

How to Prepare and Safely Weather a Hurricane/Tornado

Categories : [Disaster Related](#)

The following information is provided by the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

WHAT IS A HURRICANE?

A hurricane is a type of tropical cyclone, the generic term for a low pressure system that generally forms in the tropics. A typical cyclone is accompanied by thunderstorms, and in the Northern Hemisphere, a counterclockwise circulation of winds near the earth's surface. The higher the rating, the more damaging the wind will be.

Hurricanes can cause catastrophic damage to coastlines and several hundred miles inland. Winds can exceed 155 miles per hour. Hurricanes and tropical storms can also spawn tornadoes and microbursts, create storm surges along the coast, and cause extensive damage from heavy rainfall.

Hurricanes are classified into five categories based on their wind speed, central pressure, and damage potential – Category Three and higher hurricanes are considered major hurricanes, though Categories One and Two are still extremely dangerous and warrant your full attention. For more general information on hurricanes, visit FEMA's site at <https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30; the principal threat period for Connecticut is from mid-August to mid-October.

Recommendations by the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection offer the following tips that all Connecticut residents take three simple preparedness steps: Get a kit, make a plan, and stay informed".

Connecticut residents with mobile smartphones, Apple and Android devices, can download the CTPrepares App., to access emergency information and alerts, free of charge, during an emergency event. Services on the mobile application include creating an interactive emergency kit, developing a customized family communication plan, connect with utility companies, check weather reports, and have access to emergency preparation guides, so to be more informed during emergencies. Visit the CT.Gov Website: Emergency Management site at the following for more details and to sign up: <https://portal.ct.gov/Emergency-Preparedness/>

Preparedness Tips for Connecticut Residents with Disabilities and Older Populations:

- Contact your local government's emergency management office. Many local offices can add you voluntarily to a list of people with disabilities so they can be helped quickly in a sudden emergency. These lists are solely for the purpose of assistance in an emergency and will not be shared for any other reason.
- Ensure you have a support network and keep a contact list in a watertight container in your [emergency kit](#). When creating your emergency kit, consider the unique needs you may have, such as for a service animal, medical equipment and more.
- Inform your support network where you keep your emergency supplies. You may want to consider giving one member a key to your house or apartment.
- Be ready to explain to first responders that you need to evacuate and choose to go to a shelter with your

- family, service animal, caregiver, personal assistant and your assistive technology devices and supplies.
- Plan ahead for accessible transportation that you may need for evacuation or getting to a medical clinic. Work with local services, public transportation or paratransit to identify your local or private accessible transportation options.
 - If you use a communications device or other assistive technologies, plan how you will evacuate with the devices or how you will replace equipment if lost or destroyed.
 - Plan how you will communicate with others if your equipment is not working, including laminated cards with phrases and/or pictogram.
 - Throughout a severe storm or hurricane have a plan to check on neighbors who may need assistance such as infants, children, older adults and people with disabilities. If you have immediate needs including food and shelter, state resources are available: To find 211 services available in your area or to search for resources, visit <https://www.211ct.org/> or Dial 2-1-1.

Before, during and after disaster events, such as major storms, it is important to stay informed and have a plan. For tips, emergency kit planning, communications needs preparedness materials in different languages and more download [the CT Prepares App](#) and visit [Ready.gov](#).

Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:

- One gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food
- Battery-powered or hand crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert and extra batteries for both
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- First aid kit
- A whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask, to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in-place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Can opener for food (if kit contains canned food)
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers, inverter or solar charger

Family Emergency Plan:

- Create a paper copy of the contact information for your family. Collect the contact information of other important people and places, such as doctors, insurance companies, or schools. Identify an out-of town contact. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- Be sure every member of your family knows the phone number and has a cell phone, coins, or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact. If you have a cell phone, program that person(s) as “ICE” (In Case of Emergency) in your phone. If you are in an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know. Make sure to tell your family and friends that you’ve listed them as emergency contacts. Make sure everyone carries a copy. If you complete your plan online at ready.gov/make-a-plan, you can print it as a wallet-sized card. Also, post a copy in a central location in your home, such as your refrigerator or family bulletin board.
- Teach family members how to use text messaging. Text messages can often get around network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.
- Bring your family together to review and practice your plan every few months.

WHAT IS A TORNADO?

The Weather Channel describes a tornado as a violently rotating column of air extending between, and in contact with a cloud and the surface of the earth. Tornadoes are generally spawned by thunderstorms, though they have been known to occur without the presence of lightning. Tornadoes can come one at a time, or in clusters, and they can vary greatly in length, width, direction of travel and speed.

FEMA has published the following facts and general information about tornadoes:

Damage paths can be in excess of one mile wide and 50 miles long. Every state is at some risk from this hazard. Some tornadoes are clearly visible, while rain or nearby low-hanging clouds obscure others. Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that little, if any, advance warning is possible. Before a tornado hits, the wind may die down and the air may become very still. A cloud of debris can mark the location of a tornado even if a funnel is not visible. Tornadoes generally occur near the trailing edge of a thunderstorm. It is not uncommon to see clear, sunlit skies behind a tornado.

- They may strike quickly, with little or no warning.
- They may appear nearly transparent until dust and debris are picked up or a cloud forms in the funnel. The average tornado moves Southwest to Northeast, but tornadoes have been known to move in any direction.
- The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 MPH, but may vary from stationary to 70 MPH.
- Tornadoes can accompany tropical storms and hurricanes as they move onto land.
- Waterspouts are tornadoes that form over water.
- Tornadoes are most frequently reported east of the Rocky Mountains during spring and summer months.
- Peak tornado season in the southern states is March through May; in the northern states, it is late spring through early summer.
- Tornadoes are most likely to occur between 3 p.m. and 9 p.m., but can occur at any time.

****Terms to help identify a tornado hazard:****

TORNADO WATCH:

Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms. Watch the sky and stay tuned to NOAA Weather Radio, commercial radio, or television for information.

TORNADO WARNING:

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately.

Take Protective Measures:

Before a tornado, be alert to changing weather conditions.

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or to commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information.
- Look for approaching storms.
- Look for the following danger signs:
 - Dark, often greenish sky
 - Large hail
 - A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)
 - Loud roar, similar to a freight train.
- If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately.

For more information on FEMA safety measures, and how to build a “Safe Room” , visit: <https://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>

HOW TO PLAN AND PREPARE:

- Know what to do and where to go in an emergency
- Know who is in charge of children and loved ones, neighbors who may be elderly or have special needs, and pets
- Know evacuation routes and public shelters in your area
- Stock up on nonperishable food, water, medications and first aid supplies
- Have a battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Have an emergency travel kit that includes food, water, battery-powered radio, flashlight and first aid supplies
- Consider food insurance through the [National Flood Insurance Program](#) and take pictures of your belongings before the disaster strikes.

IF A HURRICANE/TORNADO THREATENS:

- Secure your home with storm shutters or plywood and stow outdoor objects
- If you have a boat, secure it
- Trim trees and shrubs around your home and clear clogged rain gutters and downspouts
- Fill the bathtub with water and keep the refrigerators closed
- Keep cell phone charged and avoid using them except for serious emergencies
- Fill up your car’s gas tank and have your emergency kit ready to go
- Listen to your local radio and TV stations for further updates

EVACUATE IF

- Told to do so by local authorities
- You live in a mobile home or temporary structure
- You live in a high-rise building. Hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations (If you don’t have time to evacuate pick a place in a hallway in the center of the building)
- You live on the coast, on a floodplain, near a river, or on an inland waterway
- You feel you are in danger

IF YOU CAN’T EVACUATE

- Seek shelter in the lowest level of your home (basement or stormcellar). If there is no basement, go to an inner hallway, a smaller interior room, or a closet. Keep away from all windows.
- Close all inside doors and secure and brace outside doors
- Keep curtains and blinds closed
- Do not go outside if the storm dies down; it could be the eye of the storm and winds will pick up again
- Make sure you have a portable radio, preferably a NOAA weather radio

IF YOU’RE OUTSIDE

- Try to get inside and seek a small protected space with no windows
- Avoid large-span roof areas such as school gymnasiums, arenas, or shopping malls
- If you cannot get inside, crouch for protection beside a strong structure or lie flat in a ditch or low-lying area and cover your head and neck with your arms or a piece of clothing

IF YOU'RE IN YOUR CAR

- Try to drive to the closest sturdy shelter
- If flying debris occurs while you are driving pull over and park. Now you have the following options as a last resort:
- Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible
- If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, exit your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND HANDLE POWER OUTAGES FOR MEDICAL DEVICES THAT REQUIRE ELECTRICITY. Go to:

<https://www.fda.gov/downloads/MedicalDevices/ProductsandMedicalProcedures/HomeHealthandConsumer/UCM252812.pdf>

WATCH YOUR WATER

After a storm or other natural disaster, public water supplies and private wells may not be safe to drink. Water that is dark, has an odor, or has floating pieces should not be used.

- For more information on public drinking water visit: <https://portal.ct.gov/dph/Drinking-Water/DWS/Drinking-Water-Section#47062>
- For more information on private wells and disinfection visit: <https://portal.ct.gov/dph/Environmental-Health/Private-Well-Water-Program/Private-Wells#48151>

ELECTRICAL WIRES

Strong winds from a hurricane can knock down electrical wires. Some of these wires may be live. If you see a downed wire, DO NOT TOUCH IT as it could shock you and even kill you. Report it to your local police or fire department.

FLOODING

Severe rain during a hurricane could cause flooding which may cause structural damage, mold and loosen asbestos or lead pieces. Roads may be flooded and bridges washed out, so avoid driving in flooded areas.

MOLD

Water damage will cause mold to grow in your home. Porous items that have stayed wet in a home for more than 48 hours should be removed and thrown away. For more information about mold visit:

<https://portal.ct.gov/dph/Environmental-Health/Environmental-and-Occupational-Health-Assessment/Indoor-Environmental-Quality-IEQ#mold>

FOOD

Food may spoil if there is a loss of electricity. Check for and throw away any spoiled food.

ANIMALS



Snakes, rodents, raccoons, and other wild animals may have been driven out of their homes by damage from the storm as well. When working around your home, be aware of animals as they may bite or carry disease.

INSECTS

Standing water after the storm can be the perfect place for disease-causing insects, like mosquitoes, to lay eggs. Empty out containers with standing water.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

<https://www.weather.gov/>

During times of disasters, scammers are busy trying to sell offers that may sound legitimate but may be an illegal scheme or fraud. If you feel it may be a scam or have questions about a business, visit this “Better Business Bureau” webpage, where you can investigate scams or report one, <https://www.bbb.org/scamtracker/us>

SOURCES: State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), Connecticut Department of Insurance (CID), and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

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