

Ask CDC

Be Prepared for a Hurricane

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Welcome to *Ask CDC*, the weekly podcast that answers *your* questions. I'm your host, Susan Laird.

Our question this week is from a listener who heard that hurricane season began June 1, 2009 and wants to know what he can do to prepare in case one hits.

It's very important that you prepare *before* a hurricane hits your area. Stock your home with supplies that may be needed during the emergency period. At a minimum, these supplies should include:

- Several clean containers for water, large enough for a three-to-five day supply of water, or about five gallons for each person.
- A three-to-five day supply of non-perishable food.
- A first aid kit and manual.
- A battery-powered radio, flashlights, and extra batteries.
- Sleeping bags or extra blankets.
- Water-purifying supplies, such as chlorine or iodine tablets or unscented, ordinary household bleach.
- Prescription medicines and other items required for special medical needs.
- Baby food and/or prepared formula, diapers, and other baby supplies.
- Disposable cleaning cloths, such as "baby wipes" for the whole family to use in case bathing facilities are not available.
- Personal hygiene supplies, such as soap, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, etc.
- An emergency kit for your car that contains things like food, flares, booster cables, maps, tools, a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and sleeping bags or blankets.

If a hurricane watch or warning is possible in your area, here are some basic steps to take to prepare for the storm:

- Learn about your community's emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters.
- Identify potential home hazards and know how to secure or protect them before the hurricane strikes.
- Be prepared to turn off electrical power when there is standing water, fallen power lines, or before you evacuate.
- Turn off gas and water supplies before you evacuate.
- Secure structurally unstable building materials.
- Buy a fire extinguisher and make sure your family knows where to find it and how to use it.
- Locate and secure your important papers, such as insurance policies, wills, licenses, stocks, etc.
- Post emergency phone numbers at every phone.

- Inform local authorities about any special needs, such as elderly or bedridden people or anyone with a disability.

The National Weather Service will issue a hurricane watch when there is a threat to coastal areas of hurricane conditions within 24 to 36 hours. When a hurricane watch is issued, you should:

- Fill your car's gas tank.
- If no vehicle is available, make arrangements with friends or family for transportation.
- Fill your clean water containers.
- Review your emergency plans and supplies, including your car's emergency kit; check to see if any items are missing.
- Turn on the radio or T.V. for weather updates.
- Listen for disaster sirens and warning signals.
- Secure any items outside which may damage property in a storm, such as bicycles, grills, propane tanks, or patio furniture.
- Cover windows and doors with plywood or boards or place large strips of masking tape or adhesive tape on the windows to reduce the risk of breakage and flying glass.
- Put livestock and family pets in a safe area. Due to food and sanitation requirements, emergency shelters can't accept animals.
- Place vehicles under cover, if possible.
- Fill sinks and bathtubs with water as an extra supply for washing.
- Adjust the thermostat on refrigerators and freezers to the coolest possible temperature.

There are a lot of resources out there to help you prepare for a hurricane. For more information, visit emergency.cdc.gov/disaster/hurricanes or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Thanks for listening. To submit *your* question to *Ask CDC*, email us at askcdc@cdc.gov.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.