

# Hurricane Preparedness Plan

## For the

# Empress Condominium

Prepared and approved by  
The Empress Board of Directors  
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# Hurricane Preparedness Plan

## Introduction

**Background.** All unit owners are aware of the recent hurricane activities in our area. Most are aware of the damage these have caused to our condominium and the out-of-pocket expenses that have accrued. These expenses covered the repair of damage to our condominium common areas and to our individual units.

**General.** This plan is prepared for the Empress Condominium and is designed for use anytime the Empress is in the cone of the projected path of a named storm. The primary purpose of this plan is to ensure the Empress property survives in the event of a future hurricane while sustaining as little damage as possible. The basis of this plan is that the Empress Condominium Association Board of Directors and Property Management are responsible for *protecting the building/property*. This responsibility exists before, during and when recovering from a hurricane. To achieve this purpose requires a coordinated activity between all involved.

**Hurricanes.** General information regarding hurricanes is found in Chapter 1.

**Unit Owners responsibilities.** The specific unit owner responsibilities are found in Chapter 2.

**BOD/Property Management.** The specific responsibilities for the BOD/Property Manager are found in Chapter 3.

**Plan Conditions.** The plan is written based on two conditions; 1) a severe weather condition where no evacuation is ordered and 2) a hurricane where the County or State has issued a mandatory evacuation. The Board and Management responsibilities are essentially the same with one major difference. During the time a mandatory evacuation is in effect, the emergency generator will not run, even if the commercial power goes off. This is to prevent the generator from unnecessarily running out of fuel and to ensure maintenance personnel are on-site if there is a generator problem. The details of the use of our emergency generator are found in Chapter 4.

**Communications.** There are many sources of general information before, during, and after a hurricane. These include the internet, local and national TV news, and newspapers. If no mandatory evacuation has been declared, information specific to the Empress can be obtained from our office prior to and after the hurricane has passed or after we are allowed back on the Island. Additionally, when electricity is restored, the Empress will provide updates via e-mail.

# Chapter 1

## Hurricanes

Saffir/Simpson Hurricane Scale. The Saffir/Simpson Hurricane Scale is used by the National Weather Service to give public safety officials an assessment of the potential wind and storm surge damage from a hurricane. The scale categories are as follows:

Scale Number	Winds (mph)	Damage
1	74-95	Minimal
2	96-110	Moderate
3	111-130	Extensive
4	131-155	Extreme
5	155+	Catastrophic

**Category 1 Hurricane.** No major damage to buildings except by the surge in coastal areas. Damage to unanchored mobile homes. Some damage to poorly constructed signs. Also, coastal flooding and minor pier damage. Note: *A mandatory evacuation of barrier islands will be issued for Category 1 storm. Jensen Beach is listed as a flood zone for a category 1 surge.* - Examples: Irene 1999 and Wilma 2005.

**Category 2 Hurricane.** Some damage to building roofs, doors and windows. Considerable damage to mobile homes. Flooding damages piers and small craft in unprotected moorings may break their moorings. Some trees blown down. - Examples: Bonnie 1998, Georges (FL & LA) 1998 and Frances 2004

**Category 3 Hurricane.** Some structural damage to small residences and utility buildings. Large trees blown down. Mobile homes and poorly built signs destroyed. Flooding near the coast destroys smaller structures with larger structures damaged. Terrain may be flooded well inland. - Examples: Keith 2000, Fran 1996, Opal 1995, Alicia 1983, and Jeanne 2004

**Category 4 Hurricane.** More extensive damage, certain wall failures with some complete roof structure failure on small residences. Major erosion of beach areas. Terrain may be flooded well inland. - Example: Hugo 1989

**Category 5 Hurricane.** Complete roof failure on many residences and industrial buildings. Some complete building failures with small utility buildings blown over or away. Flooding causes major damage to lower floors of all structures near the shoreline. Massive evacuation of residential areas may be required. - Examples: Andrew (FL) 1992, Camille 1969 and Labor Day 1935.

Using this scale, a Category 4 hurricane would have winds between 131 and 155 mph and, on the average, would usually be expected to cause 100 times the damage of the Category 1 storm. Depending on circumstances, less intense storms may still be strong enough to produce damage, particularly in low lying coastal areas that have not prepared in advance.

Tropical storm-force winds are strong enough to be dangerous to those caught in them. For this reason, emergency managers ***plan on having their evacuations complete*** and their personnel sheltered ***before the onset of tropical storm-force winds, not hurricane-force winds.***

Debris such as signs, roofing material, and small items left outside become flying missiles in hurricanes. Extensive damage to trees, towers, water and underground utility lines (from uprooted trees), and fallen poles cause considerable disruption.

***Preparations.*** Disaster prevention includes ensuring your condominium is as strong as possible against a storm. This includes having shutters that are up to or superior to the latest code and removing items from outside that could become missiles. It also includes having the supplies on hand to weather the storm. The suggestions provided here are only guides. You should use common sense in your disaster prevention.

1. Develop a primary and backup plan. Since we live in an area that will be under mandatory evacuation during a Category 1 hurricane, the cornerstone of these plans should be the location to which you will evacuate, the route to get there, and the timing for evacuation. Your primary plan should address the normal situation where you have a lot of warning time and you can evacuate to any place you choose. Your back up plan should be for those circumstances where warning time is minimal and you have to evacuate to a local area shelter or other local area locations.
2. Create a disaster supply kit. There are certain items you need to have regardless of where you ride out a hurricane. The disaster supply kit is a useful tool when you evacuate as well as making you as safe as possible in your condominium. Be sure to include a seven (7) day supply of medications.
3. Secure your home.

### ***Hurricane Watch and Hurricane Warning***

A hurricane watch issued for our part of the coast indicates the possibility that you could experience the onset of tropical storm force winds (39-73 mph) within 48 hours. This watch should trigger your family's disaster plan especially those actions that require leaving our barrier island, if you have not already done so.

A hurricane warning that is issued for our part of the coast indicates that the onset of tropical storm force winds is expected within 36 hours or less. Once this warning has been issued, your family should have already evacuated.

***The Empress.*** We live on a barrier island in a surge zone. Our emphasis should be to evacuate as early as possible. The normal tendency is to want to wait until the situation is very clear before deciding whether to evacuate; this is normally after a hurricane warning has been issued.

As stated earlier, **you should evacuate as early as possible, before the onset of tropical storm-force winds. Note: During two of our last three hurricanes, it took 6-7 hours to reach Orlando.**

***Francis, Jeanne and Wilma***

The Empress suffered relatively minor damage, compared to that suffered by other condominiums in our area, as a result of these three hurricanes passing over us. Our lack of damage is primarily attributed to the 89 foot wide, well vegetated dune and the wide beach we had to our east. We do not have this protection now. Our dune is now about 43 feet wide with new, immature vegetation. The beach is very narrow.

***Additional Information.*** Additional information on the St Lucie County Emergency Operations can be found on the internet at [www.stlucieco.gov](http://www.stlucieco.gov), and then click on Emergency Operation Center.

## Chapter 2

### Unit Owners' Responsibilities

1. **General.** This chapter outlines the specific responsibilities the unit owners have in regard to the Empress Condominium. Unit owners are expected to properly maintain their shutters.
2. **Away from the unit.** When a unit owner is going to be away from his/her unit during the hurricane season, Chapter 12 of the Empress By-Laws state the following:

“ A unit owner or his occupant who plans to be absent during the hurricane season must prepare his Unit prior to his departure by designating a responsible firm or individual to care for his Unit should a hurricane threaten the Unit or should the Unit suffer hurricane damage, and furnishing the Association with the name(s) of such firm or individual. Such firm or individual shall be subject to the approval of the Association.”

#### Notes:

- a. Unit owners cannot depend upon, nor is it the responsibility of, our maintenance staff to do hurricane preparations for you.
  - b. Empty all refrigerators and freezers prior to departing.
  - c. You should make arrangements with a firm or an individual to be responsible for your unit.
  - d. If for some reason you did not empty the refrigerator/freezer prior to departing the Empress, this should be a stated task for the caretaker prior to a storm hitting our area.
  - e. Make sure there is a clear understanding of what the caretaker will or will not do.
  - f. The office has a standard form that can be used to identify the caretaker. The completed form will be placed in your unit folder.
3. **Seasonal Residents' actions prior to leaving the Empress.**
    - a. Execute the form mentioned in paragraph 2 above.
    - b. Close and lock all shutters.
    - c. Close and lock/secure all windows and sliding glass doors.
    - d. Empty all refrigerators and freezers. For those garage owners who have a refrigerator and/or freezer in the garage, you should also empty these since, if a mandatory evacuation is declared and the commercial electricity is lost, the emergency generator will not come on until approval to return to the Island is given. (See Chapter 4 for information regarding the emergency generator.)
    - e. Ensure all unnecessary electrical devices are unplugged.
    - f. Ensure all items are removed from the balcony.

4. ***Actions for on-property residents prior to evacuation/storm hitting.***
  - a. Close and lock all shutters. This should be done no later than 48 hours prior to evacuating or the storm arriving.
  - b. Close and lock/secure all windows and sliding glass doors.
  - c. Empty all refrigerators and freezers. Food may be disposed on in the dumpster at least 48 hours before storm or taken to your evacuation location. Remove ice and shut off ice maker. For those garage owners who have a refrigerator and/or freezer in the garage, you should also empty these since, if a mandatory evacuation is declared and the commercial electricity is lost, the emergency generator will not come on until approval to return to the Island is given. (See Chapter 4 for information regarding the emergency generator.)
  - d. Ensure all unnecessary electrical devices are unplugged.
  - e. Ensure all items are removed from the balcony.
  
5. ***Actions when no mandatory evacuation is declared and the decision is to stay.*** Ensure you have enough non-perishable food, water, ice, medications, etc. that you will need for at least 7 days. Checklists for the recommended actions are found in many hurricane preparation documents published by the County, State, Publix Grocery, etc.
  
6. ***If you choose to stay when a mandatory evacuation is declared.*** It is common knowledge that people cannot be forced out of their homes even though there may not be electricity, water, elevator service, or emergency service to the area. If you decide to stay when a mandatory evacuation is ordered, provide your name and the name and contact number of your next of kin to the office.
  
7. ***Re-entry passes.*** Unit owners are responsible to obtain re-entry passes. In the past after a hurricane has passed and the County has determined most dangerous situations have been removed from the Island, the county has allowed people who live on the Island to return. Check points were established on all three access points to the Island. To return, you need a re-entry pass and ID proof of Island residency, i.e. drivers license, car registration, FPL bill, etc.  
  
The green re-entry passes can be obtained from either of the two (2) Driver License and Motor Vehicle Service Centers (1664 SE Walton Road and 2300 Virginia Avenue) or the Sheriff's office at 4700 West Midway Road. Again, ID proof of Island residency will be required to obtain the pass.
  
8. ***Caution.*** Even if most dangerous situations had been removed, some may remain. Please use extreme caution. There may be downed power lines, debris, broken glass, sand, etc. everywhere. Commercial electricity may be off. Our emergency generator may or may not be working. (See Chapter 4 regarding our emergency generator.)



## Chapter 3

### BOD/Property Management Responsibilities

1. **General.** This chapter outlines the specific responsibilities the Board and Property Management have in regard to the Empress Condominium. At all times, the primary responsibility of the Board and Property Management is protecting the building/property and recovering the building and property. There are three general ways actions can be taken during times of crises.
  - a. Under normal circumstances, the Board of Directors decide the course of action and provide this information to Property Management, who passes it to maintenance for action.
  - b. In the event of an emergency occurring when Management is not on site, the Board of Directors passes instructions directly to maintenance.
  - c. If no Board of directors or maintenance personnel are available and actions have to be taken, individual unit owner should take the initiative and take the actions.
2. **Coordination.** During times of crises, there is a need for additional coordination between the Board and management. This coordination should be face to face if possible.
3. **Staff re-entry documents.** Every year, prior to the hurricane season, the Property Manager will ensure all staff, maintenance and clerical, have the necessary documents to re-enter the island after an evacuation.

The Re-Entry Procedure for employees that live off of the island are:

1. Each employee will need to present a personalized letter on Association letterhead stating their position, signed by the President & Property Manager, with a copy of that employee's Florida Driver's License photocopied directly onto, and made part of the letter.
2. A copy of the Martin & St Lucie County Sheriffs' letters must be attached to the Association's letter.
3. The employees are given their re-entry package only if there is a mandatory evacuation, at which time they are informed the package must be returned after the island is re-opened.
4. The employee must show their FDL to the checkpoint officials which is the same as the one on the letterhead .

The Office Manager will keep the original of this letter and provide each employee their respective letter, if and when, an evacuation order is issued.

4. ***Preparations when a named Tropical Storm threatens the building.*** Review these procedures and those provided in Chapter 5, and discuss the required activities with management and the maintenance and clerical staff.

5. ***Preparations when the storm is from 96 to 72 hours away.***

- a. Move all equipment from the pool area (chaise lounges, chairs, tables, waste receptacles, etc and store in the social room.
- b. Install the shutters on east side of the building.
- c. Remove and secure gas grill propane tanks.
- d. Remove anything from the roof that is not secure.
- e. Close shutters on east and south sides of the social room.
- f. Install shutters on north exit from lobby.
- g. Install shutters on west side of maintenance area.
- h. Barricade knee wall opening at the east door of the back office.
- i. Turn off and secure tele-entry at the Front gate with plastic to keep off wind blown water.
- j. Close shutters on back office windows.
- k. Remove and secure outside mats.
- l. Shutter west side of the exercise and social rooms.
- m. Remove and secure the windscreen on the tennis courts.
- n. Remove and secure the trash receptacles on the posts on the tennis courts and the garbage can just outside the tennis courts.
- o. Turn the tennis court picnic table and benches upside down.
- p. Install the shutters on the guardhouse, leaving one panel off on the south side.
- q. Turn off pool equipment for the duration of the storm.

5. ***Preparations when the storm is 48 hours out.***

- a. Remove and secure flag.
- b. Install shutters on south side of social room.
- c. Check for open shutters and report those found open to the BOD. The BOD will take the necessary steps to close them.

6. ***Actions when no mandatory evacuation is declared.***

- a. Ensure the covers on the pool motors are secure.
- b. Contact the pool maintenance company to secure the pool heaters, pumps, etc.
- c. Remove and secure fire extinguishers and covers from the garages.

7. ***Actions when a mandatory evacuation is declared.***

Any actions in paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 above that have not been completed.

8. ***Last actions before the staff evacuates for a mandatory evacuation.*** (The time for this evacuation will be coordinated between the BOD and staff.)

- a. Have the Maintenance Staff secure the elevators on the 15<sup>th</sup> floor.
- b. Open both vehicle gates and secure the last hurricane panel on guard house.
- c. Shut off the emergency generator. (See Appendix A)

9. ***When directed by BOD or Property Manager.***
  - a. Back up all data on the computer. Put the backup file in a secure place.
  - b. Remove all pieces of office equipment. These should be wrapped in plastic and stored off the floor in a room off the kitchen.
  
10. ***Employee return.*** After the announcement that the island can be re-entered, employees will return as follows:
  - a. If the island is reopened before noon, employees will report to the Empress before 4PM that day.
  - b. If the island is reopened after noon employees will report to the Empress at normal working hours the next day.
  
11. ***Procedure review.*** Annually, before the hurricane season, the Board of Directors will review this document with property management, make the necessary changes, and approve the document for the next hurricane season.

## Chapter 4

### Conditions for Emergency Generator Use

There are two contingencies that affect the use of our emergency generator. These are:

1. The status of County Evacuation
  - a. Voluntary
  - b. Mandatory
  
2. The status of commercial electricity
  - a. Electricity on
  - b. No electricity

Evacuation Status		Commercial Electricity		Emergency Generator Use
Voluntary	Mandatory	Yes	No	
X		X		No action required. The emergency generator will be on stand-by mode.
X			X	The emergency generator will be on 24/7 or as directed by the Board of Directors until commercial electricity is restored.
	X	X		The emergency generator will be cut off prior to the staff evacuating. Once the County allows the residents to return to the island, the emergency generator will then be started, if commercial power has been lost. The emergency generator will be on 24/7 or as directed by the Board of Directors until commercial electricity is restored.
	X		X	The emergency generator will be cut off prior to the staff evacuating. Once the County allows residents to return, the emergency generator will then be on 24/7 or as directed by the Board of Directors until commercial electricity is restored.

## Chapter 5

### Preparations When a Named Tropical Storm Threatens the Building.

1. **General.** A tropical storm is defined as organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds between 39 miles per hour 73 miles per hour.
  
2. **Potential Activities in preparation for a Tropical Storm (TS).** The actions necessary to prepare for a TS range from very few activities for a minimum TS (39 mph) to actions that are very similar to those required for a hurricane for a strong TS. Therefore, deciding what actions to take should normally be done at the Director's level. The following are some actions that should be considered by the Board when a tropical Storm watch/warning is issued.
  - a. Move all equipment from the pool area (chaise lounges, chairs, tables, waste receptacles, etc and store in the social room.
  - b. Install the shutters on east side of the building.
  - c. Remove and secure gas grill propane tanks.
  - d. Remove anything from the roof that is not secure.
  - e. Close shutters on east and south sides of the social room.
  - f. Install shutters on north exit from lobby.
  - g. Install shutters on west side of maintenance area.
  - h. Barricade knee wall opening at the east door of the back office.
  - i. Remove plastic wind screens around pool.
  - j. Close shutters on back office windows.
  - k. Remove and secure outside mats.
  - l. Shutter west side of the exercise and social rooms.
  - m. Remove and secure the windscreen on the tennis courts.
  - n. Remove and secure the trash receptacles on the posts on the tennis courts and the garbage can just outside the tennis courts.
  - o. Turn the tennis court picnic table and benches upside down.
  - p. Install the shutters on the guardhouse, leaving one panel off on the south side.
  - q. Turn off pool equipment for the duration of the storm.

## APPENDIX A

You must access the Generator room. Setting on top of the front end of the Generator is the below panel.



To shut down or keep the Generator from starting put the ENGINE CONTROL SWITCH in the middle position, **OFF/RESET**. If the generator was running it will take several minutes for it to stop.

To have the Generator automatically start when you loose FPL power or when the power is already off put the ENGINE CONTROL SWITCH in the left position, **AUTO**.

## **Disclaimer**

Florida law requires that all condominiums over seven (7) stories in height must have a “Hurricane Preparedness Plan”. This plan has been adopted by your Board of Directors in compliance with Florida law and as a tool to assist the members and residents of the Empress Condominium. The adoption and creation of this plan by the Board of Directors of the Empress Condominium is not in anyway intended to create any liability for Empress Condominium Association, Inc., its officers, directors or employees. The plan is intended only to be of assistance. Each individual owner or resident should use his or her best judgment in an emergency situation. Any time an individual has a doubt as to the appropriate action to be taken, he or she should consult St. Lucie County Emergency Management Services, the St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Department or St. Lucie County Fire Rescue.