**Once You Hear A Hurricane May Be Coming Your Way**

1. **Keep in mind that some hurricanes are usually slow travelers.** Once you hear about it, chances are you have several days to finalize your plans.

2. **Be sure you are well supplied with any prescription drugs that you or your family take on a regular basis.** This can be a daunting task as some insurers will not honor refills until the last refill is nearly used up or has run out. If necessary, drugs must be purchased without insurance; weeks may go by without the ability to get refills, putting your health (or even your life) at risk.

3. **Put all of your valuables into plastic bags or high off the floor**.

4. **Cook all raw meats in your refrigerator and freeze them.** They will help keep the other food cold and you can take them out one at a time for meals that do not require cooking.

5. **Put all the ice that you have in your freezer into plastic bags.** Fill all spaces in your freezer with bags of ice. Keep your refrigerator door closed as much as possible to minimize thawing. Freeze water bottles, too.

6. **Make sure that you have a BBQ and lots of charcoal or propane so that you can cook and heat foods for meals**. Small propane bottles can also connect to lamps, heaters, and cooking appliances.

7. **Stay on top of the news.** How often you watch the Weather Channel is up to you, but if you start to feel overwhelmed or panicky, turn it off. You can always turn the news back on when you feel better. Either that, or ask a trusted neighbor to let you know when a hurricane will likely head your way so you can be informed when news watching is absolutely vital. It may be a good idea to evacuate your area beforehand, since traffic will be a problem during a mandatory evacuation order.

8. **Decide whether or not you will evacuate.** It's best to get out of town before it becomes mandatory, or even recommended. If you wait until the last minute, an hour will have passed before you get out of your driveway.

9. **Inform your family and friends about your decision.** They will rest easier if they know what you plan to do and why.

**In the Event You Decide to Evacuate**

1. **Determine when and how you will evacuate.** If you don't have a car, don't be too proud to ask others for help. If you do, leaving at an off-hour such as 2am is the best way to assure minimal traffic.

2. **Consult a map in accordance to the advice given on the news.** For example, if you live in Florida or Louisiana and the hurricane is said to be heading northwest, you'll want to have a route that heads northeast or north whichever one is safer and shorter.

3. **Contact any friends or family that you may need to stay with during this time**.

4. **Pack your car, not only with necessities such as food (which should be in your Hurricane Preparedness Kit) clothing and medicine, but photos and important papers such as birth certificates and shot records leaving, pack things that you would not want to be without both for your time away from home and in the event all is lost**. A good rule of thumb is to plan about a week's worth of away time (don't forget the laundry soap, etc. just in case it's longer). Choose carefully. You presumably have a limited amount of space in your vehicle and space for humans is needed too. Make sure you have spare oil and consider taking an extra gas tank if you can safely carry one on or in your vehicle (gas stations on evacuation routes sometimes run out of gas).

5. **Protect your home and yard and then leave as far in advance of landfall as is possible and prudent**. (For steps on protecting the home, see below).

6. **If you will be staying with friends, family, or in a hotel (don't count on it, have a back up plan even if you've made reservations ahead of time) withdraw sufficient cash for two weeks**. ATMs and banks may not be operating in the aftermath of a major hurricane and some credit card machines will be down. If you expect to be displaced, a family of four needs approximately $500 to last a week if you'll be staying in hotels. You'll need less than that if you will be staying with friends, relatives or in a shelter.

7. **Make sure your cell phone and extra cell phone batteries (get them if you do not already have some) are charged before leaving or before the power can go out**. You can charge them up with the power from your car if you have a DC to AC converter.

8. **Stay calm and collected, especially when you are around little kids who might easily get scared when their parents are stressed out**. Around small children, make the hurricane preparation/evacuation into an unexpected vacation or adventure.

9. **Double-check for last minute details.** Is the power, gas, and water turned off? Do you have everything you need? Is the first driver well-rested or would another couple of hours of rest do him or her a world of good? Leaving at 4am instead of 2am if you need to will still keep you out of the main flow of traffic, so there's no need to rush since any driver needs to stay on top of things especially during an evacuation.

**If You Decide to Stay**

1 ***Take all measures to protect your home and property****.* It is not only your stuff you are protecting but yourself and your family who have stayed behind. If you have removable hurricane shutters, try to put them up at least two days before landfall. Holding a 25-pound aluminum shutter while balancing on a ladder in 74 mph winds is no fun and can lead to bad things. If you are using plywood, get your wood and nails early.

* There is a risk of less-than-ideal folks wandering around the neighborhood possibly looking for an empty home to rob. Lock all doors and windows, place heavy, opaque drapes in front of windows to prevent outside eyes from looking in, and if you have them, load up on several rounds of ammunition for your rifles, shotguns, handguns, and pistols prior to the hurricane's arrival. Advertise that there are weapons in the vicinity.

2. **Move into your home or garage all pots, patio furniture, grills and anything else that can blow around.** Do not sink any furniture into a swimming pool, this is an old-wives-tale and a very bad idea.

3. **Make a list of everything you will need if you are stranded and without power for two weeks**. See "Things You'll Need" below.

4. **Designate a "safe room" in case your home's integrity is compromised**. The "safe room" should have no windows or exterior doors and preferably only one interior door. Bring in a mattress to lean upright against the door and pre-stock it with a radio, batteries, flashlight and enough food, water and pre-moistened napkins to last 12 hours. Make sure all household members know that they are to run to this room once the wind starts rushing into the home.

5. **Stay as far away from windows and doors from the moment of landfall.** If the power has gone out, listen for wind and rain that will steadily increase as the hurricane nears.

6. **Extinguish all candles once the rain and winds reach thunderstorm levels**. This is to assure they are not accidentally left lit when and if the winds start whipping through your home. A safe way to use candles is to put them in a saucepan, deeper than the candle is high, with shiny sides. The light will reflect off the ceiling and inside of the pot, and the candle will be protected from being knocked over. An inch or so of water in the pot isn't a bad idea, either. However, if you smell gas, hear gas, or even suspect a gas leak, do not use candles. Use light sticks.