



Hurricanes, Tropical Storms Pose A Major Threat to Georgia

Although the 2006 hurricane season will not officially begin until June 1, Office of Homeland Security-Georgia County Emergency Management Agency (OHS-GEMA) Assistant Director Charley English says it is not too early to make preparations now, before the hurricane season arrives.

"After Hurricane Katrina's catastrophic and the forecasts of stronger, more frequent hurricanes for the immediate future, I think we learned that these storms can find their way to Georgia. Don't be caught unprepared for hurricanes or any type of severe weather. Always keep an ample supply of nonperishable food, drinking water, a first-aid kit, battery-powered radio, flashlights and extra batteries on hand," English insists.

OHS-GEMA recommends the following:

Know What Hurricane WATCH and WARNING Mean

- WATCH: Hurricane conditions are *possible* in the specified area of the WATCH, usually within 36 hours.
- WARNING: Hurricane conditions are *expected* in the specified area of the WARNING, usually within 24 hours.

Prepare a Personal Evacuation Plan

- Identify ahead of time where you could go if you are told to evacuate. Choose several places--a friend's home in another town, a motel, or a shelter.
- Keep handy the telephone numbers of these places as well as a road map of your locality. You may need to take alternative or unfamiliar routes if major roads are closed or clogged.
- Listen to [NOAA](#) Weather Radio or local radio or TV stations for evacuation instructions. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Take these items with you when evacuating:
 - Prescription medications and medical supplies;
 - Bedding and clothing, including sleeping bags and pillows
 - Bottled water, extra cash, battery-operated radio and extra batteries, first aid kit, flashlight
 - Car keys and maps
 - Documents, including driver's license, Social Security card, proof of residence, insurance policies, wills, deeds, birth and marriage certificates, tax records, etc.

Assemble a Disaster Supplies Kit Including the Following Items:

- First aid kit and essential medications.
- Canned food and can opener.
- At least three gallons of water per person.

- Protective clothing, rainwear, and bedding or sleeping bags.
- Battery-powered radio, flashlight, and extra batteries.
- Special items for infants, elderly, or disabled family members.
- Written instructions on how to turn off electricity, gas and water if authorities advise you to do so. (Remember, you'll need a professional to turn them back on.)

Prepare for High Winds (Coastal Residents)

- Install hurricane shutters or purchase pre-cut 1/2" outdoor plywood boards for each window of your home. Install anchors for the plywood and pre-drill holes in the plywood so that you can put it up quickly.
- Make trees more wind resistant by removing diseased and damaged limbs, then strategically removing branches so that wind can blow through.

Know What to Do When a Hurricane WATCH Is Issued

- Listen to [NOAA](#) Weather Radio or local radio or TV stations for up-to-date storm information.
- Prepare to bring inside any lawn furniture, outdoor decorations or ornaments, trash cans, hanging plants, and anything else that can be picked up by the wind.
- Prepare to cover all windows of your home. If shutters have not been installed, use pre-cut plywood as described above. *Note:* Tape does not prevent windows from breaking, so taping windows is not recommended.
- Fill your car's gas tank.
- Recheck manufactured home tie-downs.
- Check batteries and stock up on canned food, first aid supplies, drinking water, and medications.

Know What to Do When a Hurricane WARNING Is Issued

- Listen to the advice of local officials, and leave if they tell you to do so.
- Complete preparation activities.
- If you are not advised to evacuate, stay indoors, away from windows.
- Be aware that the calm "eye" is deceptive; the storm is not over. The worst part of the storm will happen once the eye passes over and the winds blow from the opposite direction. Trees, shrubs, buildings, and other objects damaged by the first winds can be broken or destroyed by the second winds.
- Be alert for tornadoes. Tornadoes can happen during a hurricane and after it passes over. Remain indoors, in the center of your home, in a closet or bathroom without windows.
- Stay away from flood waters. If you come upon a flooded road, turn around and go another way. If you are caught on a flooded road and waters are rising rapidly around you, get out of the car and climb to higher ground.

Know What to Do After a Hurricane Is Over

- Keep listening to [NOAA](#) Weather Radio or local radio or TV stations for instructions.
- If you evacuated, return home when local officials tell you it is safe to do so.
- Inspect your home for damage.
- Use flashlights in the dark; do not use candles.
- Exercise extreme caution with during any power outages.
- Be very careful with power tools, such as chainsaws and portable generators.
- Make sure food and water are safe before use.

For more information, contact OHS-GEMA at 1-800-TRY-GEMA or visit these Web sites:
www.gema.state.ga.us, www.srh.noaa.gov/ffc/ or www.redcross.org.

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