

Helpline



**June 2017
 Final Edition
 Newsletter**

Dear Friends,

This is the *final edition* of the Helpline Newsletter.

I will be retiring on June 30, 2017 from UF/IFAS Extension Miami-Dade County Family and Consumer Sciences Program.

It has been a pleasure sharing the newsletter with you for the past twenty years.

Thanks for all your support!

Sincerely,

Jacquelyn W. Gibson

Extension Faculty–FCS



Hurricane/Disaster Preparedness— Are You Ready for 2017 Season?



The 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season is right around the corner, it begins

June 1st and ends November 30th. Although the past few seasons have been relatively quiet, we should be against complacency through preparation. You should start preparing now for the entire season.

Disasters can happen anytime and when they strike, you may not have much time to respond. The best way to protect your life and property is to plan ahead. One way to prepare is to develop a Hurricane/Disaster Plan that takes into consideration your family’s individual circumstances and needs. Make planning a family project to ensure that everyone will know their responsibilities, while providing a sense of security.

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Key Steps to Developing Your 2017 Hurricane/Disaster Plan



- Learn about your community’s emergency plan, evacuation routes, and locations of emergency shelters.
- Verify if you live in an evacuation zone by visiting www.miamidade.gov/oem or by calling 3-1-1.
- Develop and review family evacuation plan.
- Check and replenish hurricane supplies.
- Shop for a 3-7 day supply of water and non-perishable food.
- Store at least one gallon per person per day (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for preparation/sanitation).
- Post emergency phone numbers at every phone.
- Review insurance policies and make copies (ensure that your insurance is adequate to cover your needs in the event of a disaster).
- Prepare a “Family Document Kit.”
- Take an itemized inventory of household goods.
- Take photos of your home inside and out.
- Videotaped documentation of all valuables in home.
- Purchase or prepare a “First Aid Kit.”



- Trim trees early.
- Inspect shutters.
- Make plans for persons with special needs, and pets.

Be Budget Conscious When Buying Supplies

Residents spend hundreds of dollars each year purchasing hurricane supplies. In most cases, people wait until a storm threatens South Florida to purchase supplies, usually resulting in a large expenditure.

Remember it is more cost-efficient to start building your kits early, little by little, using what you already have at home whenever possible. Other tips to keep in mind are:

- Purchase an extra can or box of non-perishable food or other supplies for your hurricane kit during each trip to the grocery store.
- Make use of coupons and sales when available.
- Combine resources with family, friends and neighbors to save money buying in bulk, then divide the items up.
- Make bed rolls from your existing comforters and blankets.



Other Things to Consider

- Buy single serving or one-meal cans whenever possible to avoid waste. Leftovers won’t be safe.
- Don’t buy a lot of very salty foods such as chips, beef jerky or crackers. These will make you thirsty.
- If you have a way to boil water, buy instant coffee, oatmeal, rice, soup mix and cup-o-noodles.

- Buy instant powdered drink mixes such as Tang®, Kool Aid®, or iced tea. They can cover the taste of treated or stale water.

Maintaining Your Kit

Just as important as putting your supplies together is maintaining them so they are safe to use when needed.

Here are some tips to keep your supplies ready and in good condition:



- Keep canned foods in a dry place where the temperature is cool.
- Store boxed foods in tightly closed plastic or metal containers to protect from pests and to extend its shelf life.
- Throw out any canned items that becomes swollen, dented, or corroded.
- Use foods before they go bad, and replace them with fresh supplies.
- Place new items at the back of the storage area and older ones in the front.
- Change stored food and water supplies every six months. Be sure to write the date you store it on all containers.
- Re-think your needs every year and update your list as your family's needs change.
- Keep items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supply kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as an unused trash can, camping backpack, or duffel bag.

Source: <http://www.fema.gov/areyouready/>

Be Smart – Protect Your Critical Documents and Valuables



When disaster strikes, your immediate concern will be your safety and the safety of those you care about. Once the immediate danger passes, however, hav-

ing your financial and medical records and important contact information will be crucial to help you start the recovery process quickly. Taking time now to safe guard these critical documents will give you peace of mind, ensure you have access to essential medical and prescription information, and help you avoid additional stress during the difficult days following a disaster.

Family Document Kit

The first step is to take an inventory of your household documents, contacts, and valuables.



The checklist below will get you started.

- A list of all important contacts – (family, doctors, insurance agents, pharmacy information).
- Housing: lease or rental agreement, mortgage, home equity line of credit, deed
- Proof of occupancy (such as utility bill)
- Financial Accounts: checking, savings, debit cards, retirement, investment
- Insurance Policies: homeowners, renters, auto, life, flood, photos, and list of valuables
- Passports, driver's license, social security card, green card, other identification, photo ID

- Wills: including living wills and advance directives
- List of medications, immunizations, allergies, prescriptions, medical equipment and devices
- Credit card account numbers and companies
- Vehicle: loan documents, VIN, registration, title
- Stocks and bonds, mutual funds, CDs
- Educational records

Consider storing paper copies of important documents at home in a fireproof and waterproof box or safe, in a bank deposit box, or with a trusted friend or relative.

Store electronic copies of important documents in a password-protected format on a removable flash or external hard drive in your fireproof and waterproof box or safe, or consider using a secure cloud-based service.


Food Safety During Power Outages



The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) recommends that consumers take the following steps to reduce food waste and the risk of foodborne illness during severe weather events.

Steps to follow if the power goes out:

- Keep appliance thermometers in both the refrigerator and the freezer to ensure temperatures remain food safe during a power outage. Safe temperatures are 40°F or lower in the refrigerator. 0°F or lower in the freezer.

- Freeze water in one-quart plastic storage bags or small containers prior to a storm. These containers are small enough to fit around the food in the refrigerator and freezer to help keep food cold. Remember, water expands when it freezes so don't overfill the containers.
- Freeze refrigerated items, such as leftovers, milk and fresh meat and poultry that you may not need immediately—this helps keep them at a safe temperature longer.
- Know where you can get dry ice or block ice. 
- Have coolers on hand to keep refrigerator food cold if the power will be out for more than four hours.
- Group foods together in the freezer—this 'igloo' effect helps the food stay cold longer.
- Keep a few days' worth of ready-to-eat foods that do not require cooking or cooling.
- Keep the refrigerator and the freezer doors closed as much as possible. A refrigerator will keep food cold for about 4 hours if the door is kept closed. A full freezer will hold its temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours if half-full).
- Place meat and poultry to one side of the freezer or on a tray to prevent cross contamination of thawing juices.
- Use dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator as cold as possible during an extended power outage. Fifty pounds of dry ice should keep a fully-stocked 18-cubic-foot freezer cold for two days.

Steps to follow after a weather emergency:

- Check the temperature inside of your refrigerator and freezer. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, seafood, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40°F for two hours or more.

- Check each item separately. Throw out any food that has an unusual odor, color or texture or feels warm to the touch.
- Check frozen food for ice crystals. The food in your freezer that partially or completely thawed may be safely refrozen if it still contains ice crystals or is 40°F or below.

Financial Hurricane Tips

When you hear a hurricane watch/warnings, take precautions to protect your family, yourself, your property, and take actions to protect your financial interests. The Florida Department of Financial Services offers these financial tips:

Withdraw Money!

Financial institutions normally close for at least two days after a direct hit. ATMs could be out of order even longer.

So withdraw some money before a pending hurricane.

Credit and Cash:

Have a credit card with at least \$1,000 available. Get receipts for cash purchases before and after a storm

Paying by Phone or Online:

If you pay bills online or by the phone, do it before a hurricane hits, even if they are not yet due. A hurricane could interrupt phone service, causing you to miss payments and get late charges.

Paying by Mail:

Send payments by mail at least two days before a hurricane strikes. The post office will not pick up mail within 24 hours of a strike.

Confirm Payments!

After a storm, contact those you've mailed payments to and confirm they have received them.

Finance Repairs:

Use credit cards to finance necessary minimal repairs and document all transaction.

Miami-Dade Alerts

Don't be the last to know when a hurricane is coming. Sign up for weather advisories with Miami-Dade Alerts. Find out more at <http://miamidade.gov/wps/portal/Main/safety>.

Portable Generator Tips from FPL



- Never run generators inside your home or garage, as they produce potentially deadly carbon monoxide fumes.
- Keep generators away from all open windows, including neighbor's windows, to prevent deadly exhaust from entering your home.
- Buy a battery-operated carbon-monoxide alarm, which will alert you if carbon monoxide levels become dangerous.
- Always thoroughly read the manufacturer's instructions to avoid dangerous shortcuts and ensure the safe operation of your generator.
- Don't directly connect your generator to your home's wiring. Power from a generator connected to a home's wiring will "back feed" into utility lines, potentially severely injuring or killing a neighbor or utility crew working to restore power.

- Turn off all connected appliances before starting your generator.
- Turn connected appliances on one at a time, never exceeding the generator’s rated wattage.
- Don’t touch a generator if you are wet or on damp ground.
- Never refuel a hot generator or one that is running - hot engine parts or exhaust can ignite gasoline.
- Ensure you have plenty of gas for operation stored safely in gas containers.
- Use the proper power cords. Plug individual appliances into the generator using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated with a wire gauge adequate for the appliance load. Overloaded cords can cause fires.

Important Phone Numbers & Web Addresses



9-1-1 Emergencies

3-1-1 Government Information

Toll-free outside Miami-Dade County

1-888-311 Dade (3233)

TTY/TDD:305-468-5402

2-1-1 Family Social Services

TTY: 305-644-9449

American Red Cross

305-644-9449

www.miamiredcross.org



Miami-Dade Department of Emergency Management

305-468-5400

www.miamidade.gov/oem

Federal Emergency Management Agency

1-800-621-FEMA (3362)

TDD: 800-462-7585

www.fema.gov

Florida Power and Light

1800-4-OUTAGE(1-800-468-8243)

7-1-1(hearing impaired)

www.fpl.com



AT&T

1-888-757-6500

TDD 305-780-2273



Food safety during emergencies

www.foodsafety.gov/keep

Special Needs Registration (Miami-Dade County)

305-513-7700

305-468-5400

TDD– 305-468-5402

Florida Emergency Information Line

1-800-342-3557

FEMA Fraud & Abuse Hotline (Dept. of Homeland Security)

1-800-323-8603



Elder Helpline (Information & Referral) Florida

Dept. of Elder Affairs - 800-963-5337 or

1-800-96-ELDER)

Price Gouging Hotline

Florida Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer

Services - 1-800-435-7352