

Disaster Planning: After the Storm

When preparing for a hurricane or other natural disaster, plan on being self-reliant for at least three to seven days after the event has passed. You might be without important services, such as electricity, water, sewer, cell phone service, and local businesses.

Make plans and take appropriate steps across four distinct categories:

Post-Storm Safety

Re-Entering your home

Clean-up, Repairs and Avoiding Fraud

Generators

Post-Storm Safety

Keeping you and your family safe is the highest priority. Yet, many accidents happen *after* a storm has passed. Please use caution and follow county directives. Remember to:

- **Be Patient!**
- Stay tuned to your local media for the most current emergency information.
- Stay hydrated.
- Avoid downed or dangling power lines.
- Supervise your children.
- Avoid using candles. Use battery-operated lanterns and flashlights.
- Avoid driving, as road debris can puncture tires. If you do drive, treat any intersection with inoperable traffic signals as a four-way stop.
- If going outdoors, wear appropriate safety equipment, such as heavy boots, long-sleeved shirts, pants, hat and sunscreen.
- Do not wade in flood waters.
- Be aware that snakes, insects, alligators etc. will head to high ground.
- Keep your pets on a leash while outside.

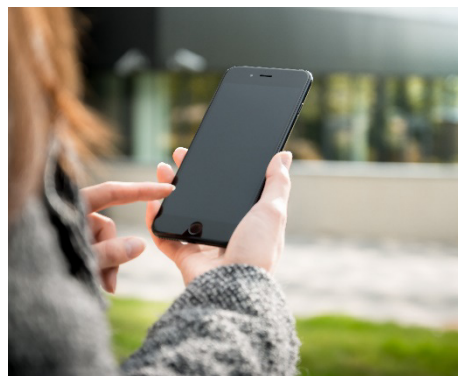


- If possible, hire professionals to remove large downed trees or limbs. Use **extreme caution** if using a chainsaw.

Re-Entering your Home

After the storm, you and your family will not be allowed to return to your home or business until search and rescue operations are complete and safety hazards, such as downed power lines, are cleared.

- **Be Patient!**
- Contact family and friends so they know you are safe.
- Check for damages before entering your home.
- Use no open flames, like matches, until you know there are no gas leaks.
- If you suspect a gas leak, immediately leave your home, and call 911 and your natural gas provider.



- Have a valid ID, which contains your address.
- If you need to return to your business, have a valid picture ID and documents indicating proof of ownership.
- If your home has been flooded, contact licensed electricians to inspect your home before you turn on any appliance.

Clean-up, Repairs and Avoiding Fraud

Remember, anyone can claim to be a general contractor or electrician. So, creating a list of licensed and insured workers before a storm is key to avoiding fraud. Be cautious of anyone coming to your home uninvited and offering services and repairs.

Here are some basic guidelines:

- Know your homeowner's insurance policy.
- Use your pre-storm home and contents inventory to assess storm damages.
- Take photos of damage, before repairs.
- If needed, make temporary repairs to avoid further damage.
- Obtain written estimates for repair/replacement work.
- Do not pay in full before work begins.
- Never pay in cash.
- Keep all receipts, for a "paper trail."
- Hire only licensed, insured contractors.
- Contractors, not you, must pull permits, required for any kind of demolition, permanent repair, reconstruction, and roofing.
- If you suspect fraud, contact the State of Florida Consumer Fraud Hotline at (866) 966-7226.

Generators

Generators can provide power to your home during outages, but use caution when operating. Carbon monoxide poisoning is a frequent killer! So, always keep generators outdoors, in a well-ventilated area and away from windows, doors or vents that might allow fumes to come indoors.

Other precautions to remember:

- Make sure your generator type and size suit your home's needs.
- Stationary or whole-house generators can operate from a gas utility line or tank, but require professional installation.
- If using a gas generator, store fuel outside in approved containers.
- Turn off and cool the generator before refueling.
- Check the generator's oil each time you refuel.
- Keep a fire extinguisher near your generator.
- **Never connect a portable generator to building wiring.** Plug appliances directly into the generator.

Remember, storms can be unpredictable and, of course, dangerous. Stay tuned to your local news for important updates, and take the time to prepare yourself, your family and your business before the threat of a storm.



For more information, contact UF/IFAS Extension Sarasota County by phone at 941-861-5000 or email to sarasota@ifas.ufl.edu.

An Equal Opportunity Institution. UF/IFAS Extension, University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension. Sarasota County prohibits discrimination in all services, programs or activities. View the complete policy at scgov.net/ADA.