

How to Prepare for a Busy Hurricane Season: Tips to Keep Your Family Safe

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Forecasters are predicting another unusually active Atlantic hurricane season this year, with six to ten hurricanes expected, and as many as half could become major storms. For millions of Americans living along the coast, that means heightened worries about powerful winds, flooding, and days or even weeks without electricity.

But emergency officials say that while hurricanes can be frightening, much of the stress can be eased by taking a few smart steps ahead of time.

Start Early with Home Preparations

Brian Mason, director of Houston's Office of Emergency Management, urges residents not to wait until the last minute. "Don't be complacent," he said. "Spend the time now to do the little things that will make a big difference for you and your loved ones."

Experts recommend securing anything outside that could become a dangerous projectile, such as patio chairs, grills, or garden tools. Board up windows if you can, and store important documents like passports and birth certificates in waterproof containers or sealed plastic bags.

It's also wise to schedule a roof inspection before the season begins and learn how to turn off your home's utilities if damage occurs.

Mistie Hinote of the Texas Department of Insurance reminds homeowners to review insurance policies and create an inventory of their belongings by taking photos. This can make filing claims easier if your property is damaged.

Assemble an Emergency Kit

Every household should have a kit ready in case you decide to stay put. Mason recommends storing at least one gallon of water per person per day, enough for seven days. Filling your bathtub can also give you extra water.

Make sure you have nonperishable food, flashlights, batteries, a battery-powered radio, medications, and backup power banks. Don't forget your pets' pack food, water, and any medicines they might need.

Parents should include games, coloring books, or other activities to keep kids entertained if the power goes out. As Mason put it, "Nothing's more challenging for a family than kids that are bouncing off the walls because they're bored."

Have a Clear Evacuation Plan

If you decide to leave, know your evacuation routes and have backup options in case roads are crowded. Keep your car's gas tank full, or, if you drive an electric vehicle, map out charging stations along your route.

Shawn Schulze of the American Red Cross says it's normal to feel scared when a hurricane is approaching. But planning and letting your loved ones know you're prepared can bring peace of mind.

“Think about what the worst could be and prepare for that,” Schulze said. “You’ll always be ready for what comes your way.”

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