

AFTER THE STORM

What To Expect

After a major disaster event such as a hurricane, survivors may find themselves under a hot sun without power, water, restaurants or grocery stores, or any of the other services and businesses they relied on. Immediate response may not be possible, so residents must be prepared to be self-reliant for AT LEAST 3 DAYS. Here is how you can help:

Re-entry

- Be patient. Access to affected areas will be controlled, and you will not be able to return to your home until Search and Rescue operations are complete and until safety hazards—such as downed trees and power lines—are cleared. It may take up to three days for emergency crews to reach your neighborhood. Further, it may take two to four weeks or longer before utilities are restored.
- Stay tuned to your local radio stations for advice and instructions about emergency medical aid, food, and other forms of assistance.
- Have a valid form of identification. Security operations will include checkpoints. Valid identifications with your current local address will be required.
- Avoid driving. Roads will be covered with debris that will puncture your tires!
- Do not sightsee, especially at night. You may be mistaken for a looter.

For Your Safety

Historically, more people have been killed in the cleanup after a disaster than are killed by the disaster itself. **Debris removal and clean up is a VERY dangerous activity.**

- Avoid downed or dangling utility wires. Fallen wires may have “electrified” metal fences.
- Be especially careful when cutting or clearing fallen trees. They may shift, crushing you or have power lines entangled in them.
- Beware of snakes, insects, or animals driven to higher ground by floods.
- Enter your home with caution. Open windows and doors to ventilate and dry your home.
- If there has been flooding, have an electrician inspect your home or office before turning on the breaker.
- Be careful with fire. Do not strike a match until you are sure there are no breaks in gas lines. Avoid candles, and use battery-operated flashlights and lanterns instead.
- Keep grills for cooking outdoors and in a well-ventilated area.
- NEVER use a generator indoors, in the garage or carport, or in any other enclosed or partially enclosed space!
- Assess and photograph or video damage to your home and its contents.
- Use your telephone for emergencies only to keep all lines open for emergency communications.

Repairs

- Make temporary repairs to correct safety hazards and minimize further damage. This may include covering holes in the roof, walls, or windows and also bracing or removing debris.
- Hire only licensed contractors to do repairs. Check with the Building Department to ensure that the contractor you hire is licensed.

If you hire a contractor, do not pull the permits for them! This is an indication that s/he may not be properly licensed!

Portable Generators

One of the most relied upon utilities is electricity. When the electricity fails, most of the modern conveniences that we rely upon daily also fail. Power outages dramatically affect our comfort and health to the point that many people purchase emergency generators. When used properly, generators can restore some semblance of normalcy. When used carelessly or in violation of the manufacturers instructions, generators kill.

- NEVER USE A GENERATOR IN AN ENCLOSED OR PARTIALLY ENCLOSED SPACE. Colorless, odorless, deadly carbon monoxide (CO) gas is given off in the exhaust of any running fuel-powered engine. CO kills silently and quickly, with its victims never knowing that they were being poisoned. Many times, CO poisoning from running engines will kill the entire family living in the home.
- Portable home generators can operate appliances and fans. Sizes range from 750 watts, which can run a fan and a light; up to 8,000 watts or more, which can run most of a house with the exception of the air conditioner.
- NEVER connect a portable generator to building wiring. ***This could “backfeed” the power lines and injure or kill neighbors or electrical crews!*** Place the generator outdoors in a well-ventilated area, start it, and then plug appliances directly into the generator. Do not forget to check the oil every time you add gas, and conserve fuel by alternating appliances. For example, keep the refrigerator cool by supplying power eight hours per day, then unplug and power something else.
- Make sure that you GROUND a generator! Failure to do so will negate the built-in electrical safety features of the tools or appliances that you plug in. Since yards and buildings are typically flooded or wet, the risk of accidental electrocution while using generator powered electrical equipment is dramatically increased when that generator is ungrounded! Read the manufacturers instructions for the proper method of electrically grounding your generator BEFORE you use it.
- ALWAYS follow the manufacturers instructions for safe operation and use of a generator.
- NEVER REFUEL ANY RUNNING GASOLINE ENGINE, INCLUDING A GENERATOR!

Clean-Up Precautions

- Call professionals to remove large, up-rooted trees and bushes.
- **Always read and heed the manufacturers directions when using power tools!**
- Do NOT use a chainsaw unless you have been properly trained in its use and safe practices. Do not use it for the first time to clear your yard . . . and always heed safety warnings, and know when and where the trees or branches you cut are going to fall!
- Always wear proper safety equipment, such as heavy gloves, safety goggles, heavy boots, long-sleeve shirts, long pants, and tie back long hair. The use of chainsaw chaps is highly recommended.
- Drink plenty of fluids, rest frequently, and ask for help when you need it.
- Lift with your legs and not with your back.
- Do not burn trash.
- Further, be especially wary of downed electrical wires, and be extremely careful when using a ladder.