

Hurricane Preparedness Tips

Hurricane readiness should begin before a storm hits. Residents are encouraged to prepare now for Tropical Storm Season, so lives can be saved and illness prevented.

Preparing a Disaster Kit

Stock your home with supplies that may be needed during an emergency. At a minimum, these supplies should include:

- Several clean containers for water, large enough for a 3-5 day supply of water (about five gallons for each person).
- A 3-5 day supply of non-perishable food.
- A first aid kit and manual.
- A battery-powered radio, flashlights, and extra batteries.
- Sleeping bags or extra blankets.
- Water-purifying supplies, such as chlorine or iodine tablets or unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach.
- Prescription medicines and special medical needs.
- Baby food, prepared formula, diapers, and other baby supplies.
- Disposable cleaning cloths, such as “baby wipes” for the whole family to use in case bathing facilities are not available.
- Personal hygiene items: soap, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, etc.
- An emergency kit for your car with food, flares, booster cables, maps, tools, a first aid kit, and fire extinguisher.

For more information on disaster supply kits, visit the MSDH website at HealthyMS.com/kit.

Food Safety

Due to power loss, food may not be safe to eat during and after a hurricane. Safe water for drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene includes bottled, boiled, or treated water.

- Throw away food that may have been exposed to flood or storm water.
- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.
- Throw away foods (including meat, poultry, fish, and eggs) that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit (F) for two hours or more.
- Throw away canned foods that are bulging, opened or damaged. Thawed food that contains ice crystals or is 40 degrees F or below can be refrozen or cooked.
- Food containers with screw-caps, snap-lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, snap-open, and home canned foods should be discarded if they have been exposed to floodwater, because they cannot be disinfected.
- While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible.
- Never place any type of food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood.
- Thoroughly wash your hands before preparing or eating food, after using the bathroom or changing a diaper, after handling uncooked food, after playing with a pet, after handling garbage, after tending to someone who is sick or injured, after blowing your nose and after coughing or sneezing.

Drinking Water Safety

Safe drinking water includes bottled, boiled or treated water. Remember these general rules concerning water for drinking and cooking:

- Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush your teeth, wash or prepare food or make ice.
- Tap water may be used for showering, baths, shaving or washing, as long as one does not swallow the water or allow it in eyes or mouth. Parents should supervise children to make sure water is not ingested, and caregivers should supervise disabled individuals for the same reason. Those with recent surgical wounds, who have a chronic illness or are immunosuppressed, should consider using bottled or boiled water for bathing until their boil water notice is lifted.
- Boiling water kills harmful bacteria and parasites. Bringing water to a rolling boil for one minute will kill most organisms.
- Water may be treated with chlorine or iodine tablets or by mixing eight drops (1/8 teaspoon) of unscented, ordinary household chlorine bleach (5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water. Mix the solution thoroughly, and let stand for about 30 minutes. However, this treatment will not kill parasitic organisms.