

# Red Cross urges Floridians to get ready for hurricanes

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

The American Red Cross urges everyone to plan now for any possible dangerous storms this year.

“After back-to-back years of active hurricane seasons that have broken records, this year it’s more important than ever before to get ready now,” said Josett Valdez, CEO for the Red Cross South Florida Region. “Last year, on top of the pandemic, we saw a record 30 named storms with two hitting the southeast before the actual start of hurricane season.”

## Getting Ready Is Easy

There are simple steps you can take to be prepared:

- Create an evacuation plan. Plan what to do in case you are separated from your family during an emergency and if you have to evacuate. Coordinate your plan with your child’s school, your work and your community’s emergency plans. Plan

multiple routes to local shelters, register family members with special medical needs as required and make plans for pets. If you already have an emergency plan, update it and review with family members so everyone knows what to do if an emergency occurs.

- Build an emergency kit with a gallon of water per person, per day, non-perishable food, a flashlight, battery-powered radio, first aid kit, medications, supplies for an infant and pets if applicable, a multi-purpose tool, personal hygiene items, copies of important papers, cell phone chargers, extra cash, blankets, maps of the area and emergency contact information. Because of the pandemic, include a mask for everyone in your household.

- If you already have a disaster kit, now is the time make sure the food and water is still okay to consume and that copies of important documents are up to date.

- Be informed. Find out how local officials will contact you during a disaster and

how you will get important information, such as evacuation orders.

- Download the free Red Cross Emergency app to help keep you and your loved ones safe with real-time alerts, open Red Cross shelter locations and safety advice on hurricanes and other emergencies.

- Standard homeowners insurance doesn’t cover flooding. It’s important to have protection from the floods associated with hurricanes, tropical storms, heavy rains and other conditions that impact the U.S. For more information on flood insurance, please visit the National Flood Insurance Program website at [www.FloodSmart.gov](http://www.FloodSmart.gov).

## COVID-19 Safety

As the pandemic continues, the Red Cross has procedures and resources in place to help ensure everyone’s safety, especially when it comes to supporting local communities if a hurricane threatens. The Red Cross is still providing the same types

of support after disasters as we always have. This includes making sure people have a safe place to stay, food to eat and resources to help them recover. The Red Cross has put in place additional precautions, in line with CDC recommendations, including social distancing protocols, masks, health screenings and enhanced cleaning procedures.

Ensuring people have a safe place to stay during a disaster is a critical part of the Red Cross mission, but how we support sheltering efforts may be different in each community, depending on local emergency plans and the scale of the disaster. In some instances, we may open group shelters, while other times hotels may be more appropriate.

“Hurricane season starts June 1 and runs through Nov. 30,” said Valdez. “Get ready now, it’s your best defense.”

# Hurricane names sometimes retired from rotating lists

By Richard Marion

CaloosaBelle

GENEVA – On March 17, 2021 the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) retired the names Dorian and Laura from the rotating lists of Atlantic tropical cyclone names due to the death and destruction they caused.

The WMO’s hurricane committee also made the decision to no longer use the Greek alphabet when naming storms citing the potential confusion and distraction from communication of hazard and storm warnings.

The hurricane season in 2020 was the most active on record. The annual list of names ranging from A-Z for storms was exhausted by mid-September, something that has only happened twice in the last fifteen years. In the past, after the annual list of names was exhausted, meteorologists would continue using names of letters from the Greek alphabet.

In 2020 nine names were used from this auxiliary list from the Greek alphabet, Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon, Zeta, Eta, Theta and Iota.

WMO’s hurricane committee listed several problems with this naming convention which prompted its decision.

The committee pointed out that the Greek alphabet names produced some confusion when translated into other languages used within the region. Also noting that the pronunciation of several of the Greek letters

(Zeta, Eta, Theta) are similar and occur in succession. In 2020, this resulted in storms with very similar sounding names occurring simultaneously, which led to messaging challenges rather than streamlined and clear communication.

Instead, hurricane committee members have now agreed to create a supplemental list of names A-Z (excluding Q, U, as well as X, Y, and Z on the Atlantic list) that would be used in lieu of the Greek alphabet when the standard list is exhausted in a given season.

In 2019 the category five Hurricane Dorian appeared to be headed directly for Okeechobee, thankfully instead it stalled along Florida’s east coast, before traveling north up the United States coastline eventually dissipating over Greenland.

Following the hurricane, individuals and organizations in Okeechobee gathered donations to ship to the barrier islands of the Bahamas that were battered by Dorian as he hovered in the Atlantic Ocean. Gilbert locations in the county were used as a dropoff location for those donating items like canned goods/non-perishable items, bottled water, powdered baby formula and bagged pet food.

The storm caused an estimated \$3.4 billion in damage.

Laura was a powerful category 4 hurricane that made landfall near Cameron, La., accompanied by a devastating storm surge of at least 17 feet above ground level. It was responsible for 47 direct deaths in the



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News/NOAA  
**The name Katrina was retired from the rotating lists after the category 5 storm by that name caused more than 1,800 deaths and \$125 billion in damages in 2005.**

United States and Hispaniola, and more than \$19 billion in damage.

The name Dorian will be replaced by Dexter in the 2025 rotation while Leah will replace Laura in the 2026 rotation.

The names for the upcoming 2021 hurricane season starting on June 1 are **Ana, Bill, Claudette, Danny, Elsa, Fred, Grace, Henri, Ida, Julian, Kate, Larry,**

**Mindy, Nicholas, Odette, Peter, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Victor, and Wanda.**

The supplemental names replacing the Greek alphabet in 2021 are Adria, Braylen, Caridad, Deshawn, Emery, Foster, Gemma, Heath, Isla, Jacobus, Kenzie, Lucio, Makayla, Nolan, Orlanda, Pax, Ronin, Sophie, Tayshaun, Viviana, and Will.



# Don't lose your boat when a hurricane hits

By **Richard Marion**  
Caloosa Belle

On May 20 forecasters from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) released their predictions for the upcoming 2021 hurricane season, saying they expect a 60% chance of an above-normal season, a 30% chance of a near-normal season, and a 10% chance of a below-normal season.

For 2021 forecasters estimate there will be a likely range of 13 to 20 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including 3 to 5 major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher) is expected.

The NOAA doesn't expect a repeat of 2020, which saw a baffling 30 named storms form. Still, it only takes one bad hurricane to turn your life upside down.

That's why it's important to secure your property and belongings and be prepared for what steps to take beforehand.

For boats, the NOAA says the most effective way to secure them is by trailering it and pulling it to high, dry land. (There's not much "high land" in Florida, but you'll have to do your best.) Before moving your boat, you should be sure that your vehicle is capable of properly moving the boat. Check the condition of your trailer's tires, bearings, and axle.

Once you have placed your boat in a safe location, lash your boat to the trailer and place blocks between the frame members and the axle inside each wheel.

If you own a lightweight boat, consider letting out approximately half of the air in the tires, then filling the boat one-third full of water to help hold it down. Be sure to consult your boat's manufacturer for the best procedure to do this. Secure your boat in place by tying it down with heavy lines to fixed objects. Your boat can be tied down to screw anchors secured in the ground.

If possible, try to pick a location that allows you to secure your boat from four directions. This is because hurricane winds rotate and change directions.

Every boat owner needs to have a plan that is designed to fit their boat type, the local boating environment, the severe weather conditions and the characteristics of safe havens and/or plans for protection. After you have made anchoring or marooning preparations, it is important to remove all of the valuable equipment from your boat. You should also remove all movable equipment, such as:

- Canvas;
- Sails;
- Dinghies;
- Radios;
- Cushions;
- Bimini tops;
- Roller furling sails.

Secure anything that cannot be removed such as: tillers, wheels, or booms. Make a list to keep track of the items that you have removed from the boat and those that you have left. Ensure that you have sealed all openings (using duct tape) to make your boat as watertight as possible. The



Special to the Caloosa Belle/FWC  
**Boaters who enjoy the water in Florida should be prepared for bad weather.**

electrical system should be off unless you plan to leave the boat in the water.

Another option is to secure your boat on the water. If leave your boat docked, consider the dock lines that you use to secure it. It is estimated that approximately 50% of boats that have been damaged at fixed docks during hurricanes could have been saved by using better dock lines. Use dock lines that are long, large, arranged well, and protect against chaffing. For most boats, you should use:

- 1/2" line for boats up to 25 feet in length;
- 5/8" line for boats 25 feet to 34 feet;
- 3/4" to 1" lines for larger boats.

You should have chafe protectors on any portion of the line that could be chafed by chocks, pulpits, pilings, etc. Secure your lines to strong, wooden pilings. These pilings can stand up to lateral stress and twisting, as opposed to concrete pilings that cannot.

You'll also want to organize your boat records and documents to keep with you during the hurricane. This could include:

- Insurance policies;
- A recent photograph or videotape of your vessel (and a photo which includes the hull number);
- Boat registration;
- Equipment inventory;
- Lease agreement with the marina or storage area;
- Telephone numbers of appropriate authorities, such as;
- Marina, harbor master, or similar entity;
- Coast guard or local law enforcement;
- Insurance agent;
- Local emergency management or emergency services.

It's recommended in the event of a hurricane warning that you plan to have your boat secure at least 48 hours before the storm is expected to make landfall.

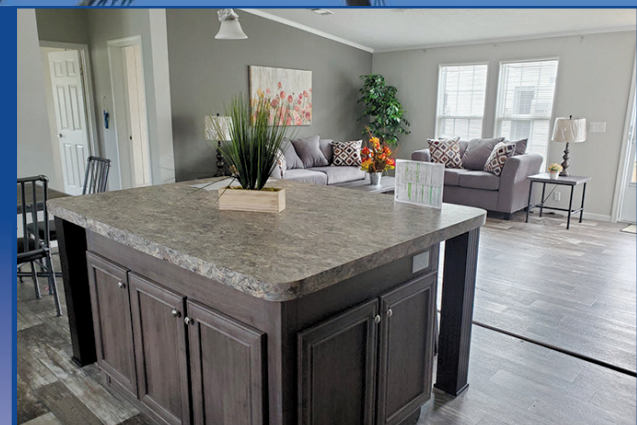
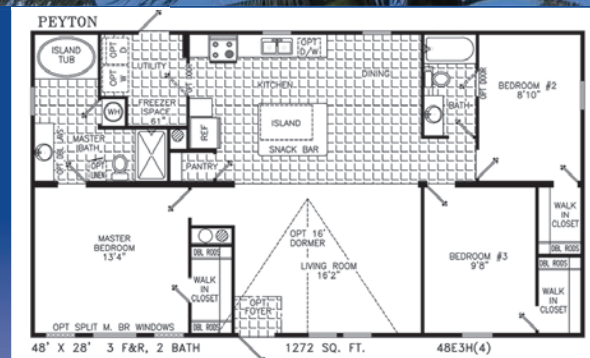
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# What's your food safety plan for hurricane season?

**By Kenneth King, Public Affairs Specialist**

Food Safety and Inspection Service

WASHINGTON — We've seen the power a hurricane can carry, and the devastation it leaves behind. Prolonged power outages and flood damage are two of the biggest risks to your food. Fortunately, a plan can help keep you and your family safe from foodborne illness.

During Hurricane Preparedness Week, develop your action plan before a storm hits.

- Buy ice packs and coolers days before the hurricane arrives in case there is a prolonged power outage.

- Pour water into containers and freeze it to make ice.

- Use an appliance thermometer to determine the safety of your perishable foods. Meat, poultry, fish and egg products must be kept at 40 F or below and frozen food at 0 F or below.

- For meats, check the canned goods aisle of your local grocery story for canned meats. These are fully cooked and unopened canned meats don't require refrigeration.

Illness-causing bacteria grow in tem-

peratures between 40 F and 140 F. We call these temperatures the "Danger Zone" for food. Bacteria that develop at these temperatures generally do not alter the taste, appearance, or smell of the food but can make you sick. During a power outage, a refrigerator will keep food safe for up to four hours and a full freezer will hold temperatures for 48 hours or 24 hours if half full.

Caution—never taste food to determine its safety. When in doubt, throw it out! Throw out any food that has been in contact with flood water. This includes any canned foods with signs of damage such as holes, leakages, and punctures. Place foods on higher shelves to lessen the chance of them being contaminated by flood water.

Learn more food safety tips for storms or other emergencies at: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/emergencies/keep-your-food-safe-during-emergencies>.

For more information about food safety and for a free food thermometer, contact the USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-888-MPHotline (1-888-674-6854) to talk to a food safety expert or chat live at [ask.usda.gov](https://ask.usda.gov) from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

## What should I put in my survival kit?

**By Cathy Womble**

Caloosa Belle

OKEECHOBEE — The American Red Cross recommends that every family have a survival kit on hand in the event of an emergency. In the state of Florida, we spend six months out of the year under the threat of hurricanes, and every household should be ready for the possibility that a hurricane could strike at some point during that six-month period.

According to the Red Cross, the most useful things to have in your survival kit are:

- Water: one gallon per person, per day (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home)

- Food: non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items (3-day supply for evacuation, 2-week supply for home)

- Flashlight and batteries
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio (NOAA Weather Radio, if possible)
- Extra batteries (Similar item available in the Red Cross Store)
- Deluxe family first aid kit
- Medications (7-day supply) and medical items

- Multi-purpose tool
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items
- Copies of personal documents (medication list and pertinent medical information, proof of address, deed/lease to home, passports, birth certificates, insurance policies)
- Cell phone with chargers (Similar item available in the Red Cross Store)
- Family and emergency contact infor-

mation

- Extra cash
- Emergency blanket
- Map(s) of the area

In addition, these items may be useful depending on the needs of your particular family:

- Medical supplies (hearing aids with extra batteries, glasses, contact lenses, syringes, etc)
- Baby supplies (bottles, formula, baby food, diapers)
- Games and activities for children
- Pet supplies (collar, leash, ID, food, carrier, bowl)
- Two-way radios
- Extra set of car keys and house keys
- Manual can opener

Depending on the types of disasters common in your area, they recommend the following:

- Whistle
- N95 or surgical masks
- Matches
- Rain gear
- Towels
- Work gloves
- Tools/supplies for securing your home
- Extra clothing, hat and sturdy shoes
- Plastic sheeting
- Duct tape
- Scissors
- Household liquid bleach
- Entertainment items
- Blankets or sleeping bags

In the event you are told to evacuate, you may have to leave quickly. It is best to

**USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service**  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### BEFORE

PLAN AHEAD (IF YOU CAN) ...

- Freeze containers of water and gel packs to help keep food cold if the power goes out.
- Keep freezer **0°F** or below
- Group foods together in the freezer to help food stay colder longer.
- Freeze refrigerated items such as leftovers, milk, and fresh meat and poultry that you do not need immediately.
- If you think power will be out for more than 4 hours, consider moving food to a cooler with ice. If available, buy dry or block ice to keep the refrigerator or freezer cold.
- Put appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.
- Refrigerator **40°F** or below
- Store non-perishable foods on higher shelves to avoid flood water.

### DURING

WHILE THE POWER IS OUT ...

Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed to maintain cold temperature.

IF DOORS STAY CLOSED ...

- ... a full freezer will hold its temperature for **48 HOURS**
- ... a half-full freezer will hold its temperature for **24 HOURS**
- ... a fridge will keep food safe for **4 HOURS**
- Place perishable foods in a cooler with ice before food starts to go bad

### AFTER

ONCE THE POWER IS BACK ON ...

Check the temperature inside your refrigerator and freezer. If they're still at safe temperatures, your food should be fine. Discard perishable foods that have been at an unsafe temperature.

Never taste food to determine its safety!

#### WHAT CAN I KEEP?

- Hard cheeses (Cheddar, Colby, Swiss, Parmesan, Provolone, Romano)
- Grated Parmesan, Romano, or combination (in can or jar)
- Butter or margarine
- Opened fruit juices
- Opened canned fruits
- Jelly, relish, taco sauce, mustard, ketchup, olives, pickles
- Worcestershire, soy, barbecue, and Hoisin sauces
- Peanut butter
- Opened vinegar-based dressings
- Bread, rolls, cakes, muffins, quick breads, tortillas
- Breakfast foods (waffles, pancakes, bagels)
- Fruit pies
- Fresh mushrooms, herbs, and spices
- Uncut raw vegetables and fruit

#### WHAT SHOULD I THROW OUT?

- Raw meat, poultry or seafood products
- Soft cheeses and shredded cheeses
- Milk, cream, yogurt, and other dairy products
- Opened baby formula
- Eggs and egg products
- Dough, cooked pasta
- Leftovers
- Cooked or cut produce

#### FOLLOW THESE STEPS AFTER A FLOOD:

**AFTER A FLOOD**

- DO NOT EAT any food that may have touched flood water.
- DISCARD FOOD not in waterproof containers; screw-caps, snap lids, pull tops, and crimped tops are not waterproof.
- DISCARD cardboard juice/milk/baby formula boxes and home canned foods.
- DISCARD any damaged cans that have swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or crushing/denting severe enough to prevent normal stacking or opening.

**SANITIZE**  
1 tbsp. bleach + 1 gallon water

Pots, pans, dishes and utensils

Undamaged all-metal cans after removing labels

have a "go bag" ready so all you have to do is grab it and leave. Decide in advance where you will go. Will you be leaving town, staying with a friend or going to a shelter. Decide what you will do with your pets. Will they go with you? Does the shelter you plan to stay in allow pets? Will you board them? Okeechobee has an emergency alert system, and you can sign up to receive them on the county's website: [www.co.okeechobee.fl.us](https://www.co.okeechobee.fl.us). It is called ALERT Okeechobee. Make a decision in advance on where your family will meet up if you are separated. Make sure each member of the family, including children, carries identification and contact numbers for the rest of the family.

Normally, when a hurricane begins to head toward Florida, there is a panic and people who live anywhere near the projected path rush out to buy water and plywood. Even those who wouldn't dream of drinking water on a normal day, rush out to buy cases and jugs of water when they hear the storm is coming. According to the Red Cross, the best way to prepare is to do it ahead of time. Do it before hurricane season so you do not have to rush out to the stores with the crowds, and buy the things you actually need.

Because of COVID-19, things will be different in shelters if and when they open. Be prepared to wear a mask and social distance as much as possible.



# Prepare ahead for the possibility of flooding

**By Cathy Womble**  
Lake Okeechobee News

OKEECHOBEE — With Hurricane Season fast approaching, it might be time to consider flood insurance. Is your home in a flood zone? Do you know how to find out? The simplest way to find out if you are in a flood zone is to go to the Property Shark website: [www.propertyshark.com/mason/fl/Okeechobee-County/Maps/Fema-Flood-Hazard-Areas](http://www.propertyshark.com/mason/fl/Okeechobee-County/Maps/Fema-Flood-Hazard-Areas). This website shows a color-coded map of Okeechobee County. The colors indicate whether your property is in a low-risk area or a moderate

to high-risk area. Most areas along Taylor Creek much of the Prairie and of course, the properties near the lake are some of those considered at a high risk for flooding. FEMA also has its own maps on the FEMA site: [www.fema.gov/flood-maps](http://www.fema.gov/flood-maps). There is a National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) managed by FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency). NFIP is delivered to the public through a network of about 60 different insurance companies and also can be obtained directly from NFIP on the website, [nfipdirect.fema.gov](http://nfipdirect.fema.gov). Many homeowners do not realize that most homeowner's insurance policies do

not cover flooding. According to the FEMA website, we can expect another year with hurricanes causing higher than average flooding. The number one piece of advice FEMA gives is to purchase flood insurance. Even if your area is declared a disaster area by the president and FEMA steps in to help with recovery, they do not pay out enough to replace your household items and restore your home to its original state. Second, FEMA advises to take pictures and/or video of all your property and belongings so you have a record in case you need to file a claim later. Finally, you should make a portable file containing copies of birth

certificates, passports, medical records and insurance papers. This file will go with you in the event you must evacuate. The originals should be stored in a water-tight safety deposit box. Many insurance companies place a moratorium on the purchase of flood insurance when there is a named storm out in the Gulf or the Atlantic Ocean, so it is important to plan ahead and purchase prior to hurricane season. Some private insurance companies will sell flood insurance during hurricane season, but they normally have more limitations than if purchased before hurricane season.

# 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane killed more than 2,500

**By Richard Marion**  
Caloosa Belle

Ninety-two years ago a hurricane struck Florida that would change the Lake Okeechobee area forever. It lashed Puerto Rico on its way to South Florida and tore its way directly through Lake Okeechobee. As reports were coming in over the radio of the storm hitting Puerto Rico, many around Lake Okeechobee weren't panicked. Those around the lake had survived a previous hurricane a few years before and reports from weathermen at the time suggested that the storm wouldn't even hit the Florida mainland. But on Sept. 16, 1928, the hurricane made landfall, bringing with it a wave of death and destruction. The storm moved across the lake northwest diagonally, from Pahokee to near the area where Buckhead Ridge is today. High winds ripped roofs from buildings, while floodwaters either lifted entire houses up and carried them away or caused them to disintegrate completely. Water from the lake came rushing through the communities of Belle Glade and Pahokee, killing thousands.

Carmen Salvatore was an Italian immigrant and World War I veteran who helped found Pahokee. He was one of the lucky few to survive the hurricane and, in 1992, the Florida Folklife Program interviewed him to document life around the lake during the early 1900s. Unsurprisingly, the role the hurricane of 1928 played came up when Salvatore was telling his life story. "The wind started about a half an hour before sundown," Salvatore said. "Then the water started coming up. This was at night. You couldn't see your hand in front of your face. The rain was coming down in sheets, not drops now, I mean sheets. We got behind a ridge to avoid the water. Then the water started coming over the ridge. That scared me." During a lull in the storm, Salvatore and a friend went to check on an elderly couple in the neighborhood. "Mr. and Mrs. Hunter were in their eighties and lived about 300 feet from me," recounted Salvatore. "We got to their house and the water from the lake had went right through the house. Went inside and nobody was there. We found Mrs. Hunter



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News/Florida Memory Project  
**BELLE GLADE – Coffins stack along the bank of a canal after the 1928 hurricane.**

within 10 feet from where we were. She heard us calling her but she was so weak she couldn't answer back. We found Mr. Hunter riding a dead cow 600 feet from there out in the muck and water." "Everybody had a story to tell," continued Salvatore. "And you think that story would be about as bad as it could be, but the next guy would give you one worse than that one." The day following the storm Salvatore described people as people shellshocked, walking around the community in a daze as they processed what had just happened. Property damage amounted to over \$25 million. Over 2,500 people died, many of whom were migrant farmworkers. Bodies were found in ditches, in trees, anyplace the swirling waters might have carried them. Farmers reported finding the skeletons of the hurricane's victims in their fields even years later.

A mass funeral was held in West Palm Beach for many of those who died. Survivors spent days and weeks gathering bodies into makeshift coffins to be buried. Eventually, volunteers had to turn to cremation because of the massive number of dead the storm left in its wake. Then President-elect Herbert Hoover visited the Okeechobee area to see the destruction firsthand. Eventually the Herbert Hoover Dike was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help prevent another mass loss of life from happening in the area again. "When the hurricane was over with we were dumbfounded," said Salvatore. "There was no wind, no life. You were in a world by yourself without any evidence of life. You were all by yourself. That's the best way I can describe it."



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**BELLE GLADE – An automotive garage in Belle Glade was demolished by the 1928 hurricane.**

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# Develop a hurricane disaster plan now

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OKEECHOBEE — Hurricane season officially started June 1, and the Florida Dept of Health in Okeechobee County encourages everyone to prepare for severe weather emergencies now.

## Get A Plan!

The best way to cope with a disaster is to have a plan. Following an emergency or disaster, you may lose access to basic services, such as power and water, and be subject to limited or no access to basic needs, like food and medications. The Florida Department of Emergency Management provides an interactive online tool, Get a Plan!, to help families and businesses stay prepared. This useful tool allows you to answer a series of questions and create a plan customized for you.

## Make a Kit

As we watch for upcoming storms, think about what you might need to keep on hand in order to be prepared. The Florida Division of Emergency Management recommends that you have enough supplies to last you and your family for a minimum of seven days. Each individual or family disaster supply kit differs, based on personal needs. Review the list below for the basic items to include in your kit. For more information, visit <https://www.floridadisaster.org/planpre>

pare/hurricane-supply-checklist/.

- Food: Nonperishable packaged or canned food and juices, snacks and foods for those with dietary restrictions (i.e., infants, people with diabetes, etc.).
- Cooking supplies: Manual can opener, cooking tools and fuel, paper plates and plastic utensils.
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Pillows, blankets and/or sleeping bags
- Clothing: Complete change of clothes suitable for the current climate. Stock up on diapers if you have an infant. Include sturdy shoes to protect feet from debris or other sharp objects post-storm.
- First aid kit, prescription medications and other medicines: People with health issues may need to carry written instructions for care and medication (including medication dosages), a list of medical devices and a list of current doctors.
- Radio: Battery-operated and NOAA weather radio.
- Toiletries
- Cleaning Supplies: Garbage bags, moisture wipes and other items.
- Cash: Banks and ATMs may not be working for long periods following a disaster.
- Important documents: Store all critical documents in a waterproof container and save electronically. Documents like

insurance, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, etc.

- Special Items: Assess all family member needs. Plan for infants, elderly and individuals with access and functional needs (i.e. medical items, baby bottles, etc.).
- Pet care items: Proper identification, immunization records, ample supply of food and water, carrier or cage, medications, muzzle and leash, and a photo of you and your pet together to validate ownership.

## Know Where to Find Shelter

The time may come when you need to evacuate your home and go to a safer place. In certain situations, it may be safest for you to evacuate to a shelter. A hurricane evacuation shelter is a refuge of last resort, a place to go if you can't stay at home or with a relative, friend or co-worker, or at a nearby hotel. Hurricane shelters are also available for people who have no other place to go. The Florida Division of Emergency Management maintains a list of open shelters on their website.

If you have a disability or a special need, such as a medical condition, it's vital that you register with your local emergency management office. All emergency management offices maintain a list of people within the community who have disabilities or special needs so they can be assisted quickly during an emergency.

If you are eligible for a Special Needs Shelter, your kit should include the following: a list of medications and dosage, a 30-day supply of medications, vital medical equipment for those who may be electrically or oxygen dependent, backup energy sources for essential medical equipment, any special dietary needs or food, as well as personal information, including photo ID, insurance card, emergency contacts, and your primary care providers contact information.

And if you have pets, be sure that the shelter has a place for them and their supplies.

## Stay Connected

During severe weather and other emergencies, stay connected to local radio, television and social media outlets.

The State Assistance Information Line (SAIL), a toll-free hotline, is activated to provide accurate and up-to-date information on emergency or disaster situations impacting the State of Florida. The SAIL hotline is: 1-800-342-3557.

You can also get helpful information from the Florida Department of Health's official social media accounts. One of the fastest ways to receive accurate health-related information is to monitor @HealthyFla on Twitter and on Facebook.

For more information on how to prepare for hurricane season, please contact your local Florida Department of Health.

## Residential and Commercial



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# Your hurricane plan should include your pets

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

When a hurricane threatens, do you have a plan for your pets? Do you have a safe spot for them in your home? What will you do with them if you can't stay in your home?

The Humane Society of the United States encourages pet owners to have a disaster preparedness plan in place that includes the four-legged members of the family.

## Preparedness tips include:

- ID your pet: Make sure that cats and dogs are wearing collars and identification tags that are up to date. You'll increase your chances of being reunited with pets who get lost by having them microchipped; make sure the microchip registration is in your name. But remember: The average person who finds your pet won't be able to scan for a chip, but they will probably be able to read a basic tag.

- Put your cell phone number on your pet's tag. It may also be a good idea to include the phone number of a friend or relative outside your immediate area – in case you have had to evacuate.

- If you evacuate, take your pet. If it isn't safe for you, it isn't safe for your pets. You have no way of knowing how long you'll be kept out of the area, and you may not be able – or allowed – to go back for your pets. Pets left behind in a disaster can easily be injured, lost or killed. Remember

to make plans for ALL your pets; during natural disasters, disaster plans for feral or outdoor cats, horses and animals on farms can be lifesavers.

- Evacuate early. Don't wait for a mandatory evacuation order. Some people who have waited to be evacuated by emergency officials have been told to leave their pets behind. The smell of smoke or the sound of high winds or thunder may make your pet more fearful and difficult to load into a crate or carrier. Evacuating before conditions become severe will keep everyone safer and make the process less stressful.

- Find a safe place to stay ahead of time. Before a disaster hits, check the website of your local office of emergency management to see if you will be allowed to evacuate with your pets and verify that there will be shelters in your area that take people and their pets. Also be sure to review how they are managing social distancing needs. If you plan to take your pet to a shelter, find out what kind of cage or pet carrier will be required. Be sure to pack your pets food, water dish, toys, blankets and any medications.

- Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to find out if they accept pets. Ask about any restrictions on number, size and species. Inquire if a "no pet" policy would be waived in an emergency. Keep a list of animal-friendly places handy, and call ahead for a reservation as soon as you think you might have to leave

your home. Several websites offer lists of pet friendly lodgings: Bringfido.com, Dogfriendly.com, Doginmysuitcase.com, Pet-friendly-hotels.com, Pets-allowed-hotels.com, Petswelcome.com; Tripswithpets.com.

- Make arrangements with friends or relatives. Ask people outside your immediate area if they would be able to shelter you and your pets – or just your pets – if necessary. If you have more than one pet, you may need to arrange to house them at separate locations.

- If you have a fish tank, invest in a battery-operated aerator (the kind used for live wells on boats), in case your home loses power during a storm.

## Some stay-at-home tips:

- Close off or eliminate unsafe nooks and crannies where frightened cats may try to hide.

- Move dangerous items such as tools or toxic products that have been stored in the area.

- Bring your pets indoors as soon as local authorities say trouble is on the way. Keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers, and make sure they are wearing identification.

- If you have a room you can designate as a "safe room," put your emergency supplies in that room in advance, including your pet's crate and supplies. Have any

medications and a supply of pet food and water inside watertight containers, along with your other emergency supplies.

- If there is an open fireplace, vent, pet door or similar opening in the house, close it off with plastic sheeting and strong tape.

- Follow local news outlets online or listen to the radio periodically, and don't come out until you know it's safe.

## After a storm, protect your pet from dangers

- Don't allow your pets to roam loose. Familiar landmarks and smells might be gone, and your pet will probably be disoriented. Pets can easily get lost in such situations. There could also be a lot of debris, such as roofing nails and broken glass, that could cause injuries.

- While you assess the damage, keep dogs on leashes and cats in carriers inside the house. If your house is damaged, your pets could escape.

- Be patient with your pets after a disaster. Try to get them back into their normal routines as soon as possible. Be ready for behavioral problems caused by the stress of the situation. If these problems persist, or if your pet seems to be having any health problems, talk to your veterinarian.

- If your community has been flooded, check your home and yard for wild animals who may have sought refuge there. Wildlife can pose a threat to you and your pet.



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