

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

**Early Preparation Leads to Informed Action**

# RESIDENTS AND VISITORS OF SARASOTA COUNTY

## IT'S ALWAYS TIME TO PREPARE FOR HURRICANE SEASON

With Hurricane Season upon us, now is the time to take action to prepare yourself, your loved ones and your home. For starters, read this disaster preparedness guide, available at local libraries, Sarasota County Government offices or online at [scgov.net/beprepared](http://scgov.net/beprepared). Our website provides tips and checklists, a way to find your evacuation level, and information to make the necessary preparations for your family, home, neighborhood and business.

### Preparing and having a plan is essential to your family's safety when a disaster occurs.

Having a well-stocked emergency supply kit is critical, as extended power outages may occur. Once winds reach 45 mph during a storm, first responders cannot assist you. Your kit should include enough supplies to last you and your household at least seven days.

No two storms are alike, and every storm presents different challenges. Just 24 hours before Milton's landfall, for example, the predicted storm surge was a potentially catastrophic 10 to 15 feet along the entire coast. Ultimately, the storm weakened due to a cold front, resulting in lower surge levels across most of the keys, with the exception of areas on Manasota Key, which received 10 feet of storm surge.

### What's important to remember is, don't base your decision on your experiences in past storms. The next storm can and will likely be different.

According to the National Weather Service, storm surge and fresh water flooding are the leading causes of death in hurricanes. The 10 to 15 feet of storm surge predicted for Milton required evacuations of levels A, B, and C! This was the largest evacuation in Sarasota County history. Evacuation decisions are never made lightly. They are based on trusted weather data and potential for life-threatening conditions.

We believe our community took the calls to evacuate for hurricanes Helene and Milton seriously. **Should evacuations be necessary again this year, we urge you to heed all warnings. Asking people to leave their homes is a decision always made with the safety of our citizens as a top priority.**

When an evacuation is ordered, official announcements about which areas should evacuate will be posted on our website, social media and local news. When local officials issue an evacuation order, the question is not IF you should leave but how quickly.

Sarasota County teams work year-round to prepare for Hurricane Season. The mission requires steadfast dedication to planning, training and preparing across all departments, as well as collaboration with city partners, nonprofit organizations and community stakeholders. Our team reviewed last season's events to identify and implement enhancements to improve future response and recovery efforts.

County departments work tirelessly long before a storm reaches our shores to prepare county facilities, equipment, evacuation centers, transportation and information for our community. They operate 24/7 in our Emergency Operations Center. As soon as conditions are safe, they return to the community to assess damage, make repairs and begin recovery efforts. Their dedication and commitment are a crucial part of what makes our community strong.

Take advantage of tax-free holidays, and purchase eligible supplies in advance. Once you have all the basic supplies such as water and non-perishable food, add medications and any unique items for your loved ones. Gather important documents and emergency contacts, and keep them in a safe place or save electronic copies. Don't forget to plan for your pets.

Now is the time to take the action to prepare. Hazardous weather can strike at any time. Make sure your plans and kits are ready.

Stay safe,



**Richard A. Collins**

Emergency Services Director, Sarasota County



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# NEW FOR THE 2025 STORM SEASON

## A DIFFERENT HURRICANE CONE

In 2024, the National Hurricane Center began producing an experimental tropical cyclone graphic. The goal was to ensure people are aware that tropical impacts extend well beyond the forecast cone. The new graphic includes inland warnings and watches together with the classic track error cone.

**What you need to know:** The shaded regions of the tropical cyclone graphic represent those areas with risks to life and property. Sarasota County can still experience significant impacts from a tropical cyclone if the county is outside of the forecast cone, as was

demonstrated during hurricanes Debby and Helene in 2024.

Coastal areas under a hurricane warning are in red, and those under a hurricane watch are in pink. Areas under a tropical storm warning are shown in blue, with tropical storm watch areas in yellow. An area under a combined tropical storm warning and hurricane watch is shown with a blue/pink hash. The white dot indicates the current position of the center of the tropical cyclone.



Illustration courtesy of the National Hurricane Center.



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## COUNTY SAFETY STATUS: Red, yellow and green conditions

Hurricanes, tornadoes and other natural disasters can create widespread damage, leaving debris, downed trees, flooding, live power lines on the ground, and damaged buildings. Immediately following such disaster, many departments (including law enforcement, fire, emergency management and public works) respond to assess damage and help citizens.

Communicating the level of damage and potential danger is imperative. The safety of our community is our primary concern. **Sarasota County utilizes a**

**color-coded system (RED, YELLOW, GREEN)** to indicate the level of damage, hazards and impact to services.

These colors will be used in Sarasota County's emergency public communications to represent the safety status of the county. Heavily impacted areas where damage is extensive and services are limited will require the **RED** status. Impacts to power, traffic lights, and downed trees may require larger areas being designated as **YELLOW**; meaning take caution, be vigilant and careful when out on the roads. Finally, as power is restored, roads cleared, and traffic lights become operable, the level of danger will return to **GREEN**.

| COLOR         | LEVEL OF DANGER  | CITIZEN ACTION  |
|---------------|--|---|
| <b>RED</b>    | Unsafe. Emergency services may not be available. Extensive damage limiting travel.   | Access may not be allowed, or limited, according to authorities having jurisdiction. Travel in this area is unsafe and not recommended. |
| <b>YELLOW</b> | Limiting factors to include lack of power, trees and power lines down in areas. Traffic lights may be out. Potential damage to utilities such as water systems and wastewater. | Safety precautions required. General travel limited to essential needs.   |
| <b>GREEN</b>  | No limiting factors.   |   |



Tropical storms leave debris, downed trees and power lines, and flooding. Stay tuned to your level of danger when storms approach.

# WEATHER SAFETY

Knowing what hazards can affect our community and learning what to do before, during and after each one will help you be safe and recover quickly after a disaster.

## HURRICANES

Hurricanes are rated on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale from Category 1 to Category 5, based on their sustained wind speed. The scale estimates potential property damage. Hurricanes of Category 3 or higher are considered major because of their potential for significant loss of life and damage. Category 1 and 2 are still dangerous and require preventive measures.

Do NOT make evacuation decisions based on a storm category. **This scale does not reflect potential for storm surge.** Category 1 and 2 storms often bring dangerous storm surge. Listen to officials and heed evacuation notices.

Hurricane Season is from June 1-Nov. 30. The height of hurricane season is August-October. During the historic 2024 hurricane season, all three storms that impacted Sarasota County arrived during this peak.

## FLOODING

1. Hurricanes are not just a coastal emergency, flooding can occur far inland. If flooding threatens, get to higher ground. Stay away from flood-prone areas, including low spots and ditches. Take dry clothing, a flashlight and a portable radio with you.
2. **TURN AROUND, DON'T DROWN.** Avoid flooded areas or those with rapid water flow. Do not attempt to cross a flowing stream or drive in water. The depth is not always obvious. It takes only six inches of fast flowing water to sweep you off your feet, and two feet of water can carry away most vehicles.
3. Do not allow children to play in or near high water, storm drains or ditches. Flood waters may be contaminated with oil, gasoline or raw sewage.

| CATEGORY  | SUSTAINED WINDS (MPH) | DAMAGE   |
|-----------|-----------------------|--|
| 1         | 74 - 95               | Very dangerous winds will produce some damage.         |
| 2         | 96 - 110              | Extremely dangerous winds will cause extensive damage. |
| 3 (major) | 111 - 129             | Devastating damage will occur.                         |
| 4 (major) | 130 - 156             | Catastrophic damage will occur.                        |
| 5 (major) | 157 or higher         | Catastrophic damage will occur.                        |



It takes only two feet of water to carry most cars off the ground. Make sure your car is not one of them.



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Florida experiences more lightning strikes per square mile than any other state. When it strikes, stay indoors.

## LIGHTNING/THUNDERSTORMS

### 1. IF THUNDER ROARS, GO INDOORS.

Find a safe place to take cover inside a home or business, a restroom in a park, or a shelter on a beach. Stay inside for at least 30 minutes after thunder stops.

2. Do not use trees for cover.
3. Do not lie down in an open area.
4. Stay away from bodies of water.

## TORNADOES

1. Purchase a NOAA weather radio and/or a battery-powered commercial radio and extra batteries.
2. Know the terms used to describe tornado threats:
  - a. **Tornado Watch**  
Remain alert for approaching storms. Tornadoes are possible.
  - b. **Tornado Warning**  
Take shelter immediately. A tornado has been sighted or indicated by a weather radar.
3. If a tornado threatens, seek shelter in a small, windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest level of a sturdy building.
4. **Mobile homes are not safe during tornadoes.** Abandon mobile homes and go to the nearest sturdy building immediately.



WHAT TO DO DURING A

# TORNADO WATCH





When a Tornado Watch is issued, make sure the following items are stored in your safe place.

- Helmets, pillows, or even a mattress to protect your head from falling and flying debris
- Shoes to protect your feet from broken glass and other sharp objects
- A whistle or noise-making device to signal for help after the storm passes
- Baby formula, diapers, and other necessary items for your children
- Pet carriers, leashes, and other pet supplies



For more information, visit:  
[weather.gov/safety/tornado](https://weather.gov/safety/tornado)

# STORM SURGE

## ALONG THE COAST, STORM SURGE FROM A HURRICANE IS OFTEN THE GREATEST THREAT TO LIFE AND PROPERTY.

Storm surge is an abnormal rise of water generated by a storm, over and above the predicted astronomical tides.

Storm surge can cause life-threatening conditions.

This rise in water level can cause extreme flooding along the coastal areas and rivers, and can inundate inland areas as the storm approaches.

Storm surge also has the potential to impact critical infrastructure including power, communications, water, sewers, fuel, roads and bridges.

Damage severity depends on the storm's size, strength, forward speed and direction of movement. In Sarasota County, storm surge can travel for miles inland, so it is important to evacuate if your area is under an evacuation order.

All storms are different. If your neighborhood did not receive storm surge during the last hurricane, it does not mean that it is safe from storm surge in the next storm. If you are told to evacuate, heed the notice and leave the area.



Storm surge travels well beyond the coast. Heed warning signs and weather alerts.

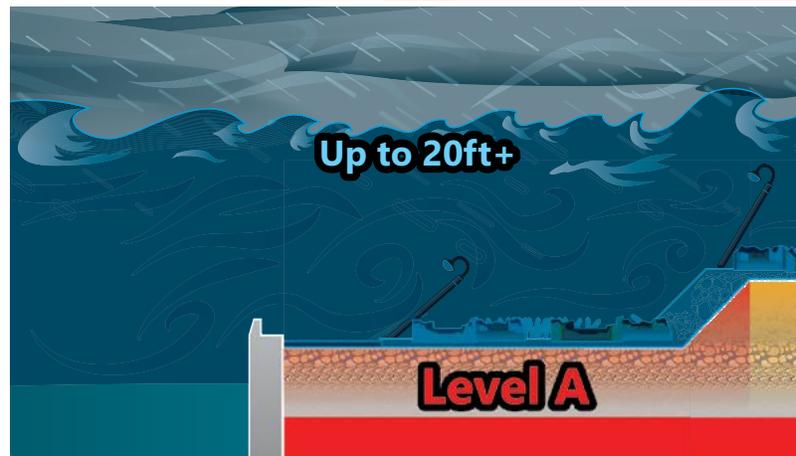


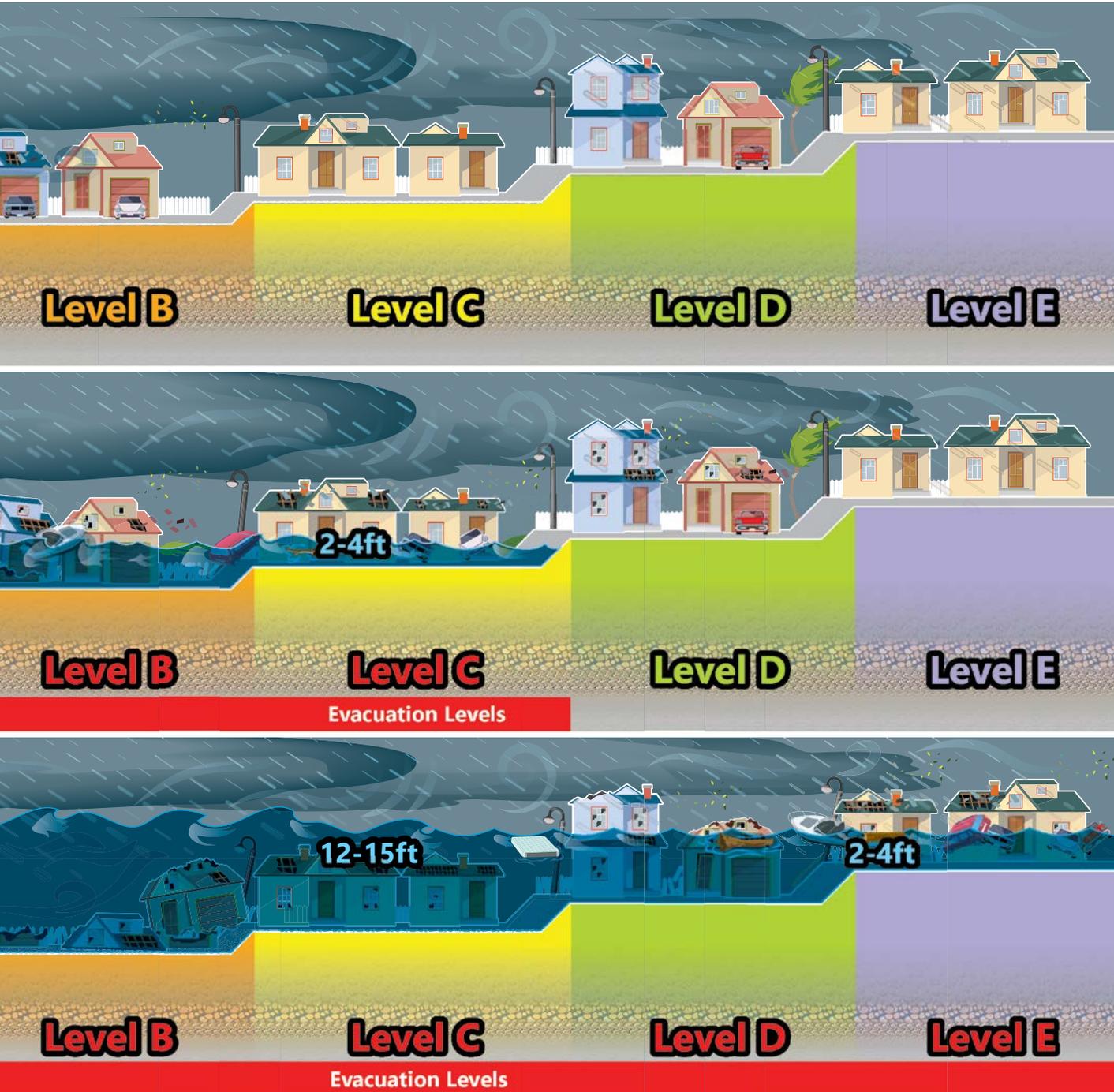
Illustration courtesy of Pinellas County Communications.



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Sarasota County has five evacuation levels A-E. If you live in one of these levels, you may be subject to evacuation. Visit [scgov.net/beprepared](http://scgov.net/beprepared) to learn your evacuation level.

# PREPARE YOUR HOME

## SAFE STRUCTURES

Hurricane research studies have shown that on average homes built under the 2002 Florida Building Code sustained less damage and when paired with shutters may be safe to stay in as long as they are not in an evacuation area. Homes built between 1994 and 2001 under the Standard Building Code sustained more damage and homes built before 1994 fared even worse. Before storm season begins, take the following steps to protect your home:

- ▶ Secure loose rain gutters and downspouts, and clear clogged areas or debris.
- ▶ Secure and reinforce your roof, windows and doors, including garage doors.
- ▶ Consider building a FEMA safe room designed for protection from high winds and flood waters.
- ▶ Learn how and when to turn off gas, water and electricity. Never burn candles or oil lamps during the storm even if the power is off.
- ▶ Keep in mind your Wi-Fi will only work if electricity is on. Many router boxes have external batteries that will keep Wi-Fi running for a limited period of time if power is interrupted. Contact your local cable/internet provider for more information.

## MOBILE OR MANUFACTURED HOMES

### YOU MUST EVACUATE IF YOU LIVE IN A MOBILE HOME OR RECREATIONAL VEHICLE.

Mobile homes are unsafe shelter in high winds no matter how well fastened to the ground. Take precautions to ensure that your mobile home is properly secured to reduce possible damage to your home and your neighbor's property.

- ▶ Check tie-downs annually. Make sure straps are tight, properly aligned and not on an angle.
- ▶ Verify that ground anchors and stabilizer plates have been installed properly.
- ▶ Be sure support piers are in contact with the frame.
- ▶ Replace straps or ground anchors that show signs of corrosion or damage.

For detailed information or to verify a contractor's license, call the **Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, Bureau of Mobile Home and Recreational Vehicle Construction at 850-617-3004.**

## CHECKLIST FOR SHELTERING IN PLACE

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean bathtub or other large containers and fill with water.                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cash (ATMs may be out-of-service).   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking water, one gallon per person, per pet, per day, for at least seven days. | <input type="checkbox"/> Pet supplies.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canned food and a manual can opener.  | <input type="checkbox"/> Photocopies of important documents (birth certificate, license and insurance).   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disposable (paper/plastic) items for food/snacks.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Full tank of gasoline in your car.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baby needs.   | <input type="checkbox"/> Cell phone/tablet supplies (power bank/external battery charger(s); car phone charger (be sure to charge the phone in your car only while it is running to preserve the car battery)). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medications, prescriptions and a first aid kit.                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Battery operated fans with extra batteries.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Battery-operated television or radio, flashlight and extra batteries.             |   |

***Most of these items can be purchased during tax-free week prior to the start of hurricane season. Learn more at [floridarevenue.com](http://floridarevenue.com).***

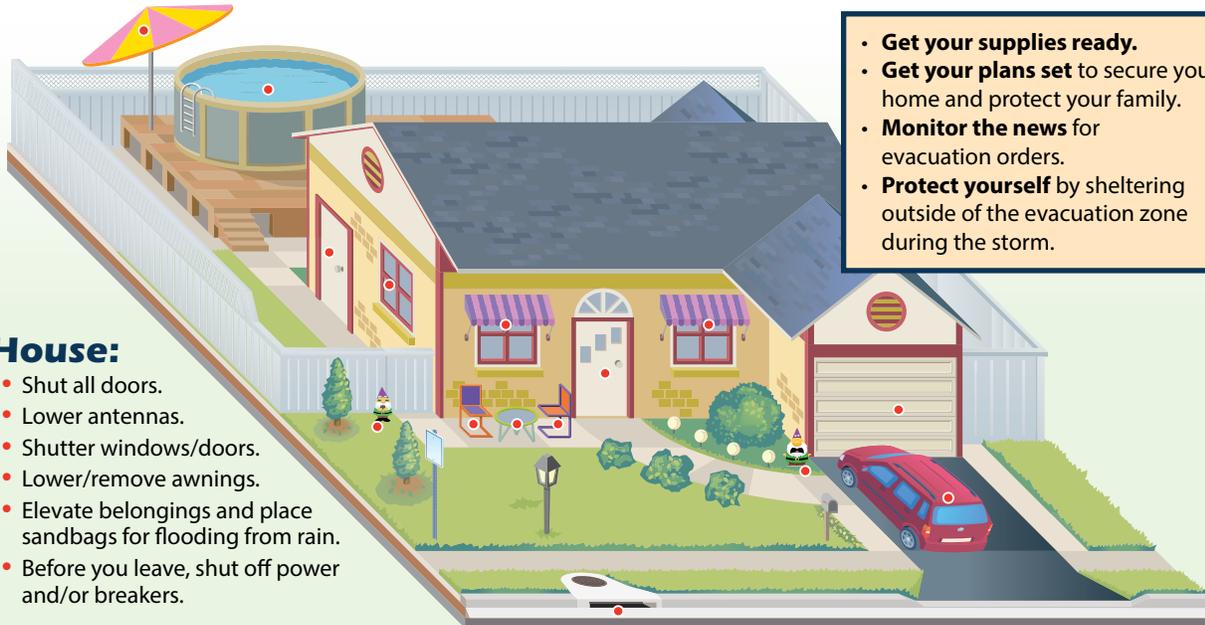


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# SECURE YOUR HOME



- **Get your supplies ready.**
- **Get your plans set** to secure your home and protect your family.
- **Monitor the news** for evacuation orders.
- **Protect yourself** by sheltering outside of the evacuation zone during the storm.

## House:

- Shut all doors.
- Lower antennas.
- Shutter windows/doors.
- Lower/remove awnings.
- Elevate belongings and place sandbags for flooding from rain.
- Before you leave, shut off power and/or breakers.

## Garage:

- Reinforce the doors with a brace kit or use long steel or aluminum bars.
- Place flood barriers against the bottom of the door(s) to seal the gap.
- Lock the door.

## Yard:

- Take all yard items inside. Clear balconies, steps and porches.
- Pick up/secure loose debris.
- Super-chlorinate your pool.
- Remove debris from your gutters and nearby storm drains if possible.

## Vehicle:

- Fill gas tank.
- Check oil and water.
- Place emergency supplies in the trunk.
- Move to a higher location if you expect flooding (especially for electric vehicles).
- Monitor traffic reports.

## If you don't have to evacuate...

- Invite others who have to evacuate to stay with you.
- Prepare a safe room.

Illustration courtesy of Pinellas County Communications.

## FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

An important aspect of disaster preparedness is financial preparedness. Safeguarding your finances should be part of your family preparedness program. Inventory your household property and valuables. Save photos of your items along with receipts and invoices in a safe place. Know where your insurance documents are, keep them in a safe place, and ensure you can get to them quickly if needed.

Call **1-877-MY-FL-CFO** for insurance assistance or visit [myfloridacfo.com/division/consumers/storm/resources](https://myfloridacfo.com/division/consumers/storm/resources).

## GET COVERED NOW

Homeowners insurance covers catastrophic loss but it doesn't protect homeowners from loss due to flooding or rising water. A separate flood insurance policy is the only way to ensure this extra level of protection. If you do not have a flood insurance policy, check with your insurance agent for a price quote on your home and your personal property.

**Do not wait!** There is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance becomes effective, unless you are purchasing a new home with a mortgage. For more information, visit [fema.gov/flood-insurance](https://fema.gov/flood-insurance).

# PREPARE YOUR BOAT



Never try to ride out a tropical storm in a boat. You could lose more than the boat.

## BEFORE HURRICANE SEASON

A significant number of vessels were lost or damaged during the 2024 hurricane season. Make a plan for what you will do if a storm comes. A little preparation can help prevent damage to your boat and surrounding properties.

- ▶ Keep boat insurance current and ensure it covers hurricane impacts.
- ▶ Store records together in a safe place. Include recent photos/videos of your boat and its contents, the Hull Identification Number (HIN#), and phone numbers for the Coast Guard and emergency contact at your marina.
- ▶ Keep your trailer and its tires, bearings and axle in good condition.

## WHEN A STORM THREATENS

Take your boat out of the water if possible. Strap your boat securely to your trailer and move it outside of areas that could flood. Avoid parking under trees. Once at a safe place, use wheel chocks or blocks to prevent rolling. Secure your boat with heavy nylon lines to fixed objects. If possible, find a location that will allow you to secure it from all four sides. It can be tied to screw anchors. Do not secure your boat to a tree. If you plan for a local marina to haul your boat out of the water and secure it, have it taken out long before the arrival of tropical storm-force winds.

**IMPORTANT:** When a tropical storm approaches, Sarasota County's drawbridges will open less often so that vehicles can evacuate over the bridge. Eventually, bridges will be kept in the down position and will not reopen until it's safe to do so.



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## IF YOU CAN'T TRAILER YOUR BOAT TO SAFETY

Some local marinas will haul large boats out of the water and secure them during the storm. Check size limits and space availability ahead of time.

Confirm what you're responsible for in your lease or storage rental agreement.

Mark valuable items and small craft (like kayaks) with your phone number so they can be returned if they are lost in the storm.

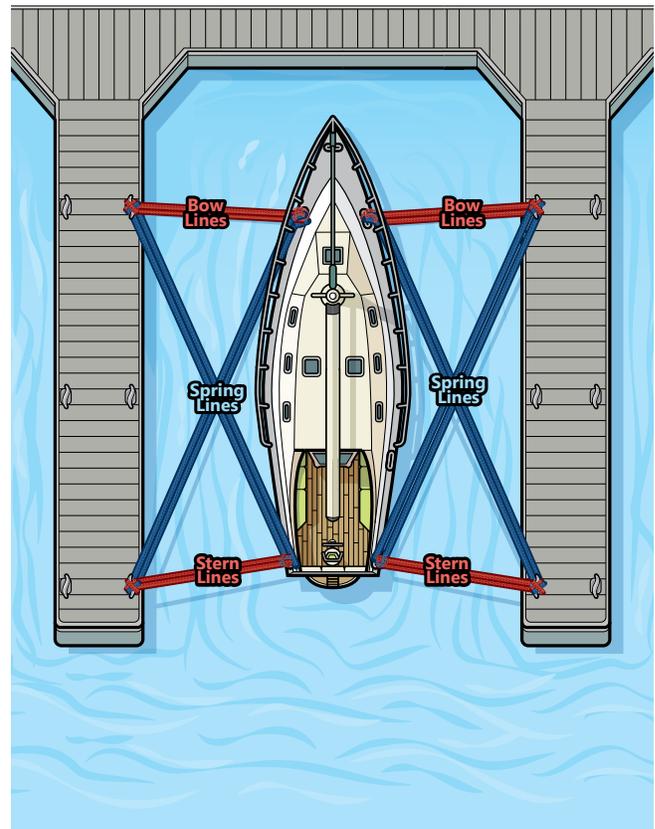
### If you cannot take your boat out of the water:

- ▶ Secure your boat in a protected, stable location.
- ▶ Inspect pilings and choose those that seem strongest, tallest and properly installed. (Note that docks can be damaged in a major hurricane.)
- ▶ Double all lines. Run crossing spring lines, each from one end of the boat to the opposite end on the dock. Attach lines high on pilings — keeping in mind that the longer the lines, the better — to allow for rising tides or storm surge. Make sure lines will not slip. Use chafe protectors on lines and fenders to protect the boat.
- ▶ Remove all movable equipment. This includes canvas, sails, dinghies, radios, biminis and roller furling sails.
- ▶ Tie down everything you can't remove, including tillers, wheels and booms.
- ▶ Charge batteries and consider backup batteries.
- ▶ Turn off all devices using electricity except bilge pumps.

## IF YOU LIVE ON A BOAT

### Never consider riding out a storm on a boat.

No matter how valuable your boat is to you, it's not worth your life. If possible, stay with friends or family outside of the area ordered to evacuate. Consult this guide for a list of evacuation centers and what you'd need. Evacuation center information will be updated on the county's website ([scgov.net](https://scgov.net)), on local radio and television stations, and on the county's social media accounts.



## RESOURCES

- U.S. Coast Guard Special Marine Advisories: **Channel 16**
- U.S. Coast Guard: [uscgboating.org](https://uscgboating.org)
- NOAA Weather Alert Radio SAME code: **012115** or frequency **162.400**
- National Hurricane Center: [hurricanes.gov](https://hurricanes.gov)

# DISASTER PLANNING FOR PETS

## DOMESTIC PETS

The safety of your family pets depends on you, especially in an emergency. During severe weather or other emergency situations, if it is unsafe for you to stay in your home, it is also unsafe for your pets. Don't leave your pet behind, and don't use your pet as an excuse not to evacuate.

The best plan is to identify a safe location that allows pets. Keep in mind that boarding kennels may be without electricity or potable water and have limited personnel and supplies for days to weeks following a disaster.

***During disasters, pets may become afraid and run away. Consider microchipping your pets to make reunification easier.***



Pets are part of the family. Plan accordingly.

Don't put yourself, your family and your pet at risk! You are responsible for planning for your pet. Just as you should prepare an emergency kit for yourself, you should also prepare one for your pet. If an evacuation is called for, take your pet-emergency kit with you wherever you go. The safety and successful evacuation of your family and pets depends on a good plan and being prepared with the proper supplies.

All of Sarasota County's evacuation centers are pet-friendly, but you must be prepared before you go. Bring a crate for your pet and all necessary supplies if you plan to stay in a Sarasota County evacuation center. If your pet is not accustomed to being confined, acclimate it to the crate before an emergency to help alleviate stress.

***Sarasota County evacuation centers accept dogs, cats, birds, rodents and turtles. Service animals are allowed in all evacuation centers.***

## WHAT TO BRING FOR YOUR PETS TO AN EVACUATION CENTER:

- One week's supply of food (with can opener if necessary) and medication.
- Enough water for each pet for three days.
- Food and water bowls.
- Current vaccination records.
- Proper ID collar and rabies tag/license and leash.
- Carrier or cage (large enough for your pet to move around in).
- Cat litter, box (small enough to fit in cat carrier) and scooper.
- Plastic bags (for handling waste).
- Disinfectant and cleaning materials.
- Current photo of you with your pet (in case you're separated).
- A comfort item such as a favorite toy, blanket or treats.



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## RURAL ANIMALS

The decision to evacuate your livestock depends on many factors. If they are in a storm-surge area, flood plain, small pasture or urban area where they will be unable to avoid debris or will be in danger of collapsing buildings, you should consider evacuation. The key to a successful evacuation is to do it early.

Decide in advance how you are going to evacuate. If you cannot evacuate, be prepared to survive with limited access to food, water and electricity for an extended period. Consider installing generators for critical facilities, including wells and septic pumps. Write your plan down and keep it in a place with copies of important papers so that you will be ready in the event you must act quickly.



Livestock and rural animals need an evacuation plan. Use the checklist on this page to prepare.

### PREPARE YOUR LIVESTOCK BEFORE A STORM:

- Know where you can take your livestock in an emergency evacuation. Be prepared to evacuate early. Large vehicles can become difficult and unsafe to drive when winds reach 40 mph.
- Practice loading and unloading your livestock in a trailer. Stressed animals will be harder to handle (and may negatively react to your own stress) during an actual disaster.
- Pack a box with extra halters and leads for each animal, blankets, brushes, wire cutters, medications, bandages, fly spray and other first-aid supplies.
- Keep important documents such as medical records, Coggins tests, photographs and registration papers in a watertight envelope.
- A two-week supply of animal feed for each animal should be stored in waterproof containers.
- Be prepared to treat contaminated water. (Add two drops of chlorine bleach per quart and let stand for half hour.)
- If you are forced to evacuate and leave your animals behind, inform friends and neighbors of your evacuation plans and post detailed instructions in several places on your property. You will need to leave water for **AT LEAST THREE DAYS** and access to quality hay. **DO NOT LEAVE ANIMALS WITH FREE ACCESS TO GRAIN.**
- The safest place for large animals to weather a storm is in a large pasture.
- Label your animals with a non-toxic grease pencil or spray paint with your phone number. Label your contact information onto waterproof luggage tags and attach them to their halters/collars or braid them into the mane or tail.

# MAKE AN EVACUATION PLAN



Never underestimate the power and speed of a storm. Coastal areas frequently flood well in advance of a storm's landfall.

**If Sarasota County issues an evacuation order, everyone within the identified level needs to leave the area.** Residents in low-lying areas, barrier islands and mobile homes should seek shelter when conditions warrant. Many coastal roads could be underwater well in advance of a storm, restricting their use as evacuation routes. If you are going to leave the area, be prepared to evacuate early and head inland to avoid the high winds and heavy rains that precede the arrival of a storm.

## **IF YOU'VE DETERMINED THAT YOUR HOME IS NOT SAFE TO RIDE OUT A STORM**

### **You have three options.**

#### **1. Stay with a friend or leave the area.**

Emergency management agencies recommend you arrange to stay at a "host home" outside the evacuation level. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address and phone number of the family contact.

#### **2. Go to a hotel.**

You may be able to reserve a hotel room out of the evacuation area. Space will fill fast. Make reservations early.

#### **3. Move to an evacuation center.**

In the event that Sarasota County will be impacted by a tropical cyclone, Sarasota County may open evacuation centers. They are not hotels and will not be able to provide any conveniences or luxuries.

Evacuation centers do not provide bedding, cots or blankets. If you suffer from pet allergies, be aware that you may be exposed to domestic animals located inside evacuation centers. Every effort will be made to assist with limiting the exposure, but cannot be guaranteed.

Sarasota County partners with Florida Department of Health to provide sheltering for residents with qualifying medical needs. Pre-registration is required. See Page 22 for more details.

- ▶ Going to an evacuation center should always be considered a measure of last resort.
- ▶ Never go to an evacuation center until local officials announce it is open.
- ▶ Evacuation center information will be updated on the county's website ([scgov.net](http://scgov.net)), on local radio and television stations, and on the county's social media accounts.



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## A CHECKLIST FOR EVACUATING

### Before you go to an evacuation center:

- Locate the water shut-off valve for your residence. The valve is generally on the side of the house nearest the water meter/backflow prevention device, or may be inside the garage.
- Turn the valve to the off position. This will help minimize damage to the interior of your home should a pipe burst.
- Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for turning off your pool and/or water heater and unplug them, and switch off the circuit breaker.
- Turn off the power and shut off the water valve to your irrigation system.
- Remove loose items, decorative and otherwise, outside the house and in the yard, and place them inside.
- Alert friends or family members of your plans and how they can contact you.

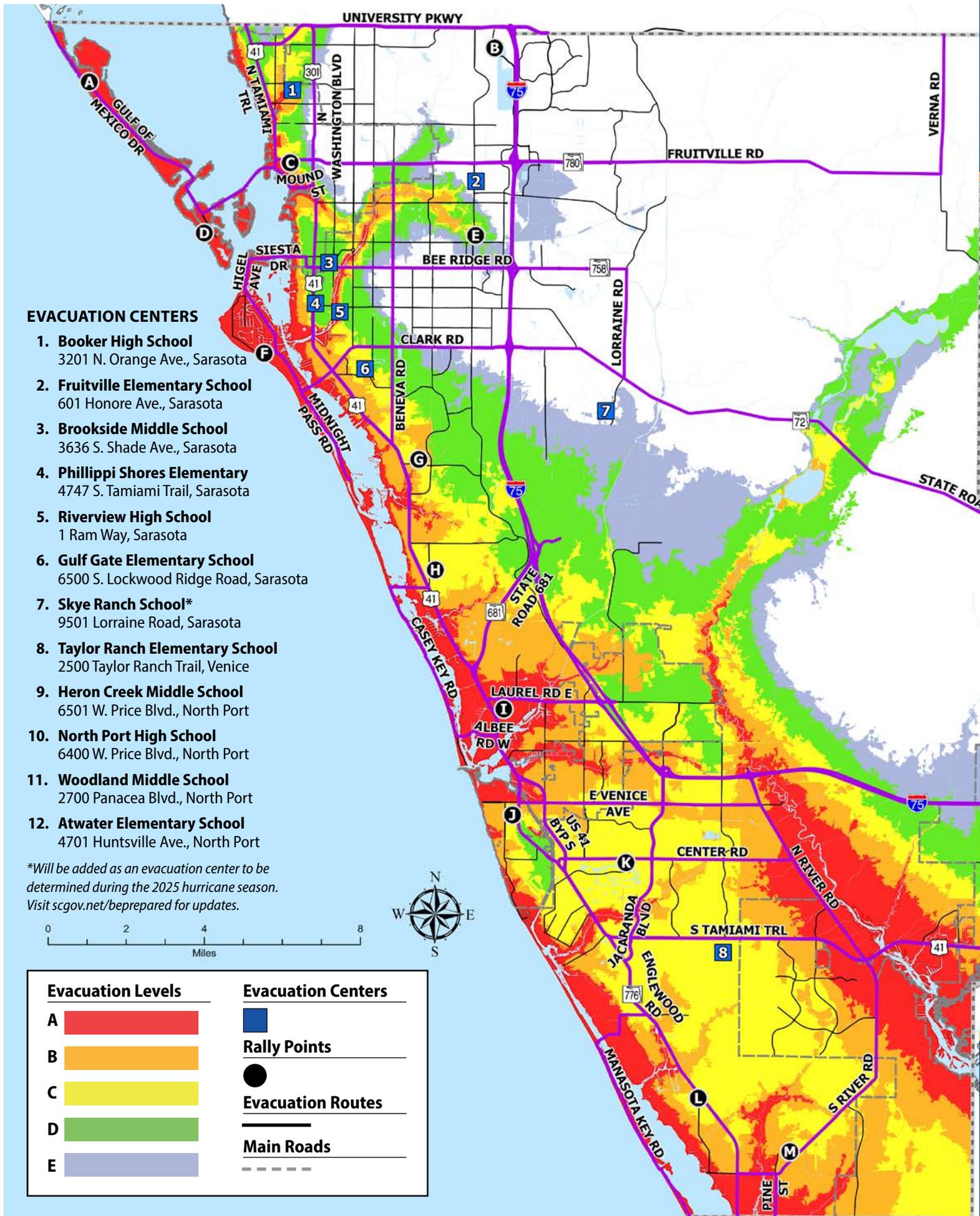
### What to bring to an evacuation center:

- Flashlight (in case your center loses power).
- Your insurance, Medicare or Medicaid cards, driver license or photo ID.
- Your children's immunization and other important health and insurance records.
- Each family member's medications, along with dosage information and physician's contact information.
- Drinking water.
- Snacks or special foods.
- Bedding and pillows.
- Book or electronic entertainment items with headphones and chargers.
- Change of clothing.
- Personal hygiene items (including toilet paper).
- Games/comfort items for children.

**NOTE:** You will be limited to approximately **20 square feet of space per person**, and meal service may be delayed.



Storms from 2024 decimated entire neighborhoods. When Sarasota County issues an evacuation order, leave the area immediately.



**EVACUATION CENTERS**

1. **Booker High School**  
3201 N. Orange Ave., Sarasota
2. **Fruitville Elementary School**  
601 Honore Ave., Sarasota
3. **Brookside Middle School**  
3636 S. Shade Ave., Sarasota
4. **Phillippi Shores Elementary**  
4747 S. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota
5. **Riverview High School**  
1 Ram Way, Sarasota
6. **Gulf Gate Elementary School**  
6500 S. Lockwood Ridge Road, Sarasota
7. **Skye Ranch School\***  
9501 Lorraine Road, Sarasota
8. **Taylor Ranch Elementary School**  
2500 Taylor Ranch Trail, Venice
9. **Heron Creek Middle School**  
6501 W. Price Blvd., North Port
10. **North Port High School**  
6400 W. Price Blvd., North Port
11. **Woodland Middle School**  
2700 Panacea Blvd., North Port
12. **Atwater Elementary School**  
4701 Huntsville Ave., North Port

\*Will be added as an evacuation center to be determined during the 2025 hurricane season. Visit [scgov.net/beprepared](http://scgov.net/beprepared) for updates.



| Evacuation Levels | Evacuation Centers |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| A                 | Rally Points       |
| B                 | Evacuation Routes  |
| C                 | Main Roads         |
| D                 |                    |
| E                 |                    |

# EVACUATION MAP

## There are **FOUR WAYS** to get to an evacuation center:

1. Take personal transportation.
2. Use **Breeze Transit** service. Visit [scgov.net](http://scgov.net) for schedules. Ride with family, friends or neighbors; or ride with Breeze. Visit [scgov.net/breeze](http://scgov.net/breeze) for service information. (Some services may be limited due to storm preparations.)
3. Drive to an evacuation center or get to a **RALLY POINT (see rally point addresses at right)**.
4. If you cannot driver yourself, arrange a ride with others or get to a **RALLY POINT**. Pre-register for transportation to an evacuation center no less than 48 hours before storm landfall.

Visit [scgov.net/beprepared](http://scgov.net/beprepared) to find the registration form.

## RALLY POINTS

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>A. Publix Super Market at Shoppes of Bay Isles</b><br/>525 Bay Isles Parkway, Longboat Key</p> <p><b>B. Breeze Transit UTC Transfer Station</b><br/>Mall at University Town Center<br/>500 N. Cattlemen Road, Sarasota</p> <p><b>C. Breeze Transit Downtown Transfer Station</b><br/>150 N. Lemon Ave., Sarasota</p> <p><b>D. Lido Public Beach</b><br/>400 Benjamin Franklin Drive, Sarasota</p> <p><b>E. Colonial Oaks Park</b><br/>5300 Colonial Oaks Blvd., Sarasota</p> <p><b>F. Siesta Public Beach</b><br/>948 Beach Road, Sarasota</p> <p><b>G. Potter Park</b><br/>8587 Potter Park Drive, Sarasota</p> <p><b>H. Pine View School</b><br/>1 Python Path, Osprey</p> | <p><b>I. Laurel Park and Sandra Sims Terry Community Center</b><br/>509 Collins Road, Nokomis</p> <p><b>J. Venice Community Center</b><br/>326 Nokomis Ave. S., Venice</p> <p><b>K. Garden Elementary School</b><br/>700 Center Road, Venice</p> <p><b>L. Buchan Airport Community Park</b><br/>1390 Old Englewood Road, Englewood</p> <p><b>M. Englewood Sports Complex</b><br/>1300 S. River Road, Englewood</p> <p><b>N. North Port Library</b><br/>13800 Tamiami Trail, North Port</p> <p><b>O. George Mullen Activity Center</b><br/>1602 Kramer Way, North Port</p> <p><b>P. Suncoast Technical College</b><br/>4675 Career Lane, North Port</p> |
|--|--|

## RALLY POINT GUIDELINES

- Each passenger is limited to two bags. Bags must fit under the seat or on the passenger's lap.
- Domestic cats and pet dogs in carriers/crates may travel with the passenger. Any required pet supplies are the responsibility of the evacuee.
- Sarasota County staff will assign passengers to evacuation centers. The passenger does not have the option to specify a preferred evacuation center.
- All transportation will cease when landfall is expected within eight hours.
- Once it is safe to return to the passenger's pickup location, he or she will be contacted to determine if return transportation is needed.
- To register for transportation to a Medical Needs evacuation center, visit [scgov.net/beprepared](http://scgov.net/beprepared).

## DID YOU KNOW?

Storm surge flooding can cause life-threatening conditions. In Sarasota County, storm surge can travel miles inland. It is critical to follow evacuation orders if you are in an area under an evacuation.

Learn more about how storm surge can impact coastal properties on **Page 6** of this guide.

**TO FIND YOUR  
EVACUATION LEVEL**  
[scgov.net/beprepared](http://scgov.net/beprepared)



# MEDICAL NEEDS PROGRAM



If you have special medical needs, you may qualify for registration for transportation and sheltering at a medically dependent evacuation center.

Sarasota County residents with qualifying medical needs are encouraged to apply for registration as a medically dependent person. It is important to apply in advance for the Medical Needs Program so, if qualified, you will be on the county's registry for transportation and sheltering at a medically dependent evacuation center during a disaster.

Register online or download a paper application at **[scgov.net/MedicalNeedsProgram](http://scgov.net/MedicalNeedsProgram)**. For questions about how to register, call 311.

It is important to register early. Paper applications for medically dependent registration will be stopped at 120 hours prior to potential impact from a storm, and all online applications will stop at 72 hours prior to impact from a storm or hurricane.

You may bring your spouse/significant other and dependents (limited to high school age and below, living in the same household), along with one caregiver who is prepared to:

- ▶ Help with (and lift you to/from) a toilet, cot and/or wheelchair/walker.

- ▶ Transport your food from the cafeteria, if needed.
- ▶ Help with medication and any treatments.
- ▶ Monitor your oxygen usage.
- ▶ Provide the evacuation center management with a discharge plan in the event that you cannot return to your home.
- ▶ Household members may not be housed in the same room as you.
- ▶ Bedding/cots are only available to registered medically dependent persons.
- ▶ Be sure to leave your answering machine or porch light on prior to evacuating to help determine if your electric has been restored.



Learn more about  
emergency preparedness at  
[scgov.net/beprepared](https://scgov.net/beprepared)



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## WHAT TO BRING TO A MEDICALLY DEPENDENT EVACUATION CENTER

- ▶ Pillow and quilt or heavier blanket.
- ▶ Two weeks of medications.
- ▶ Oxygen concentrator and extra small “travel” bottles of oxygen, if applicable.
- ▶ Your walker/cane, wheelchair or electric scooter (with charger), as applicable.
- ▶ Medical equipment/supplies (sharps container, catheters, incontinence supplies, c-pap).
- ▶ Special dietary needs, in a cooler.
- ▶ List of current medications.
- ▶ Extra batteries for phones and personal electronic devices.
- ▶ Insurance, Medicare or Medicaid cards, driver’s license or photo ID.
- ▶ Book or electronic entertainment items with headphones and chargers.
- ▶ Change of clothing with layers for comfort.
- ▶ Personal hygiene items.
- ▶ Games/books.

### IMPORTANT

Label (name and phone number) all equipment and belongings. If you suffer from pet allergies, be aware that you may be exposed to domestic animals located inside evacuation centers. Every effort will be made to assist with limiting the exposure, but cannot be guaranteed.

## IF YOU HAVE A PET

Upon acceptance into the Medical Needs Program, you will be assigned an evacuation center and informed of that center’s pet policy.

- ▶ Pets that are accepted will be kept in a separate area.
- ▶ All pets must be current on vaccinations and have all necessary supplies (crate, food, etc.).
- ▶ Staff will be available to assist with pet care, if needed.
- ▶ If you do not wish to be separated from your pet, consider evacuating to a pet-friendly hotel outside of the evacuation zone.



Never ignore an evacuation for fear of leaving a pet. They can come, too.

# AFTER THE STORM



Power may take days to return after a storm. Make sure your supplies will last at least 72 hours..

The longest and hardest part of dealing with a tropical storm or hurricane is the recovery. It may take several days for relief supplies and other aid to arrive. Listen to local media for re-entry information. Some damage may not be readily apparent, so keep these things in mind for your safety.

## POWER OUTAGES

- ▶ Avoid flooded and debris-laden areas that may be hiding downed lines.
- ▶ Assume all cables and wires are energized. Report downed wires to your utility company.
- ▶ Turn appliances that may have been on when the power went out to the off position, and turn off the main breaker until you are sure the system is safe.
- ▶ If you suspect there is water in the walls or ceiling, stay away from electrical outlets and contact a licensed electrician.
- ▶ Don't trim trees or remove debris located near downed power lines.

## WILDLIFE AND INSECTS

- ▶ Fire ants, bees, wasps, snakes, rodents and wild animals will seek refuge from flood waters. Check for any breaches in structures that may allow them entry.

- ▶ Storms and floods often leave behind standing water that creates a breeding ground for mosquitoes.
- ▶ Sarasota County Mosquito Management Services and the State of Florida will conduct surveillance to determine the extent of mosquito treatment needed after a major weather event.

## FOOD SAFETY

- ▶ Discard any food that is not in a waterproof container that has come into contact with flood water.
- ▶ Discard any food in damaged cans.
- ▶ Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about four hours if it is unopened. Discard all refrigerated perishable foods after four hours without power.
- ▶ A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full and the door remains closed).
- ▶ Dispose of food in small plastic garbage bags; tie or seal and place in a larger bag or can outdoors.



Learn more about emergency preparedness at [scgov.net/beprepared](https://scgov.net/beprepared)



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[AlertSarasotaCounty.com](https://AlertSarasotaCounty.com)

## HEAT EMERGENCIES

After a storm, loss of air conditioning and/or storm debris cleanup can cause heat cramps, heat exhaustion or heat stroke. To prevent heat emergencies:

- ▶ Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing.
- ▶ Rest frequently and seek shade when possible.
- ▶ Drink plenty of fluids.
- ▶ Be especially careful if you are taking prescriptions that impair heat regulation, or if you are overweight or elderly.

### If you or someone you know is experiencing a heat emergency:

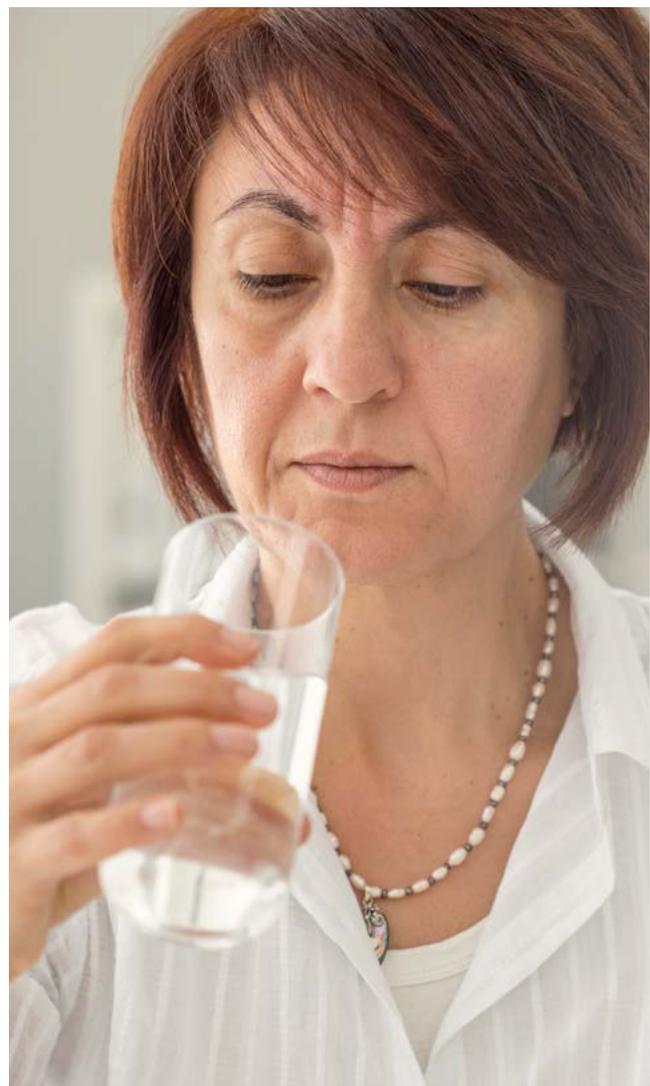
- ▶ Remove the victim from the heat and have them lie down.
- ▶ Apply cool compresses, elevate the feet, give fluids and use a fan to blow cool air.
- ▶ Call 911.

## WATER PRECAUTIONS

- ▶ Treat all water (including well water) as unsafe until you are notified that it is safe.
- ▶ Disinfect tap water you use for anything, including for your pets. Boil it for at least 10 minutes, or use chemicals (two drops of chlorine bleach per quart of water). Let the water sit at least 30 minutes before drinking.
- ▶ If you wash dishes in tap water, rinse in extra-chlorinated water.
- ▶ Wastewater lift stations may be without power. This will affect toilets and sink drainage. Avoid running dishwashers and clothes washers, and limit the amount of water used for showering, until lift stations are fully operational.
- ▶ If your well has been flooded, call the Florida Department of Health in Sarasota County at 941-861-6133 for information on bacteriological testing.

## CHAINSAWS

- ▶ Avoid downed or dangling power lines when clearing fallen trees.
- ▶ Call professionals to remove large, uprooted trees or trees in danger of falling over.
- ▶ Use proper safety equipment (heavy gloves, safety goggles, heavy boots, long-sleeve shirts and long pants).
- ▶ Tie back long hair to maintain full visibility and prevent entanglement.



Before, during and after a storm, heed health warnings about how to treat drinking water.

# STORM DEBRIS

## BEFORE THE STORM

Prevent storm debris by preparing your property for hurricane season (June 1 – Nov. 30). You can help reduce a storm's impact by cutting back trees and vegetation from power lines or other areas that could damage your home and property. Move all outside furniture and decorations inside when a storm is approaching our area.

Depending on the severity of the storm, residents should anticipate delays, and possibly suspension in their regular collection services including trash, recycling and yard waste. Delays and/or suspension may occur before and after a storm.

If you live within the city limits of Sarasota, Venice or North Port, or the Town of Longboat Key, you will need to contact your jurisdiction to determine when your garbage is collected. Processes may vary between unincorporated Sarasota County and local municipalities.

### Garbage collection:

- ▶ Unincorporated Sarasota County: 311 or 941-861-5000
- ▶ City of North Port: 941-240-8050
- ▶ City of Sarasota: 941-365-7651
- ▶ City of Venice: 941-486-2422
- ▶ Town of Longboat Key: 941-316-1988

## AFTER THE STORM

Should Sarasota County engage debris contractors for the collection of debris, instructions for how to prepare storm debris will be released via Sarasota County's website ([scgov.net](http://scgov.net)) and its social media accounts as soon as possible after a thorough damage assessment by emergency responders. Some items may be eligible for bulk collection at the curb, requiring minimal preparation, while other items will need to be properly prepared for regular curbside collection. After a major storm event, yard waste associated with land clearing and landscape improvement activities is not eligible for collection; disposal of this type of debris is the responsibility of the property owner at the property owner's expense.



Reduce storm debris on your property by cutting back trees ahead of storm season.

**STAY INFORMED:** Sarasota County will communicate debris recovery efforts through several platforms [[scgov.net](http://scgov.net), social media (i.e., Facebook, X, Nextdoor, Neighbors), Everbridge, newsletters, media releases]. Each storm is unique, so it is important that residents follow the county's social media platforms to have the latest and most accurate information.

### Access to the Central County Landfill:

Once it is deemed safe to reopen the landfill, some restrictions may be implemented.

- ▶ Essential services and contracted haulers will have priority access for disposal.
- ▶ Items accepted for disposal may vary depending on the storm's severity.
- ▶ Standard disposal fees will apply.
- ▶ For up-to-date information, visit [scgov.net](http://scgov.net).



Learn more about emergency preparedness at [scgov.net/beprepared](https://scgov.net/beprepared)



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### Ineligible Properties

FEMA considers commercial establishments, industrial parks, golf courses, cemeteries, apartments, condominiums, mobile home parks and manufactured home communities to be commercial properties that are generally ineligible for debris removal services under FEMA's Public Assistance program. Therefore, Sarasota County will not collect disaster debris from these areas. Vacant parcels of land are ineligible under FEMA's Public Assistance Program and are not eligible for storm debris collection. Any debris placed on a vacant parcel of land is considered illegal dumping and will be treated as such.

Commercial and not-for-profit properties should work through their insurance and/or the Small Business Administration (SBA) for debris removal assistance. SBA provides low-interest loans to help with the cost of debris removal. Learn more at [sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance](https://sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance).

Placing commercial storm debris on public right-of-way or taking it to a residential drop-off site for county collection is not permitted.

Sarasota County will not enter private property to remove debris. Residents are responsible for getting all debris to the curb/right-of-way for pickup. FEMA requires debris be separated by category and placed in front of the residence where

it was generated. Debris in a central neighborhood location or outside a community is not eligible for collection.

### PRIVATE ROADS IN GATED COMMUNITIES

If private roadways are deemed eligible for debris collection, restricted access roadways (gates or guards present), must grant permission to enter the roadway prior to any debris collection activities taking place. This requires a completed Right-of-Entry Form that is signed by the legal owner of the roadway or an authorized legal representative, such as a homeowner association or management company. Forms will be available after a debris-generating disaster has occurred. Residents are encouraged to contact their homeowner association or property management group with questions. Residents and homeowner associations may contract for their own debris removal service at their discretion.

**IMPORTANT:** Communities should not move debris outside of their community. Debris in a central neighborhood location or outside a community is not eligible for collection.



Some roads and properties in Sarasota County may be subject to different collection requirements. Stay alert for updates on how to prepare your storm debris.



Properly preparing your storm debris makes the collection process easier and faster for everyone.

**In 2024, Sarasota County collected more than 2.3 million cubic yards of debris from Hurricane Milton.** After any major event, it will take time to reach all areas of the county for collection. Depending on the extent of storm damage, debris removal may require multiple passes to complete, and multiple passes may not occur countywide. It is important to properly prepare debris for collection as soon as possible, especially if the property is in a one-pass zone. Once a zone is complete, it is verified and documented for completion via photos and GIS.

#### **Avoid stacking debris:**

- ▶ Next to mailboxes, fences or trees.
- ▶ Near utility poles.
- ▶ Under power lines.
- ▶ On top of water meters or other water connections.
- ▶ Near fire hydrants.
- ▶ Near vehicles.
- ▶ On storm drains.
- ▶ In the street.
- ▶ On vacant land.
- ▶ Do not place damaged fences, garbage, or other items close to vegetative storm debris piles because it interferes with removal crews and operations.



Learn more about emergency preparedness at [scgov.net/beprepared](https://scgov.net/beprepared)



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## Separating Your Debris

Storm debris should be placed at the curb without blocking the roadway or storm drains.

**Regular trash, recycling, properly prepared yard waste and non-storm related bulk items** will not be picked up with disaster debris. Continue to follow regular collection preparation guidelines.

  
Sarasota County



### HOW TO PLACE ITEMS AT THE CURB

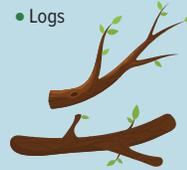
- Separate debris into the categories shown.
- Materials should be placed within 3 feet of the right-of-way when possible.
- Do not stack or lean materials near mailboxes, fences, trees, utility poles or other structures including fire hydrants and meters. This makes removal more difficult for the collection vehicles and can cause damage to property.

### DEBRIS PREP AT-A-GLANCE



#### VEGETATIVE DEBRIS

- Tree branches
- Palm fronds
- Logs



#### CONSTRUCTION AND DEMOLITION DEBRIS

- Building materials
- Carpet
- Drywall
- Fencing
- Furniture
- Lumber
- Mattresses
- Plumbing



#### APPLIANCES\*\* AND WHITE GOODS

- Air conditioners
- Dishwashers
- Freezers
- Refrigerators\*\*\*
- Stoves
- Washers, dryers
- Water heaters

\*Any construction and demolition materials contained in plastic bags should be placed with the regular garbage for disposal.

\*\*Small appliances such as radios, stereos and televisions should be placed in the garbage for disposal.

\*\*\*Remove refrigerator doors if empty or tape shut and notate spoiled food inside

The above content is conceptual only and may not reflect actual debris recovery initiatives. Information on what is being collected as storm debris, instructions on how to properly prepare debris and collection schedules (including possible delays) will be released via Sarasota County's website ([scgov.net](https://scgov.net)) and social media channels @SRQCountyGov.

### It's important to separate your debris into the following categories for collection:

- ▶ Garbage: including spoiled food in containers, or double bagged and be prepared for regular curbside collection.
- ▶ Household goods: furniture, clothes, books, toys and flooring.
- ▶ Vegetative: tree limbs and trunks.  
*Note: Small branches and leaves are not considered storm debris. They should be prepared for regular curbside collection.*

- ▶ Appliances: refrigerators, water heaters, televisions and computers. *Note: Solar panels are not eligible for collection. Residents should reach out to the solar panel vendor/manufacturer for disposal. Refrigerators with spoiled food should be taped shut and have a note on the outside indicating what is inside.*
- ▶ Construction materials: drywall, roof shingles, aluminum.

# GENERATORS, CONTRACTOR FRAUD AND HAZARD MITIGATION

## GENERATORS

Generators provide power during an outage or shortage, but they require special precautions.

1. Place generators at least 20 feet away from your home and away from doors, windows and vents that could allow deadly carbon monoxide to enter.
2. Store fuel safely outside in labeled, approved containers.
3. Stationary (whole house) generators run off gas utility lines or an LP tank and supply electrical power to pre-selected circuits. They **MUST** be professionally installed by a licensed electrician.
4. **NEVER** connect a portable generator to building wiring. There is an extreme danger of generator back-feed for the public and utility workers through downed wires. Plug appliances directly into the generator.
7. Before refueling your generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Check the oil every time you add gas. Keep generators dry.



When building or rebuilding in coastal areas, raise the roof, literally. Elevate your property above flood levels.

## CONTRACTOR FRAUD

1. Hire only licensed contractors. Never allow someone uninvited into your home to do repairs. View contractor licenses at **myfloridalicense.com**.
2. Obtain a written estimate or contract. Insist on start/completion dates and payment terms in the contract. Do not pay for incomplete repair work. **NEVER** pay with cash.
3. Any demolition or permanent repairs, reconstruction, roofing or filling requires a permit. Contact your local building department for required building permits.
4. Do not pull permits for a contractor. This may indicate they are not properly licensed.
5. If you suspect a contractor of potential fraud, contact the State of Florida Consumer Fraud hotline at 866-966-7226.

## HAZARD MITIGATION

Preventing damage is less expensive than restoring damaged property. Take actions to eliminate or reduce your risk.

1. Elevate your building above flood levels by placing it on stilts, pier foundations or a raised platform. Install flood barriers and wet/dry floodproofing. Construct waterproof walls. Elevate electrical panels and air conditioners above flood levels.
3. Install reinforced, impact-resistant doors, laminated windows, storm-resistant windows or hurricane shutters, pull-down PVC shutter systems and high-impact synthetic window shades.
4. Prevent penetration of moisture with sealants, waterproof membranes, house wrap, rainscreen systems. Use mold and mildew-resistant materials.
6. Rebuild responsibly. Be aware of substantial damage and substantial improvement rules. For details, visit **scgov.net** (keyword: substantial).

# SECURING ELECTRONIC DEVICES AND DATA

The electronic devices you use at home and in the office receive the latest news, speak to our loved ones and call for help. Data inside these devices operate businesses, monitor properties and store important records. Without question, it is much more difficult to return to home and work life after a storm has passed if these technologies have failed and if important records are lost. Do not leave your data and devices to chance.

**These tips can help you secure electronic devices and digital information from hurricanes and other disasters:**

- 1. Schedule regular backups of your personal and workplace data and devices.** Hurricane season should not be your cue to prepare, as anything could happen to your home or office throughout the year. Use the start of hurricane season as a reminder to confirm that automatic backups are working properly. This is extremely important for business owners and anyone who relies on files and data to operate that business after the storm has passed.
- 2. Scan important paperwork and documents** into a digital format, using a scanner, a handheld camera or a free smartphone app that digitizes documents.
- 3. Take before-and-after photos and videos of your home, business, furniture and valuables.** These records will be important when making an insurance claim.
- 4. Back up your digital data and files to an external hard drive or USB flash drive.** These backup drives become a portable copy of your data that you can take with you if you evacuate.
- 5. Back up your data and files to a cloud-based service.** Uploading "to the cloud" provides an added layer of protection in case something happens to your phone, computer or backup drives. Cloud-based protection secures your information online and makes it easy to restore to the original or a replacement device.
- 6. After everything is backed up digitally, store all important documents and keepsakes in a fire-safe, waterproof container that is easily portable.** This includes birth certificates and passports, or irreplaceable keepsakes like family photo albums.
- 7. Place electronic devices in high and dry locations away from windows.** Water is an obvious enemy of electronic technology. Even the smallest amount of water can ruin your device.
- 8. Make sure electronic devices are unplugged during a storm.** Power outages and lightning strikes can cause major damage to devices, computers, servers and televisions. Charge portable battery packs before the storm so you can avoid having to plug in any devices.
- 9. Limit the use of electronics until the storm has passed and power is stabilized.** Turn off and unplug devices to prevent power surge damage and battery drain. You may need to make an emergency call during or after the storm, so you need to conserve your battery life.
- 10. Your disaster supply kit should contain a battery-powered radio with plenty of extra batteries.** This will allow you to tune in to radio broadcasts for storm tracking and important safety updates from the Sarasota County Emergency Operations Center and NOAA Weather Radio.

## MORE RESOURCES TO MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

- ▶ [flash.org](http://flash.org) (Federal Alliance for Safe Homes)
- ▶ FLASH toll-free at 877-221-SAFE (7233)
- ▶ [mysafeflorida.org](http://mysafeflorida.org)
- ▶ [floodsmart.gov](http://floodsmart.gov)
- ▶ [disastersafety.org](http://disastersafety.org)
- ▶ [fema.gov/grants/mitigation](http://fema.gov/grants/mitigation)
- ▶ [myfloridacfo.com](http://myfloridacfo.com)

# PREPARE YOUR BUSINESS



According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and U.S. Department of Labor, 68% of small-business owners do not have a written disaster recovery plan.

## Here's what happens after a natural disaster to businesses without a plan.

| IMMEDIATELY                | 1 YEAR LATER             | 3 YEARS LATER           |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>40%</b><br>won't reopen | <b>25%</b><br>will close | <b>75%</b><br>will fail |

All businesses should have a disaster plan to communicate with employees, local authorities, customers and others during and after a disaster.

### Suggestions to prepare your business:

- ▶ Provide employees with information on when, if and how to report to work following an emergency.
- ▶ Set up a telephone call tree, a password-protected page on the company website, an email alert or a call-in voice recording to communicate with employees.
- ▶ Store valuable information in fire/waterproof containers, off-site and away from the storm's path.
- ▶ Evaluate your insurance coverage to ensure it will allow your business to fully recover after a storm. Keep your policy in a location off-site.
- ▶ Maintain a video or pictures of your office/equipment prior to a disaster.
- ▶ Have a supply of spare parts and alternative power supplies.
- ▶ Locate alternate work sites and moving companies.
- ▶ Ensure that there are written procedures in place, lists of customers, vendors, inventory, calendars and schedules; and that this information and location is shared with other employees who will be needed to get the business back in operation.
- ▶ Unplug equipment during major storms.
- ▶ Encourage employees to have a workplace survival kit.
- ▶ Complete a business disaster recovery plan. You can find a sample business emergency plan at [ready.gov/business](https://www.ready.gov/business) or [FloridaDisaster.org](https://www.FloridaDisaster.org).



Learn more about emergency preparedness at [scgov.net/beprepared](https://scgov.net/beprepared)



**ALERT** Sarasota County  
Official notification system of Sarasota County  
[AlertSarasotaCounty.com](https://AlertSarasotaCounty.com)

## IF MY BUSINESS IS DAMAGED, HOW DO I GET HELP?

### INSURANCE

Insurance companies will send special disaster assistance teams, as will the state and federal government, to perform damage assessments.

#### To prepare for a claim:

- ▶ Take pictures of the damage, both to the property and its contents.
- ▶ Have all your insurance documents ready.
- ▶ Do not pay for any services until repair work has been completed.

### HIRE ONLY LICENSED CONTRACTORS

**Unlicensed contracting is a felony during a state of emergency.** To verify a contractor's license, or to file a complaint against a contractor:

- ▶ Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), call **850-487-1395** or visit [MyFloridaLicense.com](https://MyFloridaLicense.com)
- ▶ Sarasota County Planning and Development Services, Building and Permitting call **311** or email [licensing@scgov.net](mailto:licensing@scgov.net)



Beware of anyone approaching your home uninvited to offer repairs.

## COMMERCIAL DEBRIS REMOVAL

Debris from commercial establishments is the responsibility of the property owner. Commercial property owners should contact their insurance company or the **FEMA Small Business Administration's (SBA) Assistance Program** for assistance with debris removal. The SBA provides low-interest loans to help with the cost of debris removal.

#### Avoid stacking debris after a storm event:

- ▶ Near utility poles.
- ▶ Under power lines.
- ▶ On top of water meters or other water connections.
- ▶ Near fire hydrants.
- ▶ Near vehicles.
- ▶ Next to mailboxes or fences.
- ▶ On storm drains.
- ▶ In the street.

**If you hire a contractor to perform any type of work involving debris**, the contractor is responsible for disposal of the debris. Contractors are required by law to dispose of debris properly; they cannot place it in the road's right-of-way. This doesn't apply to work performed by faith-based organizations and volunteers.

- ▶ Federal Emergency Management Administration: [fema.gov](https://fema.gov)
- ▶ Small Business Administration: [sba.gov](https://sba.gov)
- ▶ Doing Business in Sarasota County



# OTHER TYPES OF DISASTERS

Disasters come in all shapes and sizes. When you think of your safety, think beyond the next storm.

## FIRE SAFETY

1. **PLAN:** The time to plan for a fire emergency is now. Take a few minutes to discuss with your family or coworkers what actions you will need to take as you make your disaster plan for your family or business. Test smoke alarms in your home and business monthly. Collect contact information in case of evacuation.
2. **EVACUATION PLAN:** Decide where you will go and how you will get there. Unlike evacuating for a hurricane, with fire you may only have a moment's notice. Have at least two escape routes out of your home. Have a plan for evacuating your pets or service animals.
3. **FIRE DRILLS:** Make sure everyone knows at least two escape routes from your home or business and practice regularly.

## RIP CURRENTS

1. Do not swim against the current.
2. Stay calmly afloat and signal for help.
3. Escape the current by swimming parallel to the shoreline.
4. When outside of the rip current, swim at an angle away from the current toward the shore.

## PANDEMIC DISEASE

1. Prevention is key. Get routine flu shots and other vaccinations.
2. Wash hands often and thoroughly with soap and water.
3. Stay home when you are ill. Employers and schools should encourage this policy.
4. Avoid contact with sick people.
5. If ill, cover your mouth and nose with a face mask when around others.
6. Follow guidance by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regarding safety protocols.

## SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR

1. **SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.** Call local law enforcement, then Florida's toll-free hotline 1-855-352-7233 (1-855-FLA-SAFE) to report any suspicious activity.
2. Be prepared to provide the exact location and as much detail as you can provide about the threat or danger you observed.
3. If it is an emergency, dial 911!

## ACTIVE SHOOTER

1. Run if there is an easy escape path to evacuate the area. Leave your belongings behind. Move as quickly as you can and create as much distance between you and the threat as possible.
2. If running is not possible, find a place to hide from the shooter.
3. As a last resort, fight if you are not able to run or hide.

## HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

### IF YOU ARE TOLD TO EVACUATE:

1. Stay calm. Quickly gather what you will need, unless you are told to leave immediately.
2. Evacuate outside of the vulnerable area. Move to a place/shelter designated by local officials.
3. Keep car windows and air vents closed. Do not use the air conditioner until you are out of the evacuation area.

### IF YOU ARE TOLD TO STAY INDOORS AND SHELTER IN PLACE:

1. Bring pets indoors. Close all doors and windows. Seal all gaps under doorways and windows with damp towels and duct tape. Turn off heating, cooling or ventilation systems.
2. If air quality is at risk, cover your nose and mouth with a damp handkerchief or other cloth folded over several times.
3. Stay inside until local officials declare that the threat has subsided.

Visit [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for more information about preparing for disasters.

# FINANCIAL SERVICES, FEMA, SBA AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY GROUPS



After a storm, watch for announcements from FEMA and the Small Business Administration about programs to support disaster survivors.

## INSURANCE

Insurance companies will send special disaster assistance teams, as will the state and federal government, to perform damage assessments. Check your insurance plans annually. Don't wait until after a disaster to know your coverages. Learn more at [floodsmart.gov](http://floodsmart.gov).

- ▶ If a storm is coming, take photos of your property and valuables ahead of time.
- ▶ Know where your insurance documents are.
- ▶ Have all your insurance documents ready.
- ▶ Check for identification. Anyone coming to your home doing damage assessments from a government agency will have official identification.
- ▶ Do not pay for any services until repair work has been completed.
- ▶ Call 1-877-MY-FL-CFO for insurance assistance.

## RECOVERY RESOURCES

After a disaster, FEMA and the Small Business Administration (SBA) may have programs to support disaster survivors. FEMA programs may include funding for uninsured or under-insured expenses and services for mass care, crisis counseling, case management, legal services and unemployment assistance.

The SBA may offer low-interest disaster loans to help homeowners, renters and businesses of all sizes recover from declared disasters.

Residents and businesses may use an SBA loan for losses not covered by insurance or funding from FEMA, and/or business operating expenses that could have been met had the disaster not occurred.

- ▶ FEMA  
[fema.gov/assistance/individual](http://fema.gov/assistance/individual)
- ▶ SBA  
[sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance](http://sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance)
- ▶ Multi-Agency Resource Centers (MARC): One-stop shops that provide information and assistance from local and state agencies and organizations.
- ▶ Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC): Temporary offices set up after a disaster to provide support to impacted areas and communities. These offices may assist with the FEMA application process, answer questions about your application, and help you submit information to FEMA.

**MARC**  
MULTI-AGENCY  
RESOURCE  
CENTER

 Sarasota County  
scgov.net | call 311



# DISASTER SUPPLY KIT CHECKLIST

## GENERAL

- Two week minimum supply of medication, regularly used medical supplies, and a list of allergies
- A list of the style, serial number, and manufacturer information of required medical devices
- Batteries -  
*Do not use candles*
- Flashlights
- NOAA Weather Radio -  
*Battery operated or hand cranked*
- Cash - Banks and ATMs may not be available after a storm
- Cell phone chargers
- Books, games, puzzles or other activities for children

## PHONE NUMBERS

- Maintain a list of important phone numbers including:  
*County emergency management office, evacuation sites, doctors, banks, schools, veterinarian, a number for out of town contacts, friends and family*

## CLOTHING

- Rain gear such as jackets, hats, umbrellas and rain boots
- Sturdy shoes or boots and work gloves

## SPECIAL NEEDS ITEMS

- Specialty items for infants, small children, the elderly, and family members with disabilities

## FIRST AID

- First Aid Manual
- Sterile adhesive bandages of different sizes
- Sterile gauze pads
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Triangular bandages
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Sewing needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Disinfectant wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- Thermometer
- Tube of petroleum jelly
- Safety pins
- Soap
- Latex gloves
- Sunscreen
- Aspirin or other pain reliever
- Anti-diarrheal medicine
- Antacid
- Laxative
- Cotton balls
- Q-tips

## FOOD AND WATER

- Food - Nonperishable packaged or canned food and beverages, snack foods, juices, babyfood, and any special dietary items to last at least 7 days
- Water - *1 gallon per person per day*
- Non-electric can opener
- Paper plates
- Napkins
- Plastic cups
- Utensils

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

- Insurance cards
- Medical records
- Banking information
- Credit card numbers
- Copies of social security cards
- Copies of birth and/or marriage certificates
- Other personal documents
- Set of car, house, and office keys
- Service animal I.D., veterinary records, and proof of ownership
- Information about where you receive medication, the name of the drug, and dosage
- Copy of Will

*\*Items should be kept in a water proof container*

## VEHICLE

- Keep your motor vehicle tanks filled with gasoline

## PET CARE ITEMS

- Pet food and water to last at least 7 days
- Proper identification
- Medical records/microchip information
- A carrier or cage
- Muzzle and leash
- Water and food bowls
- Medications
- Supplies for your service animal

**FIND MORE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS TIPS AT**  
**[FloridaDisaster.org](http://FloridaDisaster.org)**

# IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

For **Sarasota County Emergency Management** or general county information, call **311** or **941-861-5000**.



**American Red Cross  
(Local Chapter)**  
941-379-9300

**Business Preparation  
and Assistance**  
941-861-5000 or 311



**Federal Emergency  
Management Agency**  
800-621-3362

**Florida 511  
Traffic Information**  
511



**Florida Department  
of Financial Services**  
1-877-MY-FL-CFO (693-5236)

**Florida Department of  
Health Sarasota County**  
941-861-2900



**Florida Division of  
Emergency Management**  
850-815-4000

**Florida Office of  
Insurance Regulation**  
850-815-4000



**Florida's Poison Control**  
800-222-1222

**Medical Needs Evacuation  
Center Registration**  
941-861-5000 or 311



**National Hurricane Center**  
hurricanes.gov

**National Weather  
Service/Tampa Bay Area**  
weather.gov/tbw/



**NOAA Weather Alert Radio**  
SAME Code 012115,  
Frequency 162.400

**Sarasota County  
Animal Service**  
941-861-9500



**Sarasota County Sheriff**  
941-861-5800

**Sarasota Salvation Army**  
941-364-8846



**Solid Waste information**  
941-861-5000 or 311

**U.S. Coast Guard**  
uscgboating.org



**UF/IFAS Extension  
Sarasota County**  
Disaster Preparedness

**U.S. Coast Guard Special  
Marine Advisories**  
Channel 16



# **ALERT** Sarasota County

Official notification system of Sarasota County

## Stay informed. Stay alert.

**Register with Alert Sarasota County for rapid updates during an emergency**

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**AlertSarasotaCounty.com**



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emergency preparedness at  
**scgov.net/beprepared**