

American Red Cross

Your Evacuation Plan

Local government officials, not the Red Cross, issue evacuation orders when disaster threatens. Listen to local radio and television reports when disaster threatens. If local officials ask you to leave, do so immediately!

If you have only moments before leaving, grab these things and go!

- Medical supplies: prescription medications and dentures.
- Disaster supplies: flashlight, batteries, radio, first aid kit, bottled water
- Clothing and bedding: a change of clothes and a sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each household member
- Car keys and keys to the place you may be going (friend's or relative's home)

If local officials haven't advised an immediate evacuation:

If there's a chance the weather may get worse or flooding may happen, take steps now to protect your home and belongings. Do this only if local officials have not asked you to leave.

Protect your home.

Bring things indoors. Lawn furniture, trash cans, children's toys, garden equipment, clotheslines, hanging plants, and any other objects that may fly around and damage property should be brought indoors.

Leave trees and shrubs alone. If you did not cut away dead or diseased branches or limbs from trees and shrubs, leave them alone. Local rubbish collection services will not have time before the storm to pick anything up.

Look for potential hazards. Look for coconuts, unripened fruit, and other objects in trees around your property that could blow or break off and fly around in high winds. Cut them off and store them indoors until the storm is over.

Turn off electricity and water. Turn off electricity at the main fuse or breaker, and turn off water at the main valve.

Leave natural gas on. Unless local officials advise otherwise, leave natural gas on because you will need it for heating and cooking when you return home. If you turn gas off, a licensed professional is required to turn it back on, and it may take weeks for a professional to respond.

Turn off propane gas service. Propane tanks often become dislodged in disasters.

If flooding is expected, consider using sand bags to keep water away from your home. It takes two people about one hour to fill and place 100 sandbags, giving you a wall one foot high and 20 feet long. Make sure you have enough sand, burlap or plastic bags, shovels, strong helpers, and time to place them properly.

Remember. Houses do not explode due to air pressure differences. Damage happens when wind gets inside a home through a broken window, door, or damaged roof.

Cover the outside of windows with shutters or plywood. Use shutters that are rated to provide significant protection from windblown debris, or fit plywood coverings over all windows. Tape does not prevent windows from breaking. All tape does is prevent windows from shattering. Using tape on windows is not recommended.

Protect your valuables.

Move objects that may get damaged by wind or water to safer areas of your home. Move television sets, computers, stereo and electronic equipment, and easily moveable appliances like a microwave oven to higher levels of your home and away from windows. Wrap them in sheets, blankets, or burlap.

Make a visual or written record of all of your household possessions. Record model and serial numbers. This list could help you prove the value of what you owned if those possessions are damaged or destroyed, and can assist you to claim deductions on taxes.

Do this for all items in your home, including expensive items such as sofas, chairs, tables, beds, chests, wall units, and any other furniture too heavy to move. Store a copy of the record somewhere away from home, such as in a safe deposit box.

If it's possible that your home may be significantly damaged by impending disaster, consider storing your household furnishings temporarily elsewhere.

Gather essential supplies and papers.

You will need the following supplies when you leave your home; put them all together in a duffle bag or other large container in advance:

- Flashlight with plenty of extra batteries
- Battery-powered radio with extra batteries
- First aid kit
- Prescription medications in their original bottle, plus copies of the prescriptions
- Eyeglasses (with a copy of the prescription)
- Water (at least one gallon per person is recommended; more is better)
- Foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking
- Items that infants and elderly household members may require
- Medical equipment and devices, such as dentures, crutches, prostheses, etc.
- Change of clothes for each household member
- Sleeping bag or bedroll and pillow for each household member
- Checkbook, cash, and credit cards
- Map of the area

Important papers to take with you:

- Driver's license or personal identification
- Social Security card
- Proof of residence (deed or lease)
- Insurance policies
- Birth and marriage certificates
- Stocks, bonds, and other negotiable certificates
- Wills, deeds, and copies of recent tax returns

All Red Cross assistance is given free of charge. This is made possible by the generous contribution of people's time, money, and skills. One of the best ways to help the Red Cross assist people affected by disasters is to make a financial contribution to the American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund. Call 1-800-HELP NOW or contact your local Red Cross chapter.