



HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

Virginia Beach is particularly vulnerable to the destruction of hurricanes and other severe weather. While the Atlantic hurricane season officially lasts from June 1 to November 30, historically, most hurricanes and tropical storms affecting Virginia Beach occur in August, September, and October. No one can predict early enough exactly how a storm will impact an area or when it will hit. You must be aware of unexpected changes in storm tracks and monitor all storms that develop. Being prepared and knowing what to do before, during, and after a storm can help minimize the dangers to you, your family, and your property.

Disaster Pre-Planning

Based upon your circumstances and where you live, you should be prepared to make decisions about how you will handle a hurricane.

- Discuss your family's plans for a disaster
- Those with special medical needs must take additional precautions in planning for an emergency
- Those living in flood prone, low-lying areas, or mobile homes should consider evacuation
- Have an emergency supply kit of food, medications, water, first-aid kit, battery powered radio, flashlights, extra batteries, sleeping bags, and blankets
- Identify an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as a "family contact." Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the "family contact"
- Learn the storm tide history and elevation of your area to determine if evacuation would be necessary
- Make provisions for pets in case of evacuation, as they are not allowed in public shelters
- Identify other alternative shelters such as relatives or friends
- Review the status of your flood, home, and automobile insurance coverage, list and take photographs of your property
- If you have a disability or have problems taking care of yourself, establish a support group using family, friends, or neighbors who can help you during an emergency

Medical Needs

People with medical needs are especially vulnerable to the impacts of a hurricane and must make contingency plans before the season begins. Normal services may not be available for weeks after a hurricane. If you receive home healthcare services, contact your

healthcare service provider to determine what their plans are if a disaster were to strike. If you use equipment dependent on electricity, such as battery chargers, oxygen, suction devices, or home dialysis equipment, contact your provider and ask what alternatives are available to you in case there are long-term power outages. In all cases, make sure that you have sufficient medications and supplies to last you at least two weeks.

Disaster Supplies Kit

Keep enough supplies in your home to meet your needs for at least **3-5** days.

- Water supply (one gallon per person per day)
- Food supply (easy to prepare non-perishable)
- First aid kit that includes family members' prescription medications
- Battery-powered radio and flashlight with extra batteries
- Change of clothing, footwear, blanket, and sleeping bag per person
- Sanitation supplies
- Special items for infants, elderly, or disabled family members
- Extra set of car keys, credit card, and cash
- Extra pair of glasses
- Quiet games, toys, books, cards, etc.

Store these supplies in sturdy, easy-to-carry containers in case you need to evacuate your home. Keep important family documents in a waterproof container.

Pet Safety

Pets are not allowed inside public emergency shelters due to public health and safety reasons. If you and your family need to evacuate, you must plan in advance and consider the following care for your pet:

- Each pet must have a carrier or crate. Familiarize your pet with the carrier
- You need to have a record of your pet's vaccinations, which must be up-to-date
- Be sure your pet wears a properly fitted collar with a current license, rabies, and identification tag
- Acquire non-spill water and food bowls
- Stock up on pet food and kitty litter

Other places that may take your pet include:

- boarding kennels
- veterinary hospitals
- friends or relatives
- motels/hotels

Evacuation Considerations

Due to the danger from hurricanes, you may need to consider evacuation. Evacuation should be considered as an option in the following situations:

- You live in a mobile home
- You live in an area threatened by rising water
- You live in an area that might be cut off by flooding
- You would feel more comfortable in another place
- You have a special medical condition
- When recommended or ordered by local officials

Evacuation recommendations will be made by the city based upon input from the National Weather Service. Residents should monitor conditions and make their evacuation decisions based upon the information available. Evacuations, particularly a regional evacuation, will require an extended amount of time. Evacuations from the region will normally be recommended by taking Route 64 East and West. These routes will become congested and blocked due to the conditions associated with the evacuation and the weather. When evacuating, please consider the following:

- Plan to evacuate early, in daylight if possible
- Ensure that a family member or friends know where you are going
- Take identification to prove residency
- Take your emergency supply kit
- Take precautions to protect your property left behind
- Eat before leaving for a shelter or evacuating the area
- Constantly monitor traffic and weather conditions during evacuation
- Complete your evacuation before the arrival of tropical force winds (39 mph)
- Consider friends or relatives as possible destinations

Evacuation

If you plan to evacuate the area, plan well in advance. Studies indicate that it may take as much as 27 hours for residents and visitors to evacuate the area. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has developed a phased evacuation plan which can be viewed at <http://www.virginiadot.org/comtravel/hurricane-evac-hro.asp> Where you live or are vacationing in Virginia Beach will determine which evacuation route you should take.

- Individuals East of I-264 are encouraged to use I-64 West toward Richmond
- Individuals South of I-264 are encouraged to use I-64 East for I-264 West toward Suffolk

Plan early because the onset of tropical force winds will cause bridges and tunnels to be shut down.

Sheltering

If possible, identify alternative sheltering such as other family members or friends. Shelters are chosen because they are located outside flood zone areas, but a shelter can still be damaged from other aspects of a storm. The primary purpose of a shelter is to provide emergency refuge. The number of shelters opened is based upon threatening weather conditions. Listen to public announcements for information on shelter locations and openings. The following is a list of shelters that may be utilized:

Bayside Elementary, 5649 Bayside Road
Birdneck Elementary, 957 South Birdneck Rd
Corporate Landing Middle, 1597 Corporate Landing Pkwy
Cox High, 2425 Shorehaven Dr
Green Run High, 1700 Dahlia Dr
Landstown High, 2001 Concert Dr
Landstown Middle, 2204 Recreation Dr
Salem High, 1993 Sun Devil Dr
Salem Middle, 2380 Lynnhaven Pkwy
Tallwood High, 1668 Kempsville Rd

Before the Storm

Once a hurricane or tropical storm develops, you may want to take the following additional actions before the onset of tropical force winds:

- If you are dependent on electrical power be sure that you have a backup power source
- Monitor news and weather information regularly
- **Do Not** tie up 911 emergency lines with questions regarding the storm, as those with real emergencies will not be able to get through
- Keep in touch with family members
- Collect important papers and valuables
- Plan for an emergency water supply such as using containers or bathtub
- Obtain non-perishable easily prepared food
- Check supply of medical prescriptions
- Check vehicle and keep fuel tank filled
- Protect property by covering windows
- Check the area around your home for potential flying objects, garbage cans, grills, chairs, etc.

During the Storm

When the effects of a storm are felt, individuals should take the following precautions:

- Stay indoors, away from windows
- Go to an inside well protected room without windows
- If flooding is a threat, cut off your utilities
- Use the telephone only for emergencies
- Be aware that emergency services (Police, Fire, Rescue) may not be available and public utilities may be disrupted

After the Storm

Based on the severity of the storm, basic services, which include water, sewer, phones, and electricity may not be available during and after the storm. Roads may be blocked and impassable. Businesses and government facilities may not be back in service and fully operational for some time. You may not have access to public information to advise you on actions to take. The following are things to consider during this period:

- Use a battery powered flashlight to inspect a damaged home. NOTE: The flashlight should be turned on before entering, as the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present
- Watch out for weakened structures, downed power lines, snakes, rodents, and avoid standing water
- Listen to your radio for official disaster relief instructions
- Check with elderly or disabled neighbors that may need your help
- Operate generators outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area away from air intakes to your home. Never operate indoors or in attached garages. Poor ventilation can result in carbon monoxide poisoning or death
- Avoid using candles as a light source, fires can result
- Avoid drinking tap water unless officials say that it is safe to drink and eat only foods that you are sure are absolutely safe

Weather Information

A **hurricane watch** means that hurricane conditions may pose a threat to your area. A **hurricane warning** means that a hurricane is expected in your area.

The Saffir/Simpson Scale is a classification system used to measure the strength and impact of a hurricane. There are five categories of hurricanes. As the category of the storm increases, the potential threat for damage increases. The potential damage of a Category 1 hurricane as compared to a Category 5 hurricane is 240 times greater. In making your plans for the impending threat of a hurricane, you will need to consider its category.

- Category 1** 74-95 mph winds, 4-5 feet tidal surge
Category 2 96-110 mph winds, 6-8 feet tidal surge
Category 3 111-130 mph winds, 9-12 feet tidal surge
Category 4 131-155 mph winds, 13-18 feet tidal surge
Category 5 155+ mph winds, 18+ feet tidal surge

Recovery Operations

The City of Virginia Beach, in the aftermath of a storm, will immediately begin the process of returning primary services and facilities into an operational condition. The public may need to be patient as the city responds and seeks assistance in recovery operations. You should listen to the radio and television, if possible, for information about recovery issues. If warranted, Disaster Assistance Centers will be established by FEMA to serve the public.

The city has the ability to issue statements about developing emergencies and ongoing conditions through **VAlert**, also referred to as Reverse 911, and **VBAM Radio 1680 AM**. The television and radio should also be monitored for current information. Additional information about a storm may also be broadcast on **Cox Channel 47 or 48**. Local and national weather information can be seen on **Cox Channel 24**, The Weather Channel. Weather information can also be heard on the NOAA weather radio.

Flood Insurance Zones

The Public Works Engineering Division is responsible for the administration of the National Flood Insurance Program for the City of Virginia Beach. Flood Insurance Rate Maps are available for inspection by the public at the Virginia Beach Central Library, 4100 Virginia Beach Boulevard, and in the Public Works Engineering Office, Room 345, Building #2 (Operations Building) at the Municipal Center.

The city's website, vbgov.com, also allows you access to **Custom Hurricane Reports** provided by Virginia Beach eMapping at <http://www.vbgov.com/resident/emergency/hurricanes/0,1375,14021,00.html>

More disaster information and preparedness literature can be found at the following internet sites:

- www.erh.noaa.gov/er/akq
- www.vdem.state.va.us
- www.fema.gov
- www.vbgov.com
- www.redcross.org
- www.hremc.org
- www.virginiadot.org

