

# How to Prepare for Hurricane Season

Disaster Preparedness Tips from the St. Petersburg Housing Authority

June 2011



With the start of this year's hurricane season on June 1, the St. Petersburg Housing Authority (SPHA) is encouraging our residents to prepare for potential emergency situations. While events like hurricanes, floods and fires are frightening to consider, having a disaster plan in place can help families react more calmly to the unexpected and can reduce the loss of life and damage to property in the event of an emergency.

## ***Creating a Disaster Plan:***

- Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire and severe weather to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- Decide if you will evacuate in the event of a hurricane, tornado or severe weather and plan where you will go – a shelter or a family member or friend's home.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets, if you have them.
- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. Explain what to do in each case.
- Pick two places to meet:
  1. Right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire.
  2. Outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home. Everyone must know the address and phone number.
- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your contact's phone number.
- Plan how you will work with your neighbors in a time of disaster and determine, in advance, how you could help neighbors who have special needs, such as elderly or disabled persons.

**For more information on how to prepare for an emergency, please visit the following websites:**

<http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/>

<http://www.redcross.org/>



## ***Your Disaster Preparedness Checklist:***

- Keep important family records in a waterproof, fireproof, portable container, including wills; insurance policies; passports, social security cards and immunization records; credit card information; an inventory of valuable household goods; important telephone numbers; and birth, marriage and death certificates.
- Prepare a disaster supplies kit in an easy-to-carry container, including a seven-day supply of water and food for each family member, sanitation supplies, and a two-week supply of medicines your family may need, such as insulin or heart tablets. If you have a baby, make sure to include baby foods, diapers, wipes, etc.
- If you must evacuate to a shelter, consider bringing the following supplies from home to make your stay more comfortable: bedding, extra clothing, cooking and eating utensils, general emergency tools, reading materials and games or hobbies that will help you pass the time.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, etc.).
- Show each family member how and when to turn off the utilities (water, gas, and electricity) at the main switches.
- Get training from the fire department for each family member on how to use the fire extinguisher and show them where it's kept.
- Install a smoke detector on each level of your home, especially near bedrooms. Test monthly and change the batteries twice each year.
- Check your home for any hazards, such as frayed electrical cords, flammable or combustible materials, fire hazards or items that can shift or fall like hanging items or bookcases.
- Learn first aid and CPR.
- Determine the best escape routes from your home. Find two ways out of each room.
- Find the safe places in your home, such as interior rooms with no windows.
- Know the location of the nearest shelters to your home and how to get there. If you take public transportation, know that regular bus service may stop as a storm approaches.
- Make sure your renters insurance is up to date

***Sources: American Red Cross and University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service websites***

***For more information about SPHA, please visit our website at [www.stpeteha.org](http://www.stpeteha.org)  
or call us at 727-323-3171.***