

Hurricane

PREPARATION GUIDE



Katrina: 10 Years Later

On Aug. 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina wrecked havoc on the Gulf Coast. More than 1,800 people died, and more than \$108 billion in damage was caused.

The Category 3 storm was the most expensive hurricane in United States history within the busiest hurricane season the country had ever seen, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Ten years later, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to evaluate its own response and the response of other agencies to the storm. We as citizens should use the CDC's efforts as motivation to assess and improve our individual focus on staying safe in the face of dangerous hurricane situations.

RESPONSIBILITY

Major issues the agency handled post-Katrina included:

- Infectious disease detection, prevention and outbreak control in shelters and affected communities;
- Injury prevention for displaced people and rescue workers;
- Environmental health and safety monitoring of homes, water quality and shelters;
- Rebuilding public health infrastructure;
- School health, and worker and

responder safety recommendations and monitoring.

GOOD & BAD

Always a strong critic of itself, the CDC identified weaknesses of many aspects of its post-Katrina efforts that it has sought to improve.

The CDC reports that its operations organizational structure during Katrina, for example, was not adequate to support the needed communications between in-field leaders from state health agencies and federal officials.

How did the CDC adjust its policies? One of the major efforts undertaken by the CDC was developing new standard operating procedures for pandemic responses, a collaboration with the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

In another admitted shortcoming, the CDC found that its staff was willing to volunteer in record numbers to deploy for Katrina, but many personnel lacked basic knowledge of emergency response operations.

CDC now claims to be making an “unprecedented investment” in training staff through its Corporate University.



Evacuate Means Evacuate

When city officials in your area decide to order an evacuation, that usually means conditions are expected to worsen — and rapidly.

Remember that even the most well-built homes may not hold up to a hurricane's brute force, so staying home to protect your structure is not worth the risk.

In anticipation of a potentially deadly hurricane, authorities will most likely direct you to leave if you live in a high-risk area in the path of the storm.

You also may hear an order to stay home if authorities determine that doing so makes for a safer situation.

No matter the warning, it is important to use common sense and put your trust in public officials making the call.

WHAT TO TAKE

Ordered evacuations sometimes come with a few days of preparation time, but not always. In the case of a rapid evacuation, you should only take what you really need with you.

This can include your cell phone, medicines, cash and all identification. You also should pack a map and have knowledge of where emergency workers recommend you traveling. Some routes may be blocked, so knowing where to travel can help save you time and keep you safe.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends turning off the gas, electricity and water to your home. This can help reduce the risk of gas leaks or fires taking place during or immediately after a hurricane.

Don't forget to tell neighbors where you will be staying during the hurricane and leave contact information. This will allow them to reach out to you after the storm.

If they get back to the area before you, they can give you an update on any damage to your home. Remember to also find out where they will be staying so you can do the same for them.



Your Home's Pain Points

As with any emergency, your home is susceptible to damages during a hurricane. What it may be able to weather in an earthquake or tornado it may not be as prepared for in the case of a tropical storm or hurricane.

Knowing where to start is as simple as analyzing what dangers a hurricane poses. High winds mean your roof can be quickly ripped away. In heavy, sustained rain, any missing roof shingles or broken windows can lead to immediate water damage.

These are important issues to address as hurricane season approaches. It's important that you not wait too long to take action.

The days leading up to a hurricane are best spent putting finishing touches on preparedness plans or safely evacuating, if ordered to do so. They are not effectively utilized hurrying through haphazard prevention efforts that can lead to missteps or mistakes.

YOUR ROOF

Do you have a few free hours on a Saturday morning? Set one aside to take a close look at your roof. A visual inspection can help you find weaknesses that are best addressed prior to a hurricane.

After safely using a ladder to reach your roof, look for loose or missing shingles, paying particular attention to the edges of your roof.

These deficiencies can allow high winds to get under-



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neath other loose or compromised shingles, which can lead to widespread damage.

If you have access to your attic, you also should take a look at your roof from the inside. Check for any light coming through. This means

there are gaps that need to be corrected before heavy rains come.

GLASS SAFETY

Your windows and glass doors also deserve your atten-

tion when inspecting your home for weaknesses.

You can find marine plywood that will stand up to high winds and heavy rains. Just measure, cut and affix the wood to fit each window or section of glass visible from

the outside of your home.

Also consider installing impact-resistant glass or other durable, tested materials. Doing so can reduce your chances of having dangerous glass cleanup on your to-do list after a hurricane.

Your Communications Plan

When do you think is the best time to reach out to your family members in the wake of a hurricane? If you said immediately, then you are on your way to establishing a powerful plan of action.

If you put in the proper planning now, you can be the greatest advocate of community safety and support. Knowing how, when and who to communicate with are critical in helping you and yours make it safely through a hurricane and its dangerous after-effects.

Here is a quick scenario for you: Let's say you smell the strong odor of natural gas emitting from your neighbor's home after a hurricane comes through your area. Who will you call? Your utility company is most prepared to handle this, but do you know its number? Could you track down the number if your phone was dead and your Internet was out?

Communication can be extremely challenging without properly working satellite signals, phone lines or electricity. There are some steps you can take, however, to make sure you're able to get in touch with those you love.

KEY CONTACTS

Besides friends and family members, there are various organizations you should have programmed into your cell phone and also listed on a piece of paper.

The National Weather Service recommends having the following agencies on speed dial, as well as connecting with them

through their websites and social media accounts:

- Local emergency management office;
- County law enforcement;
- State, county and city government;
- Local hospitals;
- Local utilities;
- Local American Red Cross;
- Local TV stations;
- Local radio stations; and
- Your property insurance agent.

SHARING IS CARING

If you are able to secure local news or weather information through your contacts, it is important to share it with your friends, family and neighbors.

Some of the most vital information you can share comes from the National Weather Service and relates to the time-frame immediately following a hurricane:

- Even if you think the hurricane has passed, hunker down for a bit longer; it may seem like a storm is over, but winds can quickly change direction even after the eye passes.
- Always be alert for tornadoes, which are often spawned by hurricanes.
- Remember that recovering from a disaster is a gradual process, so it is important to take disaster cleanup efforts one day at a time.



Handling Disaster Debris

Disasters such as hurricanes can generate tons of potentially hazardous debris.

One of the most worrisome items you may come in contact with during cleanup is asbestos. Anyone working on demolition, removal and cleanup of building debris needs to be aware of any asbestos present and to handle asbestos materials properly, urges the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Exposure to asbestos dust can cause serious lung health problems. It still can be found in many residential and commercial buildings, even as building codes have helped curb the use of asbestos in construction projects.

FLOODING DAMAGE

Heavy rainwater and flooding can weaken your home's structure, short out your electrical system or cause mold growth on furniture and carpet.

Many flooded items, such as wall-board and mattresses, will hold mold, mud and contamination forever. Mold can taint the air you breathe and compromise your immune system. Its effects are particularly dangerous if you are allergic to mold spores or already have any difficulties breathing.

The American Red Cross urges people to throw out when in doubt in dealing with flooded items such as mattresses. Once mold grows in something like a mattress, it can be nearly impossible to eliminate.

Heed the advice of the American Red Cross and find out the best place to dispose of your moldy items.



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CALL A PRO

Dealing with mold is no easy task. Cleaning up after a hurricane can pose very dangerous risks to public safety and health, according to the American Red Cross and Federal Emergency Management Agency.

There are businesses devoted solely to the practice, so don't feel overwhelmed if you're not sure where to start.

The government works hard to provide credible, certified professionals as references you can trust for completing your cleanup process. If there is a fed-

eral disaster declaration, a telephone hotline often will be publicized to provide information about public, private and voluntary agency programs to help you recover from the flood.

Check with your local government well before hurricane season starts so you have a list of contractors in mind.

Keep Your Phone Charged

There are many ways to keep your smartphone charged in the instance of a hurricane — and even more reasons to do so.

A fully charged smartphone means you are connected to the outside world. Friends, family and emergency officials are all at your fingertips — as long as your phone is functioning.

On the other hand, a dead battery can leave you feeling helpless and disconnected, unable to check on the well-being of your loved ones and shuttered from new weather alerts.

There are many ways to extend your battery life even if the power goes out. The important thing to remember is to make sure to start your post-power outage with a fully charged phone.

If you're waiting out the storm in your home, this means plugging in your phone while you're hunkered down. An extra phone charger in your emergency kit isn't a bad idea. Better safe than sorry.

CHARGING TOOLS

One of the most helpful emergency preparation tools on a smartphone is its ability to receive alerts from national and local agencies. A dead phone keeps you out of the loop. Your battery charger is the most obvious tool that can keep this from happening, but a power outage will render it useless.

You can buy a charger that uses solar power to keep your phone juiced up. There also are battery-powered backup chargers on the market that can give you several full charges after electrical options are unavailable.

Additionally, you can use your laptop as a back-up power

source. As long as you have battery life on your laptop, you can plug in your phone for a charge with a USB cable.

APP STRATEGY

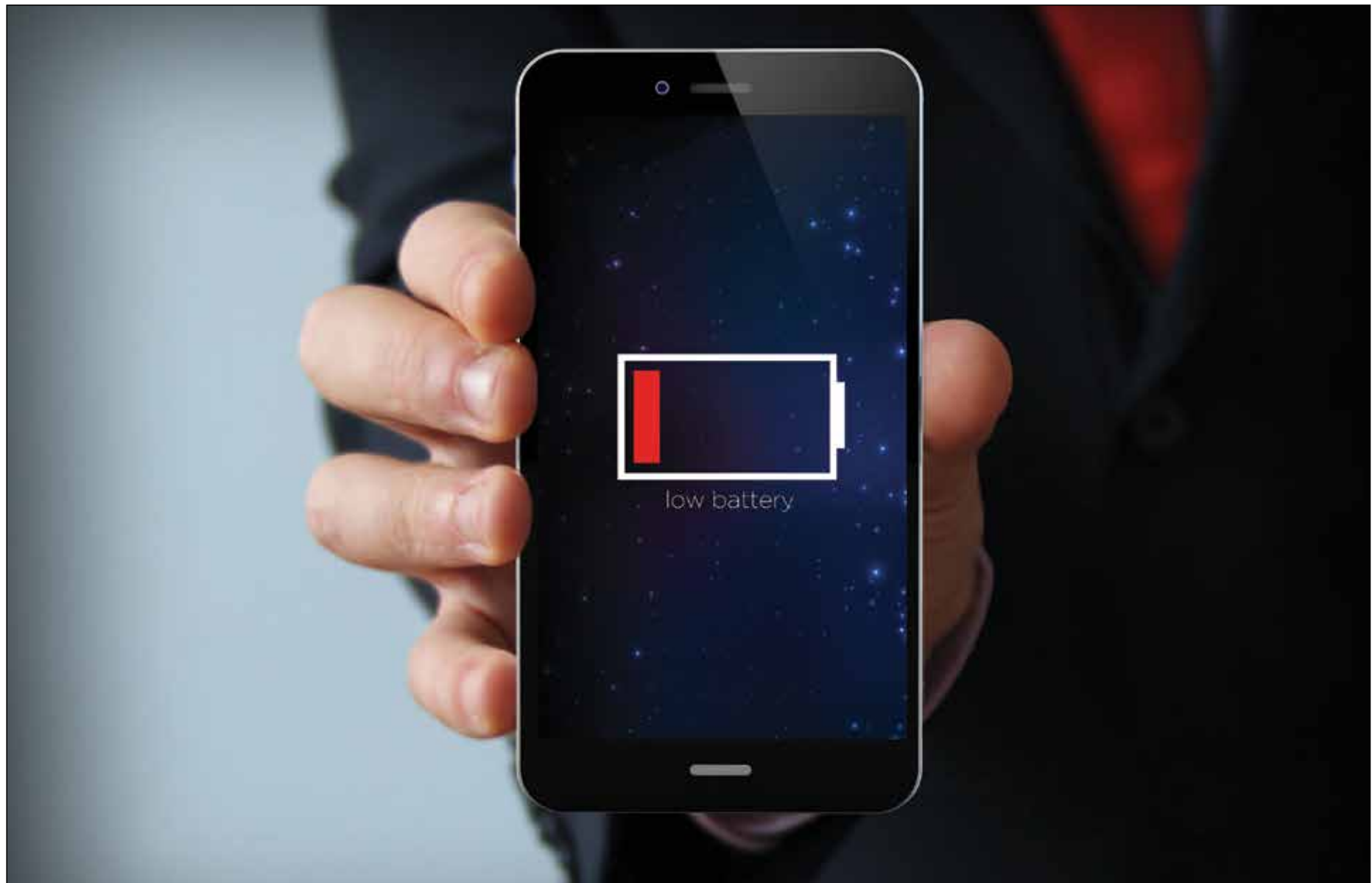
Mobile applications such as weather radars that use fre-

quent updates to keep you in the loop are invaluable during or after an emergency. They also are absolute battery drainers.

Some apps even run in the background of your phone when you're not using them. This can cause your battery to quickly lose power. You can

disable Wi-Fi on your phone, which will disallow these apps from running.

You can search your phone's application market for options that observe how you use your smartphone and recommend suggestions related to which apps you might delete to optimize your phone's battery life.





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Fast Facts and Statistics

Deadliest hurricanes in U.S. history (1890 to 2010), according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency:

Area or Hurricane Name	Year	Category	Deaths
1. Galveston, Texas	1900	4	8,000+
2. Southeastern Florida	1928	4	2,500
3. Hurricane Katrina	2005	3	1,836
4. Louisiana	1893	4	1,100-1,400
5. South Carolina/Georgia	1893	3	1,000-1,200

Costliest hurricanes in U.S. history (1900 to 2010), according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency:

Hurricane Name	Year	Category	Cost
1. Katrina	2005	3	\$108 billion
2. Ike	2008	2	\$29.5 billion
3. Andrew	1992	5	\$26.5 billion
4. Wilma	2005	3	\$21 billion
5. Ivan	2004	3	\$18.8 billion

WHAT DO WARNINGS MEAN?

The National Weather Service deploys an array of watches and warnings to keep you safe in the face of hurricanes. Here's what they mean, as defined by the NWS:

- **Tropical storm watch:** Tropical-storm conditions are possible within the specified area.
- **Hurricane watch:** Hurricane conditions are possible within the specified area.
- **Tropical storm warning:** Tropical-storm conditions are expected within the specified area.
- **Hurricane warning:** Hurricane conditions are expected within the specified area.
- **Extreme wind warning:** Extreme sustained winds of a major hurricane (115 miles per hour or greater) are expected to be within an hour.