

Hurricane planning: Before, during and after the storm



Hurricane season in the United States tends to start in late spring and end in the fall.

According to experts, there may be more than a dozen instances of tropical storms, cyclones or major hurricanes during this period. And as many as six or seven of these may be severe enough to cause widespread damage.¹

Hurricanes can disrupt your daily life and test your coping skills. Here are some ideas to help you get through a hurricane.

Before a hurricane

Does your family have a hurricane plan? Knowing what to do ahead of time can help reduce your stress if a hurricane affects you. These websites may help you get prepared:

- **www.redcross.org** gives you information on how to prepare for a hurricane. This includes tips for disaster supply kits and securing your home.
- **www.fema.gov** provides current storm watch information and other tips to prepare for a hurricane.
- **www.nws.noaa.gov/om/hurricane** offers a StormReady® program and lots of information. You can find tips that include how to evacuate and updating your home insurance.

Make sure you discuss your plan with family members. This is a chance to get everyone on the same page and assign jobs. And you can talk about any fears or concerns loved ones have. Sometimes it helps to think ahead about how you can stay calm and manage stress.

During a hurricane

Once you know a hurricane is going to hit your area, things can move at a fast pace. Here are some things that may help:

- Follow your plan. But know that you may need to make changes based on the situation.
- Share your plan with someone who is not in the storm's path.
- Follow instructions from authorities.
- Try to stay calm. It's normal to feel scared, confused and sad during a crisis. Talk to loved ones, journal, read, play games or engage in other calming activities.
- Pay special attention to children. Young ones can't always say how they feel and might not know what's going on. Be sure to explain things in an age-appropriate way while providing comfort.
- Give children tasks based on their age and praise them for a job well done. This can help reduce feelings of helplessness and make children feel included.

After a hurricane

Once the storm has passed, it can take time to fix any damage. And that can feel overwhelming. Here are some tips to consider:

Focus on meeting your basic needs – food, clothing and shelter – first.

- Check with experts before returning home or going into damaged areas.
- Try to make and keep to a routine. This can help reduce stress and give you a sense of control.
- Take care of yourself. Times like these can take a toll on your health. If possible, try to eat well and get plenty of sleep.

Hurricanes and other disasters can lead to loss. And after loss comes grief. It's normal to have feelings like shock, disbelief, anger and sadness. You may find yourself making promises such as, "If this goes away, I'll be a better person." Be sure to take time to work through these feelings.

Just like rebuilding a home, your emotional health may need some time to heal. Be kind to yourself and others. Be patient. And remember: It's okay to ask for help.

www.aoml.noaa.gov/hrd/tcfaq/E11.html

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