



Hurricanes

What is a hurricane?

A hurricane is a low pressure system that generally forms in the tropics. Thunderstorms usually travel with hurricanes.

Why is a hurricane dangerous?

Hurricanes can cause major damage to a coastline as well as several hundred miles inland. In the Northern Hemisphere, hurricane winds move counterclockwise. Winds can exceed 155 miles per hour (MPH). Hurricanes may also create tornadoes, storm surges and cause heavy rainfall. This rainfall may lead to flooding and, especially in mountainous regions, landslides or mud slides. Flash flooding may also occur. River and stream flooding may last for days or weeks after the storm is over.

Know your terms!

Tropical Depression is an organized system of clouds and thunderstorms with a defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 38 MPH or less.

Tropical Storm is an organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 MPH.

Hurricane is an intense tropical weather system of strong thunderstorms with a well defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 MPH or stronger.

Hurricane Watch means conditions are possible in a specific area, usually within 36 hours. Stay tuned to National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio and local media for more information.

Hurricane Warning means a hurricane is expected in a specific area, usually within 24 hours.

Protective measures for people and animals:

- If a hurricane or its outer edge is predicted to strike in your area, listen to NOAA Weather Radio or local media for information. Be prepared for strong winds, thunderstorms with heavy rainfall and the potential for flooding conditions. Stay indoors until local authorities declare the storm is over. Stay away from the windows. Bring your pets inside or make sure they are secured in or under appropriate shelter.
- You may need to leave your home so be ready to relocate on short notice. Pack a bag with clothes, needed medicines and cash or credit cards. Have a plan for your pets, which may include taking them to a shelter that allows pets. Find out in advance if you need to bring their food, a leash or carrying case/portable kennel.

Have an emergency plan.

Think through how you and your family would handle being without electricity for several days as well as having to leave your home and move to a shelter. Have a plan for getting your family back together if family members are separated during a hurricane.

Keep a disaster supply kit on hand, stocked with the following items:

- Water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days)
- Non-perishable foods and any special dietary products (enough for at least three days)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- First aid kit and manual
- Essential medicines
- Small tool kit and non-electric can opener
- Cash and credit cards
- An extra change of clothes and sturdy shoes
- Personal hygiene supplies

If you are ordered to evacuate:

- Take only your most needed items with you.
- Take your pet with you. Some shelters accept pets, some do not. Pet care should be a part of your emergency plan.
- If told to do so, turn off the gas, electricity and water in your home.
- Unplug appliances to prevent the possibility of a power surge when the electricity comes back on.
- Follow the directions given for leaving the area and be prepared for heavy traffic.

Safety after the storm:

If the power has gone out, keep your refrigerator closed. Foods will stay cool for about four hours. Discard any food that has been at 40 degrees Fahrenheit (4.44 degrees Celsius) or higher for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture.

A freezer that is half full will hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.

Listen to public announcements about the safety of the water supply. If the public water is not safe, use bottled, boiled or treated water. Don't use unsafe water to wash dishes, brush your teeth or wash your hands, wash and prepare food, make ice or baby formula.

Don't allow children to play in flooded areas. This water may contain germs that will make them sick if it gets in their mouths. Toys that have been in flood waters should be cleaned with a bleach solution before children play with them.

Do not use gas powered equipment, such as portable generators and grills (charcoal grills included) indoors or in an enclosed space without ventilation. They produce carbon monoxide, a gas that is poisonous to breathe, and can cause serious illness or death.

For more information, contact the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division at 336-641-7777 or visit our website at www.guilfordcountync.gov ; visit Guilford County Emergency Management website at www.readyguilford.com; visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency at www.fema.gov or the American Red Cross at www.redcross.org.

Free language assistance is available upon request.