

Hurricane Preparedness

We all have a basic idea of what to do in the event of a hurricane but we usually do nothing until one is imminent then we go into a mad rush buying all the plywood, batteries & bottled water in sight. This plan offers a methodical system that allows us to be prepared in a timely manner.

Immediately Before the Start of Hurricane Season (April-May)

- Check & limb all trees near to the house or overhanging power lines.
- Check the condition of roofs; repair leaks, replace damaged tiles, etc.
- Check that windows & doors fit firmly in jambs.
- Remove those piles of rubble & junk collecting in the backyard.
- Check that plywood, tarpaulins, shutters, etc. from last year are still in good condition.
- If you have a large picture window or sliding glass door, you should consider getting a shutter made for it.
- Start buying 1 or 2 extra non-perishable items at the supermarket each week.
- Service your generator, if you have one.

At the Start of the Season (June 1st)

- Buy plywood, nails, battens, etc adequate to cover any particularly vulnerable doors or windows.
- Make sure you have adequate containers to store water for bathing, washing, etc.
- Buy any tarpaulins you think you might need.
- Buy batteries enough to keep flashlights & radios operating for 1 week to 1 month.
- Buy adequate kerosene, lamp oil & candles. Consider a few battery-operated lamps, available at many hardware stores. These are safer than kerosene lamps & most provide light bright enough to read by.
- Check that your first-aid kit is stocked.

If a Hurricane Watch is Imposed

- Stock up on adequate supplies of drinking water & non-perishable foods to last your family for a week (longer if the hurricane sets up to be a major one). Remember supplies for your pets.
- Make sure you have adequate supplies of prescription drugs. A small cooler filled with ice & opened only when necessary should keep insulin, etc. cooled for several days.
- A good idea might be also to start freezing ice. A freezer or the freezer section of your fridge, if fairly full could keep items frozen for more than 24hours & chilled for as much as 5 days.
- Collect all your important documents, house & car titles, insurance certificates, bankbooks, etc. & put into a waterproof container, a zipper-locked plastic bag is ideal. In fact it is a good idea to keep such a container always packed to "grab & run" in the event of a fire or other emergency. Include a few photographs or other small sentimental items. Don't forget your cell phone charger. Remember this container must be small enough & light enough to move quickly with.
- If you are in a particularly dangerous area & might have to go to a shelter put together the supplies you might need. Remember most shelters do not supply water, food, blankets, etc.
- Make arrangements for your pets.
- Gas up car.

(Hurricane Watch - The first alert given when a hurricane poses a possible, but yet uncertain threat to a coastal area.)

If a Hurricane Warning is Imposed

- Batten all vulnerable doors & windows; remember some inward opening doors might be at risk. Do not seal everything tight as you will want to open a window on the leeward side (opposite to the wind) to help prevent a pressure build up in the house.
- Remove all loose objects from the yard, flowerpots, etc.
- Check lamps have oil, flashlights have batteries, etc.
- Listen to your radio or TV for regular updates.
- If going to a shelter & you have very small children, sew a tag with their name, your name & an emergency phone number in the clothes they are wearing in case you are separated.

(Hurricane Warning - Notice that within 24 hours or less a specified coastal area may be subject to (a) sustained winds of (74 mph) 118.4 km/h or higher and/or (b) dangerously high water.)

If You Have to Go to a Shelter

Pack a knapsack/school bag for each member of the family (head of household carries container with important documents). Include the following:

- Two changes of clothes for each person
- Towel, soap, toilet paper, toothbrush & toothpaste, sanitary supplies.
- One gallon of water per person
- Prescription medicines, basic first aid supplies
- Flashlight with batteries. Transistor radio with batteries
- Dry & canned foods & can opener
- Blanket & pillow, if possible

Basic First Aid Kit (kept securely by a responsible adult)

- 2 pks band aids
- 1 gauze bandage & tape
- 1 crepe bandage (for sprains)
- Over the counter pain killers
- Otc antacid
- Otc antihistamine
- Otc anti-diarrhoeal
- Antiseptic cream
- Antihistamine cream
- Otc eyewash
- Tweezers & small scissors
- Thermometer
- Other items as suggested by your family doctor or health professional

See more information at www.odpem.org.jm

ODPEM has many downloadable plans, e.g. Family Emergency Plan, Disaster Planning for Animals, etc. as well as a few on-line training programmes.

Another good source of information is the US Home Safety Council
www.homesafetycouncil.org

If a hurricane does hit, avoid your natural curiosity to go outside to "see what it's like". This causes more injuries & deaths than almost any other situation in a storm.