

Preparing for a Hurricane

Five Tips to Protect Yourself, Your Family and Your Property

Hurricane season starts June 1 and runs through November 30. To prepare for a hurricane and other disasters, the I.I.I. recommends the following five tips.

1. Buy enough insurance

- Get enough insurance to rebuild your home and to replace all of your personal belongings. If you have made a major alteration or improvement to your home, or you have made significant purchases, notify your insurance agent so that the increased value is reflected in your policy.
- Find out how much coverage you have for Additional Living Expenses (ALE). Additional living expenses coverage pays for the additional costs of living away from home, such as hotel bills and restaurant meals, while your house is being repaired or rebuilt. If you rent out part of your home, it would also replace lost income for the time you are not able to collect rent. Many policies provide coverage for 20 percent of the amount of insurance you have on your house and may be for a specified time period. Additional coverage is generally available for an extra premium.

2. Get the right type of policy

- Ask about flood insurance. Flood damage is not covered under standard home insurance policies. Insurance is available from the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and can be purchased from the same agent or broker who provided your home or renters insurance. Additional information on flood insurance can be found at www.floodsmart.gov [1]. Excess flood insurance is also available from some private insurance companies if you need more coverage than the \$250,000 for property and \$100,000 on contents that the NFIP provides.
- Look into getting a guaranteed or extended replacement policy for the structure of your home. Extended replacement cost coverage pays a certain amount above the policy limit to replace a damaged home?generally 20 to 25 percent. A guaranteed replacement cost policy pays to rebuild your home regardless of cost. Both policies are designed to protect you in the event that after a major disaster the high demand for building contractors and materials pushes up the normal cost of reconstruction.
- Ask about replacement cost coverage for your belongings. When insuring your possessions, you have two coverage choices. One is actual cash value, which replaces your possessions less depreciation. The other is replacement cost coverage, which replaces your property in today?s dollars?without a deduction for depreciation. It costs about 10 percent more, but provides more extensive coverage.

3. Create a Home Inventory

A home inventory will help ensure that you have purchased enough insurance to replace your personal possessions. It can also speed the claims process and substantiate losses for income tax purposes. A detailed home inventory is also helpful should you need to apply for disaster aid.

To make creating a home inventory easier, the I.I.I. provides free Web-based software at KnowYourStuff.org

[2]. Know Your Stuff allows you to organize easily and list your possessions, as well as add digital photographs of your valuables and upload scanned receipts. The program provides free, secure storage of your inventory on Amazon Web Services. Storing your inventory online gives you the ability to access it from any computer in the event your own computer is damaged or destroyed.

4. Prepare an Evacuation Plan

Plan ahead and practice so that your evacuation is safe, smooth and fast. In an emergency you may have only a few minutes to gather your important papers and leave your home, possibly for good. Have the following ready to go:

- Medicines, prescriptions, comfort items and a change of clothes.
- Emergency supplies such as flashlights, radio, batteries and water.
- Computer hard drive or laptop.
- Photographs.
- Insurance policies; birth and marriage certificates; wills; deeds; financial information such as account numbers, recent tax returns, stocks, bonds and other negotiable certificates; driver's licenses and other personal identification.

The I.I.I.'s free *Know Your Plan* [3] mobile app can help you and your family devise a blueprint to protect lives and property. *Know Your Plan* offers preloaded checklists to alert and educate users about vital mitigation steps; you can also customize checklists to suit your own specific needs. Other tools include programmable calendars to set task completion dates; sections for contact lists, notes and other information; and the ability to share checklists with family and friends.

5. Hurricane-proof Your Home

- Install storm shutters to protect your windows or use plywood panels, which can be nailed to window frames when a storm approaches.
- Make sure exterior doors have at least three hinges and a dead bolt lock that is at least one-inch long. Sliding glass doors should be made of tempered glass and covered with shutters or plywood.
- Replace old garage doors and tracks with a door that is approved for both wind pressure and impact protection. Wind coming into your home through an opening this large poses grave problems for the rest of your home—especially your roof.
- Seal outside wall openings such as vents, outdoor electrical outlets, garden hose bibs and locations where cables or pipes go through the wall to prevent water penetration by using a high quality urethane-based caulk.
- Prepare your yard by removing all outdoor furniture, lawn items, planters and other materials that could be picked up by high winds. Trim trees and shrubbery and remove weak branches on plants and trees.

6. Hurricane Preparedness for Business Owners (Tips from IBHS)

Prepare a business continuity plan. Having an emergency plan in the event of a natural disaster will help your business quickly recover.

- Verify employee, supplier and vendor contact information so you can check on their well being and communicate next steps for resuming normal business operations. Use the downtime before the storm hits to update your supplier and vendor contact information, as well as other important contacts, such as your bank or insurance carriers.
- Identify an alternative site for business operations should your facility be unavailable following the storm. Be sure the location is equipped with any special supplies or equipment that will be needed to continue business operations.
- Secure your vital records and data and be sure all your important information is backed up and accessible should you not have access to your computers or network.

For more information on steps to take to protect your home, go to the Web site of the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety [4].

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Source URL: <http://www.iii.org/article/preparing-hurricane>

Links:

[1] <http://www.floodsmart.gov>

[2] <http://www.iii.org/www.KnowYourStuff.org>

[3] <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/your-plan/id537737839>

[4] <http://www.disastersafety.org/>