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6 ways to prepare now for hurricanes

By Alexa Lewis, Weather staff writer



The worst thing that people who live along coastlines can do is not to prepare for tropical storms and hurricanes.

According to the National Hurricane Center, the two key factors contributing to weather safety during hurricanes are preparing in advance for the risks and to act on those preparations when alerted by emergency officials.

The director of the National Hurricane Center, Rick Knabb, and AccuWeather Hurricane Expert Dan Kottlowksi, outlined certain precautionary steps that people in areas impacted by hurricanes and tropical storms should take.

1. Evacuation planning

The main reason people have to evacuate during hurricanes is from a storm surge, which is an abnormal rise of water generated by a storm's winds that can reach heights well over 20 feet and can span hundreds of miles of coastlines, according to the National Hurricane Center.

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"Evacuation planning is number one on the list," Knabb said.

Knabb urged that people find out today if they live in a hurricane evacuation area, which is an area in which residents must leave their homes in the event of a hurricane.

Local governments provide the public with information about evacuation areas and the evacuation plans, and Knabb recommended that people review this information in advance.

"Some people will actually test the evacuation route in good weather," Kottlowski said. "Waiting until the day of the hurricane isn't a smart idea since everyone will be in a heightened state of anxiety."

While people who live in storm surge areas fall within areas that are urged to evacuate during a hurricane, people who live outside of these zones should still look into safety precautions during a hurricane.



Hurricane Joaquin churns in the Atlantic in the fall of 2015. (Satellite Image/NOAA)

Those who live in mobile homes and high rises may also have to evacuate even if they do not live in an evacuation area, Knabb said.

"It's not just a beach front problem," he added.

Pet owners should also have an evacuation plan for their pets. Many shelters offer places to keep pets.

2. Buy supplies

The most important thing that both Knabb and Kottlowski stressed was buying supplies well in advance and keeping those supplies on hand should evacuation be required.

"If you wait until the hurricane is on your doorsteps, you are going to be waiting in long lines and they could even be out of the stuff you need," Knabb said.

Those living in evacuation areas should keep a hurricane kit handy that is stored in a way that is easy to grab and bring to an evacuation shelter.

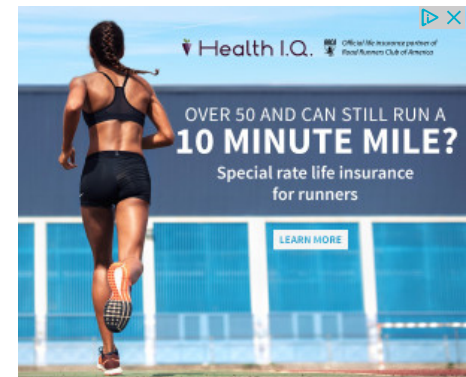


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A satellite image of Hurricane Sandy on Oct. 28, 2012. (Image/Earth Observatory/NASA)






While evacuation shelters do provide supplies, Kottlowski said, "Shelters can get overrun and residents may not have enough supplies."

These kits should include water, food, blankets and clothing.



Hurricane Kit Essentials

Ready, a campaign that provides emergency preparedness guidance for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, includes a number of other items in their hurricane kit:

-  **First aid kit**
-  **Battery-powered or hand-crank radio**
-  **Flashlight and batteries**
-  **Whistle to signal for help**
-  **Local maps**

Kottlowski said he recommends that residents have their kits bagged up in a suitcase or plastic tub.

3. Check insurance coverage

Property owners and renters should be sure to insure their homes against flooding, something that Knabb said many people do not realize is not a part of

standard home and renters insurance.

Tenants and home owners can contact their renters or home insurance provider to buy flood insurance, and they should do so even if they do not live right along the coastline.

“People might think that if they don’t live on the coast, then they won’t have a flooding problem,” Knabb said. “But if it can rain, it can flood.”



Dimitri Pinckney installs hurricane shutters in advance of Hurricane Matthew on the Isle of Palms, S.C., Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2016. (AP Photo/Mic Smith)

Car owners should also contact auto insurance companies and move their cars into an off-site location or secured building.

“You won’t be able to take every vehicle you own to the shelter, but if you leave the vehicle outside, it could be seriously damaged,” Kottlowski said.

4. Make copies of important documents

Those living in or near hurricane areas should make copies of proof of ownership documents of any property not limited to their homes, cars and boats.

These documents can be stored in the hurricane kit or in any safe location that does not risk being damaged during the hurricane.

“If a hurricane levels your house, you have to prove that it is your house,” Kottlowski said.

5. Protect your home

Residents and tenants should inspect their homes to confirm that there is no damage that a hurricane could increase.

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Any issues with the overall structure should be repaired, including loose shingles or damaged roofs.

“Any possible compromises to the roof or house will become an open avenue for strong and gusty winds,” Kottlowski said.

Residences with yards should also make a list of anything laying on the ground outside that could get tossed into the air and become debris during high winds.

Kottlowski also said residents should purchase supplies, including plywood to cover windows and extra security to keep doors from blowing open, in advance, to secure their homes from damaging winds.

6. Back up your electronics

Aside from keeping extra batteries and chargers around during a hurricane, people are also encouraged to backup any electronic devices.

Knabb said data should be stored at an off-site location so that data can be recovered if something were to happen to the physical computer or device during a hurricane.

Businesses should take particular caution in backing up information and sending that information to a remote site.

For more safety and preparedness tips, visit AccuWeather.com/Ready.



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The historic heat across Spain will continue and expand into France this week.



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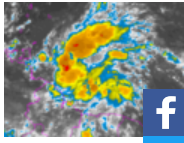
The hottest air of the year settled across parts of the United Kingdom on Monday, and some areas will not get relief until late week.



Stifling heat, storms to impact Germany through midweek

Weather News - June 19, 2017, 9:59:18 AM EDT

Parts of southern and western Germany will endure several days of dangerous heat this week.



Windward Islands brace for unusually early tropical storm conditions through Tuesday

Weather News - June 19, 2017, 9:52:33 AM EDT

An unusually strong system for June will pass through the southern part of the Windward Islands with tropical storm conditions on Monday night and Tuesday.



Portugal's worst wildfire in decades kills at least 62; Lightning suspected cause

Weather News - June 19, 2017, 8:47:05 AM EDT

At least 62 people were killed and dozens more injured after hot and windy conditions fanned a massive wildfire in central Portugal.



Stretch of pleasant weather to precede midweek storms in central US

Weather News - June 19, 2017, 6:37:34 AM EDT

Following several days of mainly sunny and warm weather in the center of the country, the threat of thunderstorms will return at midweek.

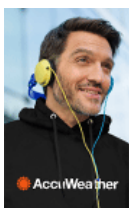


Damaging winds, flooding to threaten New York to Texas into Sunday night

Weather News - June 18, 2017, 3:42:02 PM EDT

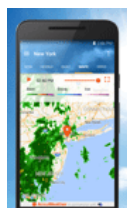
Severe thunderstorms will pose significant danger to those celebrating Father's Day weekend outdoors from the eastern Great Lakes to the Arklatex region of the United States into Sunday night.

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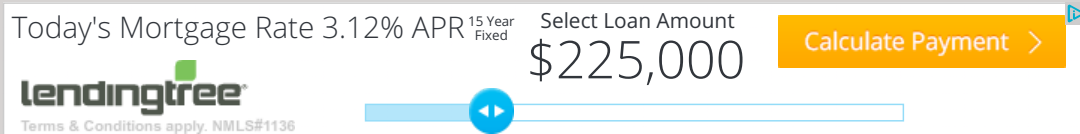
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