

Preparing for Hurricane Season



With Hurricane Season upon us, memories of Ike, the third costliest hurricane ever to make landfall in the United States, are sure to resurface. Not knowing what to expect from such a massive storm, Ike resulted in the largest evacuation of Texans in our state's history. Still in recovery mode from the damage caused by the hurricane that took place in September of 2008, Galveston Island and areas along the Gulf Coast were among the hardest hit. Houses and cars were demolished and businesses were destroyed due to the storm's ferocious winds.

Hurricane Ike exposed our vulnerabilities, leaving over 22 percent of the state without power for days; some areas were without electricity for weeks. With that said, this is a time to reflect and revisit the following questions so we can be better prepared next time.

- What did we do right?
- What went wrong?
- What should we do differently?



In recalling the issues that plagued the residents of **Precinct 7** as result of Hurricane Ike, the most prevalent were the damages caused by the storm's intense winds. Large branches of trees snapped and shallow rooted trees were toppled, making many streets impassable and hindering rescue efforts for days, in some instances, weeks after the storm ended. Extensive damage to power lines and poles resulted in power outages that lasted several weeks for some of our residents. Although, it is impossible to predict the amount of damage that a natural disaster will cause, there are things that can be done to be better prepared. Primarily, by the time a storm hits you should have all your preparations completed! If you prepare in advance and plan ahead your stress levels will be much lower.

Preparedness Tips:

- Know the safest area of your home in the event of a hurricane. Also, identify another location to evacuate to if your home is not the safest option.
- Keep all trees and shrubs well trimmed so they are more wind resistant.
- Install a generator for emergencies or test the one you already own. A generator that does not work properly after the storm is not very helpful.
- Be informed about which areas will likely serve as hurricane shelters in your community.
- Find out if you are covered! Set up a time to review your home's insurance policy with your agent to make sure it covers hurricane damage.
- Start collecting material and supplies now. Purchase wood or shutters for boarding up windows. Have wood pre-cut and ready to mount and store it until needed. Also remember, ply-lock clips used to mount plywood sheets on windows.
- Have an evacuation plan. Have maps available and write down your plans. Take into consideration any road closures that may take effect due to hurricane damage. Ensure your friends and family know where you plan to evacuate.



- Prepare an emergency disaster kit with first aid supplies, important information, maps, medications, water, weather radio, flashlights, batteries, and non-perishable foods.
- Plan for your pets. Prepare an emergency kit for your pet that includes: pet care items, proper identification, immunization records, medications, ample supply of food and water, a carrier or cage, and a muzzle and leash. Will they stay with you or be placed into a kennel when hurricane notices are aired?
- Post important phone numbers in a memorable, high-visibility area. Include the numbers for your insurance claims office, family members, business contacts, and hurricane damage restoration specialist.

How to Prepare When a Hurricane Watch is Announced

During a hurricane warning, many things should be done to prepare for the possibility of a hurricane. Among these include:



- Check and replenish emergency supplies.
- Review the evacuation plan.
- Cover all of your home's windows with pre-cut plywood or hurricane shutters to protect your windows from high winds.
- Plan to bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans, and anything else that is not tied down.
- Turn off utilities as instructed. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Turn off propane tanks.
- Reinforce your garage doors; if wind enters a garage, it can cause dangerous and expensive structural damage.
- Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water.
- Move valuable items away from the windows. If your home has more than one level, move items to the upper level to prevent water damage.
- Park vehicles inside a garage or appropriate storage facility. Make sure any cars that may be driven have full tanks of gas.
- Stay Informed! Do not end up caught by surprise if a storm's path or intensity suddenly changes.

If residents decide to or are required to evacuate, they should:

- Leave as soon as possible, taking the safest route possible.
- Unplug appliances.
- Tell an out-of-state family member or friend where they will be.
- Move valuable items to higher areas if in a surge zone.
- Bring emergency supplies and protective clothing.
- Take a sleeping bag and pillow per person.
- Lock home and leave.

Following a Hurricane

Following a hurricane, affected residents should keep tuned to a local radio station for information on the area and when it is safe to return to homes and businesses. Do not attempt to drive until instructed it is safe to do so by authorities; down power lines, debris, and flood waters could lie just around the corner and result in severe injury or death.

If it is safe to do so, help neighbors who might be injured. Avoid loose power lines and report immediately to the local power company, police, or fire department. Remember to think safely before and after a hurricane strikes to avoid injury and damages.

Visit the following websites for more on Hurricane Preparedness:

<http://www.ready.gov/america/beinformed/hurricanes.html>
http://www.fema.gov/hazard/hurricane/hu_during.shtm
http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/disaster_prevention.shtml

<http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.86f46a12f382290517a8f210b80f78a0/?vgnextoid=fbb5e821cbdf9110VgnVCM1000002bf3870aRCRD&vgnextfmt=default>