and their families before a storm and as a storm approaches. It is available for free download on the Apple App Store and Google Play.

### **Florida 511**

Florida 511 mobile app provides up-to-the-minute, real-time traffic conditions and incident information for Florida. It is available on the Apple App Store and Google Play. Other Florida 511 tools include Text Alerts, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

### **Nextdoor**

Nextdoor is a social network where you can see local news and updates from Pinellas County and other official agencies. It is available on the Apple App Store and Google Play. The service is also offered on their website at [nextdoor.com](http://nextdoor.com), with options for email and texts.

### **Social Media**

- Facebook for Pinellas County Government: [facebook.com/pinellascountynews](https://facebook.com/pinellascountynews)
- Twitter for Pinellas County Government: [@PinellasCoNews](https://twitter.com/PinellasCoNews)
- Twitter for Pinellas County Emergency Management: [@PinellasEM](https://twitter.com/PinellasEM)
- Pinellas County YouTube: [pccvtv1](https://www.youtube.com/pccvtv1)

## **What To Expect**

There will be a point in time when all evacuations will be over. Winds will continue to gain strength. Once they reach 40 – 50 mph conditions, Fire and Emergency Medical Services will not be able to respond to emergencies. It will be time for everyone to shelter in place.

## **During the Storm**

### **If floodwater starts coming into your home ...**

Do not go outside and wade through the water. Floodwater and storm surge can move very quickly, and live power lines could be in the water outside. Remain inside and stand or sit on something that is elevated off the floor, such as a bed or table. If necessary, evacuate vertically, getting onto your roof as a last resort.

### **If there is a tornado or high sustained winds ...**

Take refuge in your safe room — an interior room, closet or hallway on the lowest level of your home. The center of your house is the safest.

- At a warning, go to your safe room.
- Lie on the floor under a table or other sturdy object if you cannot make it to a safe room.
- Curl up and cover your head with a mattress or other item if available.

### **If the power goes out for six hours ...**

If there is food in the refrigerator, move perishable foods into an ice-filled cooler. Put a thermometer in the cooler to make sure it stays below 40 degrees. Meats and other perishable foods can stay about 40 degrees for two hours without spoiling.

### **If the power stays out for two days ....**

If there is food in the freezer, it can be stored safely for two days if you keep the freezer door shut. Once the storm passes, cook any unspoiled food outside and consider sharing with your neighbors. From this point forward you will need non-perishable food. Get more information on food safety at [foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/food-safety-in-disaster-or-emergency](https://foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/food-safety-in-disaster-or-emergency).

### **If the water supply is affected ...**

It is always possible that the drinking water supply could be affected during a disaster. Monitor the news for boil water advisories, [pinellascounty.org/emergency](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency), which mean there is a possibility of contamination. In this case, you should be prepared to disinfect the water.

- Boil — Bring a pot of water to a rolling boil for one minute to ensure bacteria, viruses or parasites are gone.
- Bleach — Add 1/8 teaspoon of unscented bleach per gallon of water and let stand for 30 minutes; bleach should contain 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. This is less effective than boiling but will work if there is no way to boil water.
- If water is out, use your emergency supplies.

Get more information on disinfecting water at [pinellascounty.org/utilities/boilwater.html](http://pinellascounty.org/utilities/boilwater.html).

### **If there is a sewer outage ...**

If a sewer outage is announced, do not flush your toilet. Powered sewer lift stations may be down, which could cause a sewage backup in your home. Use a portable toilet, like one used on a boat or camper, or set one up by using one of the following methods:

- Five-gallon bucket - Line with heavy-duty trash bag and use household bleach as a disinfectant. Make sure it has a tight lid.
- Toilet bowl - Turn off your outside water supply first and flush once to empty before lining with a trash bag.
- Do not use cat litter. It should not be put into toilets or flushed. It may clog your pipes.

Once given the OK by officials, dispose of the emergency toilet's contents into your household commode. Thoroughly sanitize your emergency toilet with bleach before storing or disposing.

### **If phone, cable and cell service are down ...**

- Use a battery, solar or crank-powered radio. Radio broadcasts are usually the last communication source to go down, and AM stations can broadcast longer than FM. Severe weather alerts are also transmitted through the NOAA Weather Alert Radio.
- Mobile text messaging - Texting often works when other services do not. If your phone's digital clock works, then you can send and receive texts. Social media and mobile apps may be working as well.
- Keep your phone and other devices charged. Use your back-up battery charger and solar battery
- chargers. Use a vehicle to charge your devices.

### **Going beyond the text: Design an ad**

If a hazardous weather incident struck tomorrow, would you be prepared? Would you know what actions to take? In Florida, tornadoes and flooding strike all too often. Planning and practice are keys to safety. Whether in homes, schools or businesses, everyone should have plans for severe weather. Your job is to create an advertising campaign for your school about hazardous weather preparation. Using the information in this guide and the advertisements in the *Tampa Bay Times*, design a public service ad to increase students' awareness of being prepared. With a partner, create a print ad, poster and television ad to share with your classmates.

## **After The Storm**

In the days following a hurricane, crews will be busy clearing roads, responding to emergency calls and assessing damage. You must rely on what you have stored for food, medications and entertainment.

- Only call 911 in the case of a police, medical or fire emergency.
- If you need information, call the County Information Center at 727-464-4333.
- Shelter in place. Do not attempt to travel and be careful when going outside of your home.
- Take photos of your property for insurance and immediately begin taking steps to reduce flood damage, to your home, [pinellascounty.org/flooding/safety.htm](http://pinellascounty.org/flooding/safety.htm).
- Check on your neighbors. Share food and take care of each other.
- Do not set objects of any type on the stove while the power is out.

## **When will power be restored?**

Power companies focus on restoring power in a sequence:

- Public safety situations
- Transmission, substation equipment and main distribution line
- Essential facilities
- Distribution lines

To report an outage or view current outages:

- Duke Energy customers: [dukeenergy.com/outages](http://dukeenergy.com/outages)
- TECO customers: [tampaelectric.com/residential/outages/outagemap](http://tampaelectric.com/residential/outages/outagemap)

## **Driving safety tips**

- Traffic lights may be inoperable or malfunction. If the traffic lights are not working, treat an intersection as a four-way stop sign.
- Do not drive through standing water.
- Match your speed to road conditions. Cars can quickly become uncontrollable when driving on damaged, debris-choked roads.
- Visibility may be limited. Increased traffic on congested roadways and large trucks can obstruct your line of sight.
- Maintain a safe distance from the car in front of you.
- Traffic patterns may be shifted in work zones; always obey posted work zone speed limits.
- Constantly scan for pedestrians who can quickly lose their footing.
- Obey all “road closed” signs. Just because you can’t see road damage doesn’t mean it is safe.
- Not all damaged or destroyed road signs have been replaced; be prepared to yield to a pedestrian or another driver or to stop unexpectedly.
- Know where you are going and give yourself ample time to get there.
- Drive with car lights on and slow down.

## **Generator safety**

- Keep generators in well-ventilated locations outside, away from all doors, windows and vent openings.
- Never use a generator in an attached garage, even with the door open.
- Place generators so the exhaust fumes can’t enter the home through windows, doors or other openings in the building.
- Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for correct placement and mounting height.
- Turn off generators and let them cool down before refueling. Never refuel a generator while it is hot.
- Store fuel for the generator in a container that is intended for the purpose and is correctly labeled as such. Store the containers outside of living areas.

## What To Do

- Stay Connected. Stay tuned to local news for updates on flooded areas, road closures, and re-entry points.
- Follow re-entry orders and avoid heavily damaged or impacted areas.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Roads may be damaged and could collapse from the weight of a car.
- Stay out of flooded areas and standing water. Floodwaters can contain raw sewage, bacteria, viruses, and other germs that can cause disease or be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Watch for critters such as snakes, raccoons, possums and insects that may have “moved” into elevated areas.
- Photograph and list all damaged or lost items including their age and value where possible. Take photos of water in the house. Adjusters need evidence of the damage to prepare your estimate.
- File your flood insurance claim now.
- Remove wet contents immediately to prevent mold. Wet carpeting, furniture, bedding, and other items holding moisture can develop mold within 24 to 48 hours. Cut out drywall that got wet.
- Turn off or keep your breaker box off if water rose above power outlets in your home. Power systems may not be stable after a disaster and power may come off and on.
- Look for water marks to show how high the water was as the levels may have gone down before you are able to assess damages.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and chemicals.
- Empty your refrigerator and discard any spoiled or questionable food. Remove, clean and sanitize shelves, crispers and ice trays. Wash the interior of the refrigerator and freezer with hot water and baking soda.
- Service damaged septic tanks, cesspools, pits, and leaching systems as soon as possible. Damaged sewage systems are serious health hazards.
- Prevent mosquitoes breeding by following the 3 Ds: Drain water when possible; Dress in light colors and cover all parts of the body; Defend with DEET, Picaridin or Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus.
- Follow safety tips for using chainsaws, including safety goggles, gloves and protective foot coverings.
- Know when a job is too big to do yourself and contact a licensed, bonded professional.

## **Mitigation**

- Throughout the year, regularly inspect and maintain your home and surroundings.
- Keep storm drains near your home clear of leaves and debris, especially before and after a storm. Only rain down the drain.
- Inspect and clear your gutters frequently.
- Repair or replace your roof if shingles are deteriorating or missing.
- Repair, where possible, sidewalks, patios, decks and driveways that may have shifted over the years, allowing water to pool close to the home.

## **Retrofit your property**

You can strengthen your property against wind and water intrusion by protecting and reinforcing four critical areas: roof, windows, doors and garage doors.

Examples include:

- Add roof straps.
- If you live in a manufactured home, add reinforced anchoring straps to reduce the chance of it toppling over.
- Upgrade to hurricane impact windows or use other protective coverings, such as plywood. There are many options available.
- Install gutters with spout extensions and use a splash pad to direct the water away from your foundation. Make sure they are pointed away from your neighbors' yards and into your grass or garden, not into the driveway.
- Install trench drains in your driveway or at your doorway to help collect water and reduce yard flooding.
- Raise switches, sockets, circuit breakers and wiring.
- Elevate your equipment, such as water heaters, AC units, etc.
- Install sewer backflow valves. Valves, such as backwater or flap, can alleviate wastewater from entering your home if the sewer system becomes overwhelmed.
- Install flood vents in the walls of enclosed storage spaces. This helps relieve pressure put on the walls during a flood event and lowers the chance of their collapsing.
- Build with flood-resistant materials.
- The Federal Alliance for Safe Homes offers detailed information on ways to strengthen your home at [flash.org](http://flash.org). Their YouTube channel features informational videos as well as projects you can do yourself at [youtube.com/user/StrongHomes](https://www.youtube.com/user/StrongHomes).

For information on upgrading or rebuilding your home in Pinellas County, go to [pinellascounty.org/emergency/RebuildRight](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency/RebuildRight).

## **Consumer Alert**

In a declared state of emergency, it is illegal to sell necessary goods or services at increased prices. If you believe a business or individual is price gouging, call Pinellas County Consumer Protection, [pinellascounty.org/consumer](http://pinellascounty.org/consumer), at 727-464-6200 or report it to the Florida Attorney General's Office at 866-966-7226 or through their website portal at [flsa6.gov/consumer-protection/](http://flsa6.gov/consumer-protection/). If you do not have phone or internet service, document the activities of the business or individual and report it as soon as you can.

## **Emergency Assistance**

After a hurricane, it could take days or even weeks for emergency relief services to be available. Service providers in the county will work with officials and emergency relief organizations from out of the area to provide essentials to residents.

When the area is stabilized, long-term recovery begins with business restoration, building repairs and interim long-term housing for those who lost homes.

In the months that follow, state and federal governments may set up sites to take insurance and financial aid claims such as long-term housing and loans for reconstruction and small businesses.

## **File Insurance Claims**

The claims process will depend on the type of claim you are filing. Contact your insurance agent immediately to report the damage to your property and discuss the next steps. Your insurance agent will assist you in starting the claims.

- Contact your insurance agent.
- Collect information you need about the damage and claim.
- Photographs of the property and contents before and after a loss are recommended.
- Accompany your adjuster when inspecting the damage to your property.
- Put your differences in writing.
- Keep all receipts: Receipts are needed to receive reimbursement for your living expenses, for items you lost, and for some repairs.

## **Know Your Rights**

Criminals may prey on your vulnerability after a storm. Know your rights as a consumer and don't let your eagerness to make repairs leave you a victim.

- Be cautious of anyone coming to your home uninvited and offering to do home repairs.
- Be alert to individuals canvassing your neighborhood in an unmarked van or truck.
- Insist on a written estimate and get estimates from several companies.
- Be sure the contract or business card has an address, telephone number and professional license numbers.
- Ask for references and check them out.
- Insist on start and completion dates in the contract.
- Do not pay the final balance for work performed until it is completed to your satisfaction.

Contact the Pinellas County Department of Justice and Consumer Services, [pinellascounty.org/consumer](http://pinellascounty.org/consumer), for more information at 727-464-6200.

## **GET INVOLVED**

### **Businesses**

Business and industry partners can sponsor educational events, fund projects, volunteer for projects, and organize events to benefit vulnerable areas. Email [ema@pinellascounty.org](mailto:ema@pinellascounty.org).

### **Communities**

If you live in a condominium or mobile home community, you can become a Disaster Liaison to help educate, prepare and communicate with your community. Email [ema@pinellascounty.org](mailto:ema@pinellascounty.org).

### **Volunteer Organizations**

Faith-based or community-based organization representatives can join the Pinellas County Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) to help strengthen the county's ability to respond to disasters. Email [voad@pinellascounty.org](mailto:voad@pinellascounty.org).

### **VIPs in Disasters (VIPD)**

If you are a Pinellas County volunteer or want to become one, you can train to play a role before, during or after a disaster. Go to [pinellascounty.org/volserv/disaster-opportunities.htm](http://pinellascounty.org/volserv/disaster-opportunities.htm).

### **EMbassadors**

Pinellas County Emergency EMbassadors volunteer at outreach events and help with educational presentations to bring valuable information to the public. Email [ema@pinellascounty.org](mailto:ema@pinellascounty.org).

### **Billboard Emergency Alert System (BEAS)**

If your business, community center or House of Worship maintains an electronic billboard, you can help our community stay informed. Go to [pinellascounty.org/emergency/beas/beas-form.htm](http://pinellascounty.org/emergency/beas/beas-form.htm).

### **Help your neighbor**

You can assist family, friends and neighbors in many ways. For example: Help them prepare their properties, get emergency supplies, register for special needs shelters, download the Ready Pinellas app and sign up for Alert Pinellas.

## **Pinellas County Emergency Management**

The Department of Emergency Management began as Pinellas County Civil Defense during the Cold War era of the late 50s and early 60s. The principal focus was protection of the population from the threat of nuclear attack by a hostile country. Over the years it became obvious that Pinellas County's population was vulnerable to a host of natural and technological hazards.

Thus began the metamorphosis of Civil Defense to Emergency Management. Today the Department of Emergency Management vigorously pursues an "All Hazards" planning strategy in the classic "Four Phases of Emergency Management": Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. In a jurisdiction of more than 900,000 residents this is no small undertaking. Our philosophy is that such planning efforts are dynamic and constantly changing. Our task is to constantly develop, assess, test and update the county's disaster preparedness plans with the goal being the protection of our citizens, and visitors, lives and property.

## **Pinellas County**

### **County Information Center**

(During emergencies)

727-464-4333

[pinellascounty.org](http://pinellascounty.org)

### **Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County**

727-824-6900

[pinellashealth.com](http://pinellashealth.com)

### **Pinellas County Animal Services**

727-582-2600

[pinellascounty.org/animalservices](http://pinellascounty.org/animalservices)

### **Pinellas County Consumer Protection**

727-464-6200

[pinellascounty.org/consumer](http://pinellascounty.org/consumer)

### **Pinellas County Economic Development**

727-464-7332

[pced.org](http://pced.org)

### **Pinellas County Information Line**

727-464-3000 /

V/TDD 727-464-4062

[pinellascounty.org](http://pinellascounty.org)

**Pinellas County Schools**

Main 727-588-6000

School Bus Info Line 727-587-2020

[pcsb.org](http://pcsb.org)

**Pinellas County Sheriff's Office**

(non-emergency)

727-582-6200

[pcsoweb.com](http://pcsoweb.com)

**Pinellas County Solid Waste**

727-464-7500

[pinellascounty.org/solidwaste](http://pinellascounty.org/solidwaste)

**Pinellas County Utilities**

727-464-4000

[pinellascounty.org/utilities](http://pinellascounty.org/utilities)

**Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)**

[psta.net](http://psta.net)

**St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport**

727-453-7800

[fly2pie.com](http://fly2pie.com)

**Visit St. Petersburg/Clearwater**

[visitstpeteclearwater.com](http://visitstpeteclearwater.com)

## **Utility companies**

### **Clearwater Gas**

727-562-4900 (general)  
727-462-6633 (gas leaks)  
clearwatergas.com

### **Duke Energy (report outages)**

800-228-8485  
duke-energy.com/outages

### **Frontier**

800-921-8101  
frontier.com

### **Spectrum**

855- 222-0102  
spectrum.com/services/florida/  
pinellas-county

### **TECO Peoples Gas**

877-832-6747 (general leaks)  
peoplesgas.com

### **TECO (report outages)**

888-223-0800  
account.tecoenergy.com/outage

### **WOW!**

866-745-3685  
wowway.com

## **State agencies**

### **Florida Attorney General's Office**

(price gouging)  
866-966-7226  
myfloridalegal.com

### **Florida Highway Patrol**

\*FHP (mobile phone)  
727-570-5010  
flhsmv.gov/florida-highway-patrol/about-fhp/

## **Federal agencies**

### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

800-621-3362

fema.gov

### **National Hurricane Center**

nhc.noaa.gov

National Weather Service/

Tampa Bay Area

weather.gov/tbw

## **Newspaper in Education**

The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education program (NIE) is a cooperative effort between schools and the Times Publishing Co. to encourage the use of newspapers in print and electronic form as educational resources – a living textbook.

Our educational resources fall into the category of informational text, a type of nonfiction text. The primary purpose of informational text is to convey information about the natural or social world.

NIE serves educators, students and families by providing schools with class sets of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Tampa Bay Times* plus award-winning original educational publications, teacher guides, lesson plans, educator workshops and many more resources — all at no cost to schools, teachers or families.

In 2020-2021, NIE provided more than 1 million print copies and 10 million digital editions of the *Times* to area classrooms.

For more information about NIE, visit [tampabay.com/nie](http://tampabay.com/nie), call 727-893-8138 or email [ordernie@tampabay.com](mailto:ordernie@tampabay.com). Follow us on Twitter at [twitter.com/TBTimesNIE](https://twitter.com/TBTimesNIE). Find us on Facebook at [facebook.com/TBTNIE](https://facebook.com/TBTNIE).

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## Florida Standards

**This publication and the activities focus on the following Florida Standards:**

**BEST:** ELA.K12.C.1.4; ELA.K12.C.2.1; ELA.K12.C.3.1; ELA.K12.C.4.1; ELA.K12.C.5.1; ELA.K12.R.2.1; ELA.K12.R.3.2; ELA.K12.R.3.4; ELA.K12.V.1.1 **Language Arts:** LAFS.K12.L.1.1; LAFS.K12.L.1.2; LAFS.K12.L.2.3; LAFS.K12.L.3.4; LAFS.K12.L.3.6; LAFS.K12.RI.1.1; LAFS.K12.RI.1.2; LAFS.K12.RI.1.3; LAFS.K12.RI.2.4; LAFS.K12.RI.2.5; LAFS.K12.RI.2.6; LAFS.K12.RI.3.7; LAFS.K12.RST.1.1 LAFS.K12.RST.1.2; LAFS.K12.RST.2.6; LAFS.K12.RST.3.7; LAFS.K12.SL.1.1; LAFS.K12.SL.1.2; LAFS.K12.SL.1.3; LAFS.K12.SL.2.4; LAFS.K12.SL.2.5; LAFS.K12.W.1.1; LAFS.K12.W.1.2; LAFS.K12.W.2.4; LAFS.K12.W.2.5; LAFS.K12.W.2.6; LAFS.K12.W.3.7; LAFS.K12.W.3.8; LAFS.K12.W.3.9; LAFS.K12.W.4.10 **Science:** SC.K12.N.1.1; SC.K12.N.1.3; SC.K12.N.1.6; SC.K12.N.3.2; SC.K12.P.10.1; SC.K12.P.10.2; SC.K12.E.6.2; SC.K12.E.7.1; SC.K12.E.7.3; SC.K12.E.7.5; SC.K12.E.7.7; SC.K12.E.7.8; SC.K12.P.11.2; SC.K12.P.9.1; SC.K12.P.10.1; SC.5.K12.10.3; SC.5.K12.10.4