

# HURRICANE INFORMATION



As a coastal state, Georgia is at risk for hurricanes that form in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico. Hurricanes can cause catastrophic damage even hundreds of miles inland, so every resident needs to understand their risks and should plan what to do in the event of an evacuation.

Hurricanes, known also as typhoons, are severe tropical storms with heavy rains and intense winds, which blow in a large circle around a center known as the "eye". If the eye, or storm center, passes directly overhead, there will be a lull in the wind lasting from a few minutes to half an hour. At the other side of the "eye", the winds will return rapidly to hurricane force and blow from the opposite direction.

Hurricanes are unpredictable in nature, and depending on their intensity, they can cause a great deal of damage to an area. Hurricanes can produce tornadoes and cause severe flash flooding. Regardless of their size, hurricanes should be respected! Hurricanes can be dangerous killers. Learning the hurricane warning messages and planning ahead can reduce the chances of injury or major property damage.

## Hurricane Basics

- ✚ **WHAT:** Hurricanes are massive storm systems that form over the water and move toward land. Threats from hurricanes include high winds, heavy rainfall, storm surge, coastal and inland flooding, rip currents, and tornadoes. These large storms are called typhoons in the North Pacific Ocean and cyclones in other parts of the world.
- ✚ **WHEN:** The Atlantic hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30, with the peak occurring between mid-August and late October.
- ✚ **WHERE:** Each year, many parts of the United States experience heavy rains, strong winds, floods, and coastal storm surges from tropical storms and hurricanes. Affected areas include all Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal areas, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Hawaii, parts of the Southwest, the Pacific Coast, and the U.S. territories in the Pacific.

## KNOW THE TERMS

Familiarize yourself with these terms to help identify a hurricane hazard:

**Tropical Cyclone:** A warm-core non-frontal synoptic-scale cyclone, originating over tropical or subtropical waters, with organized deep convection and a closed surface wind circulation about a well-defined center. Once formed, a tropical cyclone is maintained by the extraction of heat energy from the ocean at high temperature and heat export at the low temperatures of the upper troposphere.

**Tropical Depression:** A tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface wind speed (using the U.S. 1-minute average) is 38 mph (33 knot) or less.

**Tropical Storm:** A tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface wind speed (using the U.S. 1-minute average) ranges from 39 mph (34 knots) to 73 mph (63 knots).

**Hurricane:** A tropical cyclone in which the maximum sustained surface wind (using the U.S. 1-minute average) is 74 mph (64 knots) or more.

**Storm Surge:** An abnormal rise in sea level accompanying a hurricane or other intense storm, and whose height is the difference between the observed level of the sea surface and the level that would have occurred in the absence of the cyclone. Storm surge is usually estimated by subtracting the normal or astronomic high tide from the observed storm tide. Storm surge can reach heights well over 20 feet and can span hundreds of miles of coastline.

**Hurricane Warning:** An announcement that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are expected somewhere within the specified area. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane warning is issued 36 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.

**Hurricane Watch:** An announcement that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are possible within the specified area. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane watch is issued 48 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.

**Tropical Storm Warning:** An announcement that tropical storm conditions (sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph) are expected somewhere within the specified area within 36 hours.

**Tropical Storm Watch:** An announcement that tropical storm conditions (sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph) is possible within the specified area within 48 hours.

**Short Term Watches and Warnings:** These watches/warnings provide detailed information about specific hurricane threats, such as flash floods and tornadoes.

#### **DURING A HURRICANE WATCH**

- ✚ Fill up your car with gas.
- ✚ Secure buildings.
- ✚ Review evacuation plan.
- ✚ Listen to a battery-operated radio for hurricane reports.
- ✚ Check your family's emergency -supplies.
- ✚ Bring in outdoor objects (i.e. toys, garden tools).
- ✚ Turn refrigerator and freezer to coldest settings.
- ✚ Secure outdoor objects, which cannot be brought inside (i.e. boats, lawnmower)
- ✚ Store drinking water in clean bathtubs, jugs, bottles, and cooking utensils.

#### **DURING A HURRICANE WARNING**

- ✚ Listen to a radio or television for official instructions.
- ✚ If in a mobile home, check tie downs and evacuate immediately
- ✚ Store valuables and personal papers in a waterproof container

- ✚ Stay inside, away from windows, skylights, and glass doors.
- ✚ Keep a supply of flashlights and extra batteries handy.
- ✚ Avoid open flames, such as candles and kerosene lamps, as a source of light.
- ✚ If power is lost, turn off major appliances to reduce power "surge" when electricity is restored.

### **IF EVACUATION IS NECESSARY**

- ✚ Lock up home and leave.
- ✚ Take blankets and sleeping bags to shelter.
- ✚ Tell someone outside of the storm area where you are going.
- ✚ Bring pre-assembled emergency supplies and warm protective clothing.
- ✚ Leave as soon as possible. Avoid flooded roads and watch for washed-out bridges.
- ✚ Secure your home by unplugging appliances and turning off electricity and the main water valve.

### **ADEQUATE DISASTER SUPPLIES**

- ✚ Flashlight and extra batteries
- ✚ Portable, battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- ✚ First aid kit and manual
- ✚ Emergency food and water
- ✚ Non-electric can opener
- ✚ Essential medicines
- ✚ Cash and credit cards
- ✚ Sturdy shoes

### **PROTECTION FOR YOUR HOME - LONG BEFORE STORM**

Permanent shutters are the best protection. A lower-cost approach is to put up plywood panels. Use 1/2-inch plywood-marine plywood is best cut to fit each window. Remember to mark which board fits, which window. Pre-drill holes every 18 inches for screws, do this long before the storm. Trim back dead or weak branches from trees. Check into flood insurance. You can find out about the National Flood Insurance Program through your local insurance agent or emergency management office. There is normally a 30-day waiting period before a new policy becomes effective. Homeowners policies do not cover damage from the flooding that accompanies a hurricane.

### **FAMILY EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION PLAN**

In case family members are separated from one another during a disaster (a real possibility during the day when adults are at work and children are at school), have a plan for getting back together. Ask an out-of-state relative or friend to serve as the "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure everyone in the family knows the name, address, and phone number of the contact person.

### **POST STORM ACTIVITIES**

- ✚ Enter your home with caution.
- ✚ Give first aid where appropriate.
- ✚ Help injured or trapped persons.



- ✚ Check refrigerated foods for spoilage.
- ✚ Use telephone only for emergency calls.
- ✚ Stay tuned to local radio for information.
- ✚ Do not move seriously injured persons. Call for help.
- ✚ Open windows and doors to ventilate and dry your home.
- ✚ Return home only after authorities advised that it is safe to do so
- ✚ Avoid loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately.
- ✚ Beware of snakes, insects, and animals driven to higher ground by floodwater.
- ✚ Take pictures of the damage, both to the house and its contents and for insurance claims.
- ✚ Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges.

## **INSPECTING UTILITIES IN A DAMAGED HOME**

Check for gas leaks-If you smell gas, hear blowing, or hissing noise, open a window, and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, a professional must turn it back on. Look for electrical system damage--if you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, call an electrician first for advice. Check for sewage and water lines damage--if you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using the water from the tap. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

**HELPFUL INFORMATION ARE ALSO AVAILABLE ON YOUR PHONE OR TABLETS...JUST GO TO YOUR PLAY STORE AND DOWN LOAD THE APPS FOR YOUR PHONE.**

**\*\*RED CROSS\* FEMA\*READYGA\***

## ✚ **LISTEN TO LOCAL OFFICIALS**

Learn about the emergency plans that have been established in your area by your Liberty County Emergency Management agency at (912) 368-2201. In any emergency, always listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials.

***Liberty County Emergency Management Agency (912) 368-2201***

