

Start Hurricane Season Well Prepared with a Good Plan

As hurricane season looms ahead of us, Pasco Sheriff's Office wants to remind citizens to prepare well in advance of the storm to help ensure your safety. Simple steps taken now can help not only your family, but first responders in a storm. Atlantic Hurricane Season begins on June 1 and runs through the end of November. Keeping your hurricane kit and plan up-to-date is a smart idea before the storm arrives.

Staying prepared throughout hurricane season will help provide a sense of calm before a storm threatens our area. Build an emergency kit and keep it stocked throughout the storm season. Have bottled water and non-perishable food in your emergency kit so you can avoid busy stores. Additionally, make sure your household has a hurricane evacuation plan and knows where to go in the event of an evacuation. Ensure your car's gas tank and any propane tanks are above half full. Test generators monthly to confirm they're working properly. Lastly, review insurance policies and have a copies easily accessible and stored in a waterproof container.

Once a storm is on its way, assess your current supplies and be ready to activate your emergency plans. For those who need to evacuate, make arrangements early and have a backup plan. Consider particular accommodations for special needs such as disabilities, language barriers or pets before a storm. For example, not all shelters accept animals, so locating ones that do ahead of the storm will save you time during your evacuation. Plan accordingly for pets' needs by ensuring you have a pet carrier, plenty of food and medications for each animal.

Strengthen your home before a storm. Put away loose items that can act as debris during a storm, such as toys or furniture. Keep shrubs and trees trimmed throughout storm season and keep drains and gutters clear. For homes that experience flooding, know your closest sandbag distribution site, and obtain sandbags before a storm. Not only will these steps help keep your home safe, but those of your neighbors as well.

Knowing where to find emergency alerts and warnings before, during and after a storm can save a life. If a storm moves into our area, keep phones charged to ensure you can stay in touch in the event of an emergency. Pasco Sheriff's Office will also provide information on storms on our news site, News.PascoSheriff.com. Add a battery-powered radio with extra batteries in your emergency kit as well.

Before returning home after a storm moves through our area, be patient and allow time for first responders to assess if areas are safe. Only return from evacuations after the all-clear is given for your area, as roads may be closed or obstructed from debris. Stay clear of downed power lines, which may be live. Inspect homes with exterior damage assessments for safety issues. Never run generators, grills or other gas-operated appliances indoors.

The time to prepare for hurricane season is now. A few steps taken ahead of a storm can help keep you safe when a storm affects our area. Prepare now and stay safe this hurricane season!