

## HOME &amp; GARDEN

# HOW TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR HURRICANE SEASON

Do these things before the next storm comes



Written by [Kaleb A. Brown](#), News Staff Writer who ties events you care about to products you need.  
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While there are great things to look forward to in the coming summer months, those of us living along the coasts have to contend with the harsh reality of potential hurricanes. The Atlantic hurricane season is on **June 1** so the best time to prepare your home for these monstrous storms is now — before they start forming.

Whether or not you should stay in place or flee during a hurricane will be determined by the guidance of local government officials, which may change as the storm grows closer. Either way, stay informed—it's time for you to prep for a hurricane, and we're here to guide you through all the basics to protect your home no matter what the plan is.

## When is hurricane season 2024?

In the Atlantic, where the **most hurricanes** make touchdown, hurricane season lasts from the beginning of the meteorological summer through the end of meteorological fall; likely, **June 1** through **November 30**. The peak of **hurricane season** is from mid-August through mid-October.

## When to begin preparing for hurricane season

Now. With hurricane season beginning on June 1, there's only a bit of time before storms start hitting. While you'll usually have a decent heads-up before a hurricane, everyone will be rushing for supplies in the days leading up to the storm and some of our suggested preparations cannot be done on the fly. The earlier you prepare for a hurricane, the better.

## What are hurricanes?

As defined by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Hurricane Center (NHC), **hurricanes** are storms that form over warm, tropical waters, and travel inland before eventually dissipating. Hurricanes exhibit speeds of over 74 MPH and cause major damage to infrastructure.

## Prep for a hurricane by protecting your home from storm damage

The two most dangerous aspects of a hurricane are its intense rainfall and wind speed, so when you're preparing your home to weather these fierce storms, you'll have to keep these in mind. Most importantly, stay safe.

### Leak-proof your roof

When it comes to minor leaks in your home, they're not normally a big deal and a bucket can do the trick. However, these minor annoyances can turn catastrophic when a hurricane strikes thanks to the higher amount of rainwater you'll have to contend with. This is one reason why hurricane preparedness is essential.

To keep the inside of your house dry, make sure to inspect your roof for any holes. Roof sealant can be used to patch up any openings you come across that could lead to an annoying leak. This product can be found at home improvement stores as well as online—just make sure to purchase a sealant that works with your specific roofing material. This information will be specified on the container both online and in-person.



#### Gorilla 8060002 White 100% Silicone Sealant

Seal up your roof with gorilla glue.

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Shingles can help keep out rainwater (a must during these massive storms), so make sure the shingles on your **roof are in good condition**. Loose shingles should be nailed down to keep them from blowing away. Likewise, you'll want to replace any missing or broken shingles.

"When shingles start to peel off, the exposed roof structure starts a cascading failure process where water can cause a lot of interior damage even if the roof remains intact," says Carol Friedland, the Director of Louisiana State University's LaHouse Home and Landscape Resource Center. "I recommend using roofing cement to make sure shingles along the edge of your roof are attached," she states.



#### Shingles

Repair and replace your shingles.

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### Clean your gutters

Another thing to keep in mind as you prep for a hurricane is the state of your gutters. You'll want to make sure that they're **clean** so that they can do their job effectively.

We get it—it's our least favorite chore, too. Making sure your gutters are cleared is crucial for protecting your home during a hurricane because you want to divert as much water away from your home as possible. Fortunately, that's the express purpose of gutters—but only if they're clear of debris. If they're not, you risk roof and water damage from water collecting in your leaf-clogged gutter.

Using a ladder to reach your gutters and a bucket to dispose of the waste, you can use your hands or a trowel to clear your gutter. Just don't do this after severe weather has already begun as it can be extremely hazardous during intense winds.

Using an **affordable gutter guard** can reduce the amount of debris that gets into your gutter, meaning you'll have to clean it less often.

## Create a barrier

To further protect your home against water, you can use sandbags to **create a barrier** around the perimeter of your home, preventing flood water from reaching it.

Several different types of sandbags can be used, including DIY sandbags made from burlap sacks.



### UpNorth Sandbags - Box of 100 - Empty Woven Polypropylene

Create a barrier using sandbags.

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The first thing you'll need to do is fill them with sand or dirt. It's generally a two-person job with one person holding the bags open and another shoveling the materials into place.

You'll then place the bags on top of one another, staggering them as if laying bricks. The structure should be covered with a tarp to help protect the sandbags from water seeping through.



### Large Waterproof Tarp Thick Poly Tarpaulin

A tarp will be key to completing your barrier.

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at Amazon

If making a barrier higher than three rows of sandbags, you'll want to create a pyramid shape to reinforce the structure.

Bear in mind that this requires many, many sandbags to pull off, especially if your property is large.

A less expensive and labor-intensive, albeit less secure, way to use sandbags is to limit the use of them by piling only in front of key openings. Placing them in front of doors and garages can help to mitigate the chance of water seeping through, even if water levels reach the exterior of your home.

## Prune trees and plants

Beyond heavy rain, you'll have to contend with hurricane force winds where any object is liable to become a deadly projectile. Long branches are one such thing that can become dangerous when propelled, so you'll want to cut them using bypass pruners.

After cutting them, you'll want to get the branches off your property, lest they become more potential projectiles you'll have to worry about. These branches can typically be discarded at a local dump site.



### FELCO F-2 068780 Classic Manual Hand Pruner

Our best shear can clear your yard of any branches that may turn into projectiles.

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## Clear your yard of freestanding items

You'll also need to move any freestanding items such as lawn mowers and patio furniture into your home or garage. You might think that they're secure because they're heavier objects, but as heavy as they are, the hurricane force winds may be *strong enough to move them*.

If this happens, you do not want to be on the business end of a flying table.

Items that are cumbersome or unsafe to move inside, like gas grills, can be anchored to the ground using stakes, deck anchors or furniture weights.

## Protect your windows

Windows are at particular risk of damage from projectiles in high winds. While they usually prevent outside elements from entering your home, objects propelled by intense winds can break them. This opens your home to the rain, wind and flying objects that can injure you and your loved ones.

To protect windows from breakage, Friedland recommends **boarding them up** with plywood. The plywood should be  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch thick and can be bought at your local home improvement store.

How you go about boarding up your window will differ based on the material of your house.

For wood and vinyl houses, the plywood should be installed outside and measured so that it extends one inch beyond the window frame on all sides allowing you to drill in the holes without hitting the frame. Screws should be inserted into the plywood every 16 inches using an **electric drill**.

If your house is brick or stucco, you'll want to apply the plywood on the frame instead of beyond and use barrel bolts instead of screws.



### Makita FD07R1 12V MAX CXT Lithium-Ion Brushless Cordless Driver-Drill Kit

Board up windows using an electric drill.

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## Keep your roof on

Friedland states that when hurricane wind speed is particularly high, she and her team see roofs being torn completely from homes, exposing their insides to the lethal storm. The best way to mitigate the chances of this happening is by purchasing and installing a hurricane strap. It's a piece of metal that connects the frame of your roof to the upper walls of your house, ensuring your roof doesn't go flying.

Older homes may be particularly in need of hurricane straps, as it's possible that they were built before safety regulations made these straps required. They can be found in hardware stores and online and can be self-installed or with the help of a professional.

It's important to note that a hurricane strap offers minimal protection if not installed properly, so contact a professional if you're not feeling confident about it.



### Simpson Strong-Tie 5-2/7-in 18-Gauge Zmax Steel Rafter Tie Wood To Wood

Secure your roof with a tie.

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## Prepare for power issues

Hurricanes can knock out your power, either through winds taking down power lines or through rain flooding and corroding electrical wiring. This is another area where hurricane preparedness is key.

### Buy a portable generator

The best way to circumvent the effects of a power outage is to supply your own power with a **portable generator**, which runs on fuel such as propane. However, it's important to take proper precautions before using one.



### Champion Power Equipment 200951 2500-Watt Portable Inverter Generator

Supply your appliances with power.

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at Amazon

"One problem we've observed in Louisiana during Hurricane Ida is generators placed next to the house causing exhaust to come up the soffit and build up dangerous levels of carbon dioxide in the house," remarks Friedland.

For this reason, she urges storm preppers to have a functional, battery-operated **carbon monoxide monitor** and to operate portable generators outside, far away from windows.



### Google Nest Protect - Smoke Alarm

Our favorite carbon dioxide monitor is essential for using a portable generator.

**BUY NOW**  
at Amazon

To operate a generator **safely**, it should be used in a dry area, refueled only when it's turned off and stored properly with a generator cover when not in use.

## Charge electronics fully ahead of the storm

Once the power goes out, you could find yourself out of power for a very long time depending on the severity of the storm.

As you prep for a hurricane ahead of time, make sure to charge all your devices, **including your portable chargers**, laptops and phones.



### Goal Zero Sherpa 100PD Wireless Portable Power Bank

Keep your devices charged with this Reviewed-approved portable charger.

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at Amazon

Additionally, you'll want to ensure you have a healthy supply of **batteries** to use throughout hurricane season to keep your **flashlights** charged, as well as a radio to keep up with storm updates.

In a scenario of leaving your home for the duration of a storm, you'll want to know if your power went out while you were away and for how long. You can estimate how long your power is out by **putting a coin on top of a glass** of frozen water in your freezer before you depart. Upon your return, if the coin has frozen at the bottom of the glass, your food has been thawed for a dangerous amount of time and should be discarded.

## Invest in surge protection

Paradoxically, hurricanes also run the risk of providing your home with too much power in the form of an electrical surge. Electrical surges occur when lightning strikes an electrical system, overloading it with extra energy and causing damage such as combustion.

To avoid the effects of surges, you can use a **surge protector**, which redistributes the extra electricity into the ground instead of into your electronics.

If you can't get one or choose not to, you can always just unplug all unnecessary appliances and electronics to avoid the risk of damage via an electrical surge.

Another thing to keep in mind during an intense storm is that electricity and water make a deadly combination. Flooded homes should not be entered due to the risk of electrocution.



### Surge Protector Power Strip

Protect your appliances with a surge protector.

**BUY NOW**  
at Amazon

## Stock up on supplies

Hurricanes can turn vital tasks such as eating and drinking into a challenge.

### Ensure a fresh water supply

Flooding from a hurricane can cut off or contaminate **tap water**. It's important to check for any water advisories from your local officials as having tap water available doesn't mean it's necessarily safe to use.

If you don't have a way to access information from local government officials, whether through a government site or social media, you should assume the water isn't safe to drink. The **FDA advises against** drinking flood water, so it's best to stock up on bottled water in advance of a superstorm.

As a general rule of hurricane preparedness, a three-day supply of water for each person in your household (or one gallon per day for each person) should be sufficient to last through a storm. However, if you have enough space, the **FDA recommends** that you buy a two-week supply, as it allows for more flexibility.



## Pure Life, Purified Water

Stock up on bottled water.

**BUY NOW**  
at Amazon

## Prep with non-perishable foods

As far as food goes, you'll want to buy non-perishable food options when prepping for a storm, as these foods will remain good even if they're not refrigerated. Non-perishables include granola, cereal and **canned goods** so long as you have a **can opener**.

Safe environment permitting, food can be prepared with a portable stove. Also referred to as a camping stove, a portable stove is essentially an individual burner. These stoves come in various styles and run on various fuels such as kerosene to ensure they are operable without a source of electricity.

You can cook myriad items with these stoves, such as canned food, eggs and noodles. Be mindful of your burner's size, as it limits what you can and cannot cook on it.

If you do decide to use a camp stove or fireplace to prepare your food amid a storm, be aware that you increase your **risk of carbon monoxide poisoning**. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas created by combustion that can be fatal if ingested enough.

As such, camp stoves, like portable generators, should only be used outside. Additionally, they should not be operated unattended or used with heavy pots that might risk tipping the camp stove over.



## Coleman Classic 1-Burner Butane Stove

A camp stove is perfect for cooking canned food.

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at Amazon

## Protect your belongings



Credit: Reviewed / Getty Images / Tuned\_In

Keep important documents around your home in a safe secure location like a waterproof, airtight safe.

Along with the potential for destruction to your home comes the possibility of damage to your personal property. There are some ways to increase your chances of saving your valuables from destruction.

Clothes, linen and other compressible belongings can be stored in vacuum-sealed bags.



## 20 Pack Vacuum Storage Bags

Protect your clothes with this vacuum bag.

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at Amazon

Larger, more rigid items can go in **trash bags** if possible.



## Hefty Ultra Strong Tall Kitchen Trash Bags

Use trash bags to store larger belongings.

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at Amazon

Important documents such as wills, medical information, and passports (as well as a hard drive with copies of important documents, if stored digitally) should be secured in a **waterproof, airtight safe** to protect them from possible flood damage.



## SentrySafe Waterproof and Fireproof Alloy Steel Digital Safe Box

Keep your more fragile belongings safe with this safe.

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at Amazon

Furniture and key appliances, such as couches and refrigerators that are at flood level can be raised using things like cinder blocks a few inches so that if the water is low enough, it will pass harmlessly underneath.



## 8-in W x 8-in H x 16-in L Concrete Block Cored Concrete Block

You can use cinder blocks to raise your furniture.

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Careful preparation mitigates the chance of a hurricane getting inside and damaging your property, but if nothing else, hurricanes are known for their unpredictability. Look over your **finances** to see if you can mitigate any damage a hurricane could potentially cause to your home and belongings.

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