

Emergency Preparedness Roadmap

Start Simple, Start Now!

Take simple steps to prepare for all types of emergencies.

Hurricane Season is June 1 to November 30

But disasters and emergencies are not limited to hurricanes or a specific time of year. They can occur anytime, anywhere. For example, it is always Earthquake Season in Charleston. Emergency services may not be immediately available if they are also impacted.

What will YOU do until help arrives?

Preparing for and responding to disasters begins with preparing yourself and your family, but when a large disaster strikes and first responders are overwhelmed, the first people you will turn to for help will be your neighbors. Building good relationships with your neighbors is the best way to extend your personal safety net. Preparedness is everyone's responsibility. We all need to work together!

Four simple steps can help YOU get ready!

We don't know what type or when disasters and emergencies may strike, but there are simple preparedness steps you can take that are common to all disasters.

You plan only once, and are able to apply your plan to all types of hazards.

- 1. Get a kit of emergency supplies.***
- 2. Make a plan of what you will do.***
- 3. Be informed about what might happen.***
- 4. Get involved in preparing your community.***

Everyone should have an emergency plan and be prepared to take care of themselves for at least the first 72 hours after a disaster, some say prepare for 5 to 7 days.

1. Get a Kit of Emergency Supplies

When preparing for a possible emergency situation, think first about the basics of survival: fresh water, food, clean air and warmth. **Consider two kits.** In one, put everything you will need to stay where you are and make it on your own for at least the first 72 hours after a disaster. The other kit should be a light-weight, smaller version that you can have ready to take with you in case you need to leave home.

- Store your kits in plastic containers in a cool, dry and dark place, such as a closet or "safety corner".
- Layer and check the items once or twice a year for expiration dates, changes in your children's clothing sizes and weather requirements. A good way to remember to inspect your kit is to do it when you set clocks back and change your smoke detector batteries.
- If you haven't started a kit yet
 - Start with what you already have
 - Prepare as if you are going camping for 3 days with no facilities. If you've camped, you've got a head start; camping supplies, camp stove and water jugs, and other items double as emergency supplies.

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2. Family Emergency Plan

- Make sure your family has a plan in case of an emergency. Before an emergency happens, sit down together and decide how you will get in contact with each other, where you will go and what you will do in an emergency. Keep a copy of this plan in your emergency supply kit or other safe, accessible place in the event of a disaster.
- **Fill out the information for each family member and keep it up to date.**
- **Where to go in an emergency.** Write down where your family spends the most time: work, school and other places you frequent. Schools, daycare providers, workplaces and apartment buildings should all have site-specific emergency plans.
- Print-at-home 1-page fillable plans online at <https://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/emergency-management/files/CheckList.pdf>

3. Be informed

- The Charleston County Emergency Management Department has a FREE app where you can get real-time information delivered straight to your Apple and Android devices.
 - To get the app: Go to your online app store for your phone - Google Play for Android or Apple for iPhones. In the Search field type **CC EMD**
- Have a Digital TV antenna to use in event your cable is out of service.

4. Get involved in preparing your community

- Take a personal responsibility to be prepared.
- Get training in first aid and emergency skills.
- Volunteer to support local emergency responders, disaster relief, and community safety efforts.
- Join your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Visit: www.LCERT.org for more information.

Learn more about how to prepare yourself and your family:

- Visit Charleston County Government's Web site: www.charlestoncounty.org
- Visit: www.ready.gov
- Visit: www.redcross.org
- Call the Charleston County Emergency Management Department at (843) 746-3800

Special needs planning

If you have special needs, the following organizations can help you make a plan and register you for emergency assistance:

- **Medical Needs:** S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) at (843) 953-0038
- **Mobility & Other Special Needs:** Disabilities Resource Center at (843) 225-5080
- **Mobility & Other Special Needs:** print-at-home [Charleston County Disabilities and Other Special Needs Emergency Preparedness Guide](https://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/emergency-management/hurricane.php#hpg) online at <https://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/emergency-management/hurricane.php#hpg>

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PRE-SEASON Hurricane Preparations

- Evaluate homeowner's insurance policy to know coverage and owner obligations after storms.
- Do have or do you need flood insurance? You can find out about the National Flood Insurance Program through your homeowner's insurance agent. There is normally a 30-day waiting period before a new flood insurance policy becomes effective for an existing residence. Homeowner policies do not cover damage from the flooding that accompanies a hurricane.
- Make a plan for evaluating damage after a storm hits.
- Build a relationship with a building or restoration contractor before a storm hits.
- Work on needed home repairs before storms.
- Remove dead trees and limbs.
- Develop an emergency communication plan for family members.
- Make sure that all family members know how to respond after storms such as turning off utilities and children how and when to call 9-1-1.

BEFORE A STORM

- Trim dead or weak branches from trees.
- Make sure Wireless Emergency Alerts are set to "ON" on cellular phones.
- Refill prescriptions – should maintain at least 2 week supply especially during hurricane season.
 - See www.fda.gov or drug store websites for additional medicine and prescription guidance.
- Service your vehicles especially if you plan to evacuate.

RIGHT BEFORE A STORM

- Fuel up family vehicles (power outages and transportation difficulties often cause gas shortages).
- Secure or move outdoor furniture, hanging baskets, and refuse/recycling bins to a safe location.
- Close window shutters or board up windows.
- Fully charge mobile devices, laptops, and any emergency battery supply.
- Fill the bathtub with water.
- Place additional plastic containers of water in freezer.
- A trained I'On At Home (IAH) Member Liaison will check-in at the home of each IAH member.

IF YOU EVACUATE

- Know where you will go.
- Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in most shelters.
- Turn off gas, electricity, and water if a major hurricane strike. If you don't turn electricity off:
 - at least unplug small appliances including computers, sound systems & TVs
 - set timers on indoor lights
 - put a coin on top of a cup of frozen water in the freezer. If the coin is not on the top when you return, treat the food as spoiled!
- Stay tuned to your local television and radio stations for emergency information.
- Charge your cell phone and mobile devices. (Have an extra charger for your phone, etc.)
- Let friends, relatives and neighbors know where you are going
- Take your basic emergency supplies kit
- Also, take important items from your "extended" emergency supplies kit such as
 - important papers including your driver's license and insurance policies

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DURING A STORM

On the road if you evacuate:

- Leave early. Take your time.
- A GPS may misdirect you to closed roads.
- Stay on official evacuation routes.

If you stay, protect yourself:

- Stay tuned to your local television and radio stations for emergency information. Be sure to keep a battery- operated, solar-powered or hand-crank operated radio or television for use during power outages.
- Stay inside of a well-constructed building away from the windows and the doors, even if they are covered. Go to an interior first-floor room, closet, or under the stairs.
- Be alert. Tornadoes are very often spawned during hurricanes.
- If the “eye” of the storm passes over your area, be aware that severe conditions will return with winds from the other direction in a very short time.
- Limit non-emergency calls. Keep calls brief to minimize network congestion. Wait at least 10 seconds before redialing. For non-emergencies, send text messages from your mobile device.
- Once the storm passes, be patient. You will most likely not be able to return home right away.

AFTER A STORM

- If you evacuated, wait until area is declared safe before entering. Roads may be closed. Do not drive in flooded areas. Do not drive around barriers.
- Check for gas leaks. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building.
 - Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can. From a safe place, call to report a gas leak to your utility provider. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.
- Look for electrical system damage. If you see sparks, broken or frayed wires, or if you smell something burning, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, get professional assistance.
- Check for sewage and water line damage. If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid water from the tap.
- Avoid using candles or other open flames indoors.
- Report life-threatening emergencies only.
- Recheck medicines and prescriptions; Medicare or insurance companies may change rules after major disasters.

Tips for Contact with Loved Ones

- Be creative, and be persistent. If one contact method doesn't work, try another. Don't give up!
- Call during off-peak hours for the best chance of getting through. Send a text message, which may go through when phone calls cannot.
- Check your loved one's social media pages (i.e., Facebook, Twitter), as they may have already gone online to tell their story.

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Recommended Items to Include in a Basic or Grab & Go Emergency Supply Kit:

- ☐ Water, 1-2 gallons of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation.
- ☐ Food, at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Consider buying ready-made emergency meal kits online.
- ☐ Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both.
- ☐ Flashlight and extra batteries.
- ☐ First aid kit.
- ☐ Whistle to signal for help.
- ☐ Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place.
- ☐ Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation.
- ☐ Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- ☐ Non-electric can opener for food (if your kit contains canned food).
- ☐ Local maps.
- ☐ Cell phone and cell phone chargers.

Additional Items to Consider for an Extended Emergency Supply Kit:

- ☐ Essential medicines including prescription medications and glasses.
- ☐ Baby supplies including infant formula, food, diapers, medications.
- ☐ Pet supplies including food and extra water.
- ☐ Important family documents such as copies of insurance policies, identification and bank account records in a waterproof, portable container. You may need quick, easy access to these documents. Consider taking pictures on a phone and keep copies of important documents and files on a flashdrive that you can carry with you on your house or car keys.
- ☐ CASH and change; lots of \$1 and \$5 bills.
- ☐ Emergency reference material such as a first aid book.
- ☐ Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person. Consider additional bedding for cold weather disasters.
- ☐ Complete change of clothing including a long-sleeve shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Consider rain jackets/pants and additional clothing for use during a wintertime emergency.
- ☐ Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper. When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant. Or in an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use scented, color safe or bleaches with added cleaners.
- ☐ Fire extinguisher: ABC type.
- ☐ Matches in a waterproof container.
- ☐ Personal hygiene items and feminine supplies.
- ☐ Mess kits, paper cups, plates and plastic utensils, and paper towels.
- ☐ Sunscreen, sunglasses and mosquito repellent.
- ☐ Paper and pencil.
- ☐ Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children.

More details on how and what to store in your kits at

- <https://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/emergency-management/emergency-kit.php>
- print-at-home [Charleston County Disabilities and Other Special Needs Emergency Preparedness Guide](#)