

The best time to prepare for a flood or other natural disaster, such as a tropical storm or a hurricane, is before it happens. Knowing what to do, what to have and when to take action is your best protection. Take the first step by creating your family's preparedness plan. A Family Flood Preparedness Plan helps guide your family's response and actions in case of a flood or other natural disaster.

What to do Before, During and After a Flood

BEFORE

- Keep your flood insurance policy current. Homeowners insurance does not cover damage from flooding. To learn more about flood insurance visit www.floodsmart.gov.
- Learn about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's schools or daycares and other places where family members spend time.
- Pick a place to meet outside of your neighborhood if you cannot return home. Make sure all family members know this location.
- Know and prepare for the special needs of infants, elderly, ill or disabled individuals. Plan to care for your pets. Most emergency shelters do not allow animals.
- Create an emergency contact card with all important contact information. Post the card by your telephone and share the information with all family members.
- Show each family member how to turn off the electricity to your residence at the main breaker or switch.
- Prepare and maintain a Family Emergency Kit. Replace items as necessary.
- Practice your plan with all family members.

DURING

- Monitor local media for weather updates and instructions.
- Move emergency supplies and valuables to a high, dry place in your residence.
- Make sure you have an adequate water supply. Fill bathtubs and all available containers with water.
- Safely turn off the electricity to your home at the main breaker or switch. If you were not able to turn off the electricity before water entered your home, do not turn it off. Get out of the water.
- If power is lost, turn off major appliances to reduce a power "surge" when electricity is restored.
- Avoid open flames as a source of light.
- If water floods your house remain in place. Do NOT try to walk or drive in the floodwater. Await rescue from emergency officials.

AFTER

- Watch for and inform local authorities about health and safety issues, such as downed power lines and washed-out roads.

- If you are returning to your home after evacuating, walk carefully around the outside checking for loose power lines, gas leaks and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer.
- Do NOT enter the house if you smell gas, if floodwater surrounds your home, or if your home was damaged by fire and the authorities have not declared it safe. If you smell gas, leave the house and call **CenterPoint Energy** at **713-659-2111** or **800-752-8036**.
- If you feel safe entering your home, use a flashlight to check the interior. Do not light matches or turn on electrical switches.
- If the water rose above the electrical outlets in your home, contact a licensed electrician before restoring power.
- Allow electrical appliances and equipment submerged in water to dry thoroughly for one week. Have them checked by a qualified repair person before turning them on.
- Take photos to document property damage.
- During clean-up, keep children and pets out of the affected area until you are finished. Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves and goggles.
- Remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected, such as mattresses, rugs, carpeting and carpet padding, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, books, wall coverings and most paper products.
- Remove spoiled food from your refrigerator.
- Place a tarp on any damaged or exposed roofs to prevent further damage.
- Before hiring a repair contractor, check qualifications and references. Get written estimates. Keep all receipts. Be wary of people driving through neighborhoods offering home repair services.

Helpful Resources

Rainfall Information

Harris County Flood Warning System
www.HarrisCountyFWS.org

Weather

National Weather Service
www.srh.noaa.gov/hgx/

Disaster Assistance

American Red Cross,
Greater Houston Chapter
www.houstonredcross.org 713-526-8300

Federal Emergency
Management Agency, Region-vi
www.fema.gov/regionvi
1-800-427-4661

Flood Insurance

National Flood Insurance Program
www.floodsmart.gov 1-888-724-6797

Texas Department of Insurance
www.tdi.state.tx.us 1-800-578-4677

Texas Windstorm Insurance Association
www.twia.org 1800-788-8247

WHEN FLOODING IS IMMINENT

1

Put your family preparedness plan into action.

2

Contact your family members and confirm plan of action and alternatives.

3

Confirm your family emergency kit is complete and ready.

4

Move emergency supplies and valuables to a high, dry place in your residence.

5

Locate and put pets in a safe place.

6

Make sure you have an adequate water supply in case service is cut off.

7

If you can do so safely, turn off the electricity at the breaker before water enters your residence.

8

If you can do so safely, move vehicles to higher ground.

9

Your safest option is to stay put. However, if you must evacuate to a safe location or a shelter, take your emergency supply kit and tell your family check-in contact you're leaving. Don't drive through flooded streets.

REMEMBER

When faced with a flooding situation: **STAY PUT** wherever you are, unless your life is threatened or you are ordered to evacuate.

BE PREPARED! Family Emergency Kit

Use this checklist to prepare your Family Emergency Kit and be prepared for the next flood, tropical storm or hurricane.

Home & Property Recovery

- Flood Insurance – this is a separate policy, as most homeowners insurance policies do not cover flood damage
- Fire extinguisher – small canister (ABC type)
- Work gloves
- Plastic sheeting/bags to cover electronics
- Hammer and nails or construction stapler
- Duct tape to secure coverings
- Utility knife
- Pliers and/or wrench to turn off gas and water, if necessary

Personal Health & Safety

- Hurricane evacuation map and area map for shelter locations
- First aid kit for your home and cars with items recommended by the American Red Cross
- Prescription and over-the-counter medications
- Important telephone numbers
- Moist towelettes, toilet paper, soap and detergent
- Inventory of valuable household items
- A waterproof, portable container; for family documents, including:
 - Birth, marriage and death certificates
 - Wills, insurance policies, deeds, contracts
 - Passports, social security cards, immunization records
 - Bank and credit account numbers and contact information

Food & Water

- Water – one gallon daily per person (and pet) for three to seven days – two quarts for drinking/ two quarts for food preparation and cleaning
- Food – enough for three to seven days, including non-perishable packaged or canned food (meat, soup and fruit) and juices; special food for infants, the elderly, or those with food allergies or illness
- Non-electric can opener
- Camping stove
- Cooking tools/fuel
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Paper plates, plastic cups and utensils
- Pet food

Clothing & Bedding

- Rain gear – including umbrella, rain coat and boots
- Sturdy shoes or work boots
- Clothing for wet and/or dirty conditions
- Blankets or sleeping bags

Tools & Supplies

- Fully-gassed vehicles
- Fuel for generator
- Cell phone with car charger or extra battery
- Telephone with a cord
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Battery-powered flashlights or camping lanterns
- Battery-powered radio
- Batteries
- Mosquito repellent
- Plastic garbage bags, ties
- Needles, thread
- Books, games, paper, pencils

The mission of the Harris County Flood Control District is to provide flood damage reduction projects that work, with appropriate regard for community and natural values. The Flood Control District widens and deepens bayous and creeks, excavates large stormwater detention basins, implements voluntary home buyout programs and maintains more than 2,500 miles (about the distance from Los Angeles to New York City) of waterways. To learn more about the Flood Control District visit www.hcfcd.org.

In addition, the Flood Control District has a team of dedicated personnel that work during severe weather events to advise local officials and the public of potential flooding. It also operates and maintains the Harris County Flood Warning System – a network of 133 rainfall and stream level gages across Harris County that monitor rainfall amounts and water levels in the bayous of 22 watersheds. To monitor rainfall and stream levels in the bayou closest to you, visit www.HarrisCountyFWS.org.