

Hurricane Preparedness Guide

Lake Okeechobee News

July 7, 2021

Hurricane misconceptions continue to circulate

By Dennis Feltgen
National Hurricane Center

Millions of people were affected by hurricanes in 2017. Their perceptions have now been reset, but some don't line up with reality. Social science may be the answer to fixing it.

When a hurricane is approaching, many people prepare based on previous experience. But they're not always right. Here's a sampling:

"I live outside of the cone, so I am safe



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News/NOAA
Hurricane Irma hit Florida in 2017.

from feeling the effects."

The cone has nothing to do with impacts, only the average track error of the past five years. 2017's Irma went up Florida's west coast, but its wind field grew in size and pushed storm surge onto Florida's east coast.

"It's never flooded here before."

It's not easy to picture 60 inches of rain, but it was one of the biggest stories of Harvey. There's no historical record of that amount, so it's difficult to imagine what it will do.

"I got hit last year and it was a 100 year storm, so I'm in good shape for the next 100 years."

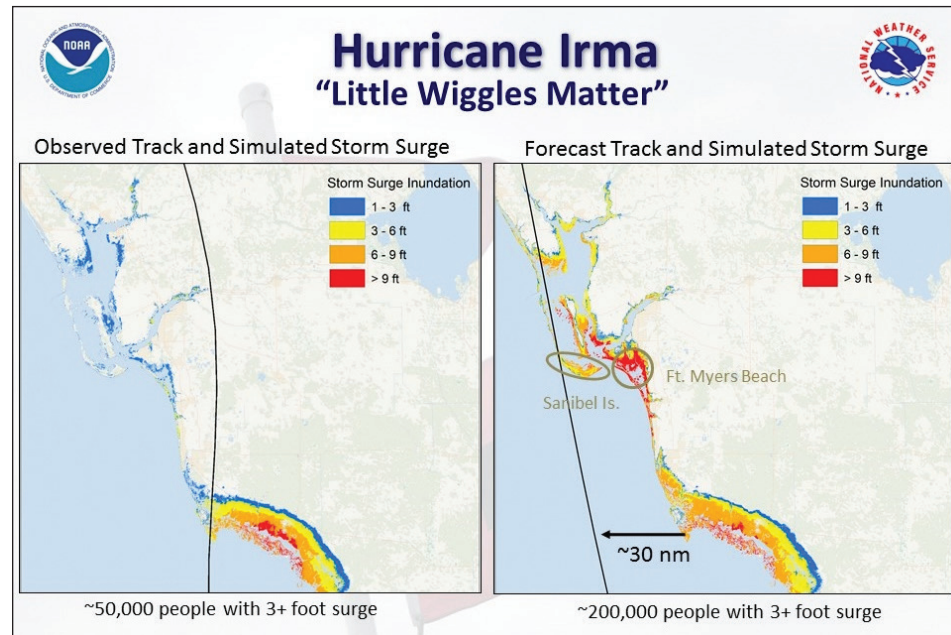
All 100 year storm means is that you have a 1 % chance of it happening to you every single year. That's the same as a 25% chance of flooding in a typical 30-year mortgage. You can get hit in back to back years or even in the same year.

"A very slight wiggle in the track doesn't matter."

That could be true over the middle of the ocean, but not for land. Hurricane Irma proved that. Its wiggle of 30 miles along Florida southwest coast meant the difference between getting only a few feet of storm surge versus 9 feet.

"We went through a Cat 4 and nothing bad happened"

Many people in Key West will tell you Irma was a Cat 4 there. The reality is they only got Cat 1 winds. You had to go 20



Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

A small change in the path a hurricane takes can make a big change in the number of people affected by storm surge.

to 30 miles away to find the Cat 4 winds. The reality is that you've got to understand exactly what you went through and that you may not have seen the strongest part of that storm.

How do we line up perception with reality? The answer lies in social science. A project will soon begin at NOAA's National

Hurricane Center to find ways to better communicate the risk from the hurricane hazards, find out how people are interpreting our products and to make sure everything is actionable. We have to plan for what COULD happen, not what has happened in the past. It's a life and death proposition.

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What's your food safety plan for hurricane season?

By Kenneth King
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.

Develop your action plan before a storm hits.

• Buy ice packs and coolers days before the hurricane arrives in case there is a pro-

longed 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 store for canned meats. These are fully cooked and unopened canned meats don't require refrigeration.

Illness-causing bacteria grow in temperatures 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: www.fsis.usda.gov.

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 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

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.
- Put appliance thermometers in your refrigerator and freezer.
- Keep freezer 0°F or below
- Refrigerator 40°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.
- 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** if half-full **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

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

AFTER A FLOOD

FOLLOW THESE STEPS 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

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How much water do you need for your hurricane supply?

By Katherine Allen, Lisa Hamilton, and Yilin Zhuang
UF/IFAS

GAINESVILLE — The Atlantic hurricane season extends from June 1 through Nov. 30. NOAA's Climate Prediction Center is predicting another above-normal Atlantic hurricane season. Forecasters predict 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. However, experts do not anticipate the historic level of storm activity seen in 2020.

Do you know how much water you need during an emergency?

A safe drinking water supply is important during an emergency. The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) and Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) recommend that households store one to one and one-half gallons of water per person for a minimum of a three-day supply. For a family of four that is a minimum of 12 to 18 gallons of water.

Purchasing and storing an adequate supply can be costly and take up considerable space. In addition, thin plastic water jugs can degrade over time, leaking and/or becoming contaminated. To reduce costs, storage concerns, and ensure a safe water supply, consider sanitizing household containers for storing needed water.

DIY a safe water supply for hurricane season

DIY Containers: Sanitize household containers and fill with water when a storm is approaching.

- First, wash the inside and outside of each container with soap and hot water.
- Next, sanitize containers with a solution of 1 teaspoon of non-scented household bleach per quart of water.
- Close the container tightly and shake well, making sure that the bleach solution touches all of the internal surfaces of the container
- Let the container sit for 30 seconds and pour the solution out.
- Finally, rinse thoroughly with plain clean water. Avoid using milk containers because they can be hard to clean. Bacteria can grow quickly in a milk container, contaminating the water stored in it. However, if there is no alternative, special care should be taken when sanitizing these containers.
- After containers have been filled with clean water, label them with the words "Drinking Water" and mark the date of

storage. Direct heat and light can slowly damage plastic containers, resulting in eventual leakage, so they should be stored in a dark, cool, and dry place.

- Lids should be tightly closed to prevent contamination. Store water away from gasoline, kerosene, pesticides, or similar substances because vapors from these materials can penetrate plastic.

How to store these emergency water supplies?

Water can also be stored in a freezer. Frozen water provides the added benefit of helping to keep frozen food cold for a longer time if power is out for an extended period and you can use in coolers to keep food cold and then drink once melted.

Use only plastic containers to store water in a freezer, as glass may not be able to withstand the pressure of expanding ice.

To minimize exposure to bacteria, open a container just before use and then refrigerate it if power is available. If no refrigeration is available, keep the container up high, away from children and pets. Use water from opened containers within 1 to 2 days if possible.

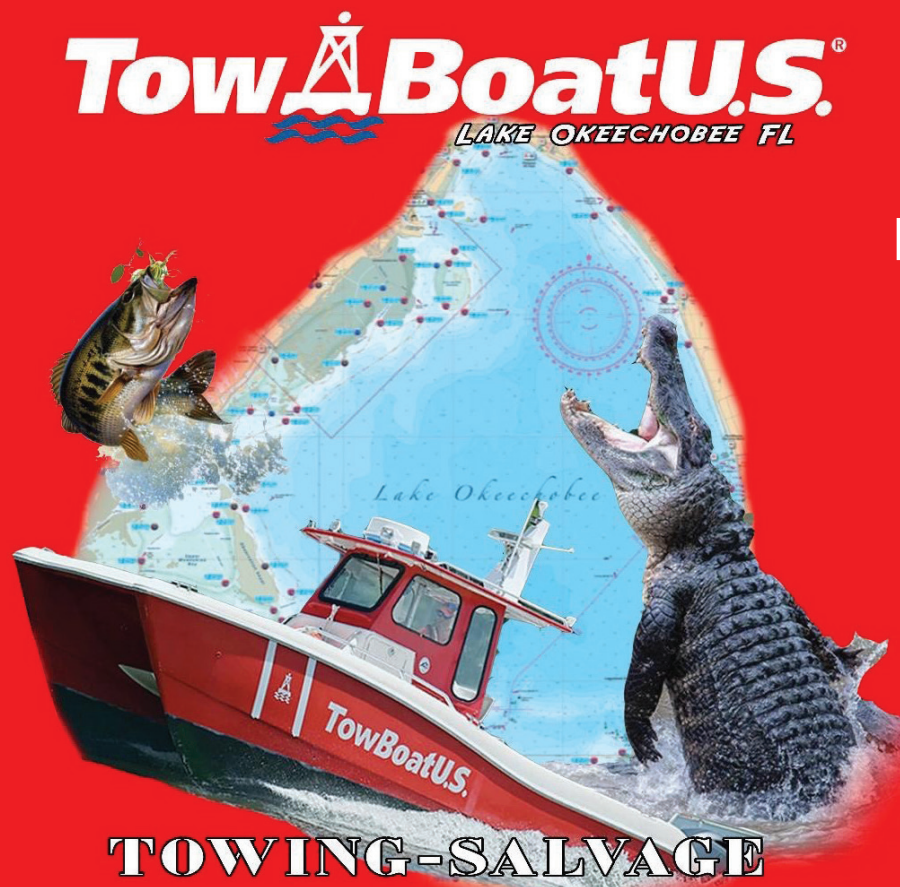
To learn more about hurricane preparedness, please watch the recordings on the YouTube channel UF/IFAS Extension: Water Resources.



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Will you need to disinfect your well after it is flooded?

By Yilin Zhuang

Water Resources Regional Specialized Agent, UF/IFAS

Hurricanes bring excessive rain. When heavy rains bring flooding to an area, your private well may not be safe to drink. It may be in danger of contamination from pollutants found in the flood waters.

If your well has been flooded, such as your well head was surrounded by flood waters or it was submerged in flood waters, your private well might be in danger of contamination from pollutants found in the flood waters.

The only way to know if your water is safe to drink or not is to have it tested. Bacterial contamination is common after a well is flooded. Find a certified lab to test your water for bacteria (coliform bacteria and E.coli).

The Environmental Laboratory Certification Program was established in 1979 to ensure laboratory quality and capacity to perform testing of drinking water regulated in the Florida Safe Drinking Water Act. You can assess this link to find a certified drinking water testing lab: https://fldeploc.dep.state.fl.us/aams/org_search.asp.

Before you receive your water test result, you need to use alternative safe water sources for drinking, making beverages, cooking, brushing your teeth, washing dishes, and washing areas of the skin that have been cut or injured. Bottled water can be used for these purposes. You can also bring your well water to a rolling boil for at least one minute to kill bacteria.

If your well water test reveals bacteria, the well and water system need to be disinfected. Non-scented chlorine bleach is often used to disinfect a bacterial contaminated well. Keep in mind, the disinfection process includes not only your well but also all the plumbing. If you have water treatment systems or devices, remove all membranes, cartridges, and filters, and replace them after the shock chlorination process is completed.

How To Disinfect My Well?

- Pump out the well to remove any

The Amount of Chlorine Bleach to Use for Well Disinfection

Well Depth in Feet	Well Diameter In Inches			
	2"	4"	5"	6"
50	1 cup	2 cups	2 cups	3 cups
80	1 cup	2 cups	4 cups	4 cups
100	1 cup	3 cups	4 cups	6 cups
150	2 cups	4 cups	8 cups	10 cups
200	3 cups	6 cups	10 cups	12 cups

potential contaminants. It is at least three well volumes of water from a faucet near the wellhead, or at a minimum, pump the well for at least 1 hour before beginning the disinfection process.

- Flush out household plumbing including water heater. Make sure the water is clear and free of sediment.

- Turn off electric power to the pump and remove the well cap. Prepare a solution of bleach and water, and pour the solution into the top of the well. The amount of bleach depends on the depth of water in the well and the diameter of the well casing. The bleach should be diluted with 10 parts of water. For example, 1 cup of bleach with 10 cups of water before pouring it into your well.

- Recirculate the water by connecting a hose to a faucet and spraying the water back into the well for at least 10 minutes.

- Open every faucet in the system and let the water run until the smell of chlorine can be detected. Then close all the faucets and seal the top of the well.

- Allow the chlorinated water to stand in the system for at least 12 hours but no longer than

24 hours. You cannot use any water through the system during this period including flushing your toilets. Prepare alternative water supply during well disinfection process.

- The next day, operate the pump by turning on all faucets, beginning with outside and flushing out the water until there is no chlorine odor.

Is My Water Safe Now?

Again, the only way to verify that the water is safe to drink is to have it tested. Send another sample to the certified lab to confirm there is no bacteria in your well water first. Although chlorine bleach is effective against microorganisms, it will not remove chemical contamination that may have gotten into your well.

For more disaster recovery tips, go to disaster.ifas.ufl.edu.

Some tips to remember:

- **Not all bleach is created equal!** It can be challenging to find disinfecting products after a storm. When you are looking for bleach to disinfect your well, please re-

member: DO NOT PURCHASE SPLASHLESS BLEACH. Common household bleach usually contains 5-6% sodium hypochlorite (i.e. chlorine). Splashless bleach is a little thicker than regular household bleach. It is less likely to splash, but the sodium hypochlorite concentration is only 1-5%. It is not strong enough to sanitize and disinfect your well. As the label warns, you will be left with a lot of suds in your water! If you have already used the splashless bleach, you will need to flush your well system longer to remove all the suds.

• Bleach expires too!

Bleach loses strength in its container over time. Check the "sell by date." If you cannot buy new bleach, try to use bleach that is less than three months old. In addition, only use unscented bleach to avoid adding unneeded chemicals to the water.

• Right pH is critical!

To make the disinfection procedure more effective, make sure the pH (i.e. acidity) of the water well is between 6 and 7.5. If the pH of your well is not in this range, consult a well treatment professional to adjust the pH and maintain it in the correct range during the disinfection process.

• Prepare a chlorine solution!

Bleach should be combined with 10 parts of water before adding it to the well for the best results. It will reduce the chance of corrosion of the well system. Please note DO NOT mix chlorine solutions with other cleaning products, including ammonia, because toxic gases will be created. The amount of bleach depends on the depth of water in the well and the diameter of the well casing. For example, if your well diameter is 2 and the well depth is 100 feet, you will need 1 cup of bleach with 10 cups of water before pouring it into your wells.

NOTE: This well disinfection method is also called Shock Chlorination. Please note shock chlorination is not a regular maintenance method. This disinfection method is only used when a new well is drilled, flooding occurs, if bacteria is found, or if the well has been sitting without use for an extended period of time.





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Minimize wind damage to your South Florida landscape

By Timothy K. Broschat and Derek Burch
UF/IFAS

When an area has been free of hurricane-strength winds for a number of years, there is a possibility of severe damage to trees and to the structures near them when a storm finally hits. Trees and shrubs, even those native to an area, can grow too massive or unbalanced to be able to stand windstorms, and it is worth learning how to prune and shape trees in order to minimize the risks of damage.

The ideal approach to avoiding storm damage begins with the initial selection of the plants. Such selection takes into consideration the branch and trunk strength of the trees being considered for planting, how strong their root system is, and their placement relative to structures and utilities. A regular system of pruning must then be established; pruning should develop a sturdy, well-spaced framework of healthy branches carrying an open, leafy canopy that allows air to move freely.

Trees resistant to wind

There are some tree species that stand up to strong winds much better than others. (No tree can be guaranteed to stand up to hurricane-force winds or even strong gusts of wind. This is particularly true if it has been growing unpruned for a number of years.) These trees are more likely to withstand strong winds. Wind-resistant trees include:

- Cordia sebestena—geiger tree,
- Mangifera indica—mango,
- Manilkara roxburghiana—mimusops,
- Quercus virginiana—live oak,
- Tamarindus indica—tamarind,
- Most palm species.

Brittle trees

At the other end of the scale are the trees noted for dropping branches or splitting apart under stress. Losing leaves or twigs in a high wind will make a garden untidy, but may give the trees an advantage by reducing the stress on the main branches.

The trees on this list are likely to lose major limbs. Brittle trees include

- Acacia auriculiformis—earleaf acacia,
- Bischofia javanica—bischofia,
- Enterolobium cyclocarpum—ear tree,
- Eucalyptus spp.—eucalyptus,
- Grevillea robusta—silk oak,
- Hibiscus tiliaceus—sea hibiscus,
- Persea americana—avocado,
- Spathodea campanulata—African tulip tree.

Most species fall between the extremes and have a good chance of surviving a moderate to strong storm intact, provided they have had proper pruning.

Shallow-rooted trees

Another class of damage occurs when the whole tree blows over rather than breaking up. The soil in which the trees are growing may have a major influence on how shallow-rooted a tree is, but there are certain species that almost never make deep roots, and these are always likely to blow over. On poorly drained soils, such

as marl, where the water table periodically comes close to the soil surface, most trees that would otherwise form deep roots will be shallow-rooted and much more easily blown over than they would be on well drained soils. It is interesting to consider that in nature, blowing over rather than breaking up may help the tree to survive. The roots left in the ground supply the fallen tree with nutrients and new upright shoots form from the base and along the trunk. In a controlled landscape this is not a desirable characteristic, but it may be an advantage in semi-wild situations, particularly along the coast.

Species with shallow root systems include:

- Albizia lebbek—woman's tongue,
- Bulnesia arborea—vera wood,
- Casuarina spp.—Australian pine,
- Ficus microcarpa—Indian laurel,
- Peltophorum spp.—yellow poinciana, copperpod,
- Thespesia populnea—seaside mahoe.

Planting considerations

When a tree falls or breaks up it is more likely to damage a structure close to it than one farther away. If the landscape planning includes the use of trees to shade the house, some compromise will be necessary to avoid the shade trees turning into wreckers during a storm. It is more important to shade the east and west walls than the roof. Small trees could be planted fairly close to the house to accomplish this, and they would be much less hazardous than larger trees, even if the larger trees were farther away. Observations of native tree hammocks in Dade County suggest that a large number of trees close together may be an effective storm protection for structures, but no definitive testing of this theory has been carried out. Overhead utility lines are even more vulnerable to damage than the roof or windows of a house, and there should be no tree branches close enough to drop across them or even brush against them.

Once the tree has been selected and planted in such a place as to reduce hazards, there still remain cultural practices throughout the life of the tree that will affect its survival during a storm.

When planting, the usual advice has been to dig a large hole, put the tree in the hole, and fill around the ball of roots with enriched soil. Under certain circumstances, this may be exactly the wrong thing to do! In really bad soil or rock, the hole full of rich soil may allow the tree roots to get off to a good start, but the roots may take a long time to grow from the good soil into the poor soil surrounding it. Roots may coil around in the hole just as they would in a pot, and with the same disadvantages: a danger of encircling and constricting the lower part of the trunk, a limited volume from which to draw water and nutrients, and very little resistance to being blown over.

If the soil is enriched or amended before planting, use no more than 1/3 organic matter (by volume) mixed well with the original soil from the site, making this addition to an area large enough to support an extensive root system. If this is not feasible,

plant the tree in unamended soil and pay close attention to watering and fertilizing until the tree roots have grown out strongly. Use of organic mulches 3 to 4 inches deep around the tree (but not touching the trunk) will help with the establishment of the tree by keeping the ground cooler, moister, and with fewer weeds than if the ground were bare. The mulch will gradually improve the soil, too.

Pruning for wind resistance

The most wind-resistant form for a tree is one with a central leader and a well-spaced framework of branches around and up and down the trunk. Most trees can be grown in this form when they are young, but the growth habit of some species will change to a multi-trunked spreading form as they mature.

There should be no narrow forks or branches leaving the trunk at an acute angle, since these branches are likely to split under stress. Crotches from 45 to 90 degrees are less likely to split than narrow V-crotches of less than 40 degrees.

A wind-resistant tree is the result of regular care since its early life. Young trees should not be cut back to make them bushy, but should rather be encouraged to form a strong leader with well-spaced laterals (branches that go out to the side) that are held back enough to stop them from forming multiple, competing leaders.

A young tree can have the lower branches removed over a period of time to give a clear trunk to whatever height is necessary. It should not, however, be cleaned of laterals in the lower part of the trunk too soon, since the branches there (provided they are not allowed to form competing leaders) will help to give a larger trunk diameter and a much sturdier tree.

Trim lower lateral branches gradually over time to encourage a larger trunk diameter. Later pruning should consist of

forming a well-spaced framework of strong branches, and a pleasing outline to the tree.

Preparing for a storm

Faced with the threat of a storm, gardeners who have kept their trees thinned and with a canopy in proportion to the trunk and branches have little extra to do. The overgrown, neglected tree, however, is another matter. It may be necessary to reduce the size of the tree, which will be a minor operation and hardly noticeable for a tree which has been well maintained. For a neglected tree it will mean severe surgery and a tree that will be ugly for a few months whether or not the storm hits.

The order of pruning is always the same).

- Cut out dead, diseased, and damaged wood.
- Take out watersprouts.
- Cut out crossing branches and those growing into the center of the tree.
- Clean off small branches that clutter the center of the tree.
- Select a well spaced framework of branches and cut all others out completely.
- Shorten branches to give a balanced head. Whenever possible, this shortening should be done to a bud that has already started to grow out as a sidebranch.

Cutting to an upward pointing branch or one leading to one side or the other will determine the direction in which new growth occurs for a time. If the tree has been well managed, pruning in this way (drop crotch pruning) will mean that the cuts scarcely show since a lot of foliage will remain to disguise them. In cutting back a neglected tree, many of the cuts will have to be made to a part of the branch with no leaves or side branches. Even when the cut can be made to a fork, the remaining branch may also need to be shortened so that the cuts have very little foliage to hide them.

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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?

FEMA maps are online at 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.

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.

American Red Cross shares hurricane safety tips

Special to the Lake Okeechobee News

MIAMI — Hurricane season officially started on June 1 and runs until Nov. 30. The American Red Cross urges people to take steps now to get prepared in case of an emergency.

Having a plan in place can make a big difference in your safety when facing a hurricane or tropical storm," said Josett Valdez, chief executive officer for the American Red Cross South Florida Region. "Making sure you and your loved ones are prepared is more important than ever as we enter into hurricane season starting today."

What you should do ...

- Determine your risk. Hurricanes cause problems for people in coastal areas but

can also cause damage hundreds of miles inland.

- Talk with household members and create an evacuation plan. Practicing the plan minimizes confusion and fear during the event.

- 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 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. If someone already has 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. If they already have

an emergency plan for their household, they should talk about it again with family members, so everyone knows what to do if an emergency occurs.

- Be informed. Learn about the community's hurricane response plan. Plan routes to local shelters, register family members with special medical needs as required and make plans for pets.

- Download the free Red Cross Emergency App to select up to 35 different severe weather and emergency alerts on their mobile device. The content includes expert guidance on what to do before, during and after different emergencies or disasters from home fires to hurricanes. All Red Cross apps can be found in smartphone app stores by searching for American Red Cross or by going to redcross.org/apps.

- Keep insurance policies, documents, and other valuables in a safe-deposit box. You may need quick, easy access to these documents. Keep them in a safe place less likely to be damaged if a hurricane causes flooding. Take pictures on a phone and keep copies of important documents and files on a flash drive that you can carry with you on your house or car keys.

- Protect windows with storm shutters or invest in one-half inch marine plywood that is pre-cut to fit your doors and windows.

- Identify a place to store lawn furniture, toys, gardening tools and trash cans (away from stairs and exits) to prevent them from being moved by high winds.

- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts to prevent flooding.



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