

HIGHLANDS COUNTY

ALL-HAZARDS GUIDE

ARE YOU
PREPARED?



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OFFICIAL DISASTER PLANNING GUIDE
FOR HIGHLANDS COUNTY

HURRICANE TRACKING MAP INSIDE



Would you be ready if disaster struck?

What about your family? Or your business?

This foldable guide was developed by your county emergency management team and it will help you prepare your family and your property for a variety of potentially significant hazards that you may face here in Highlands County.

This guide is designed to answer questions you may have when preparing to deal with natural and man-made disasters. When these hazards occur, the consequences can be devastating if we have not properly prepared ourselves to protect our lives and property. Most of us realize the importance of preparing

for the more significant hazards like hurricanes, and many of these preparations are universal for all threats, including a family disaster plan and emergency supply kits. Take time to create your family or business disaster plan by using this guide and visit floridadisaster.org for more tips and information.

To obtain official information about our county, please visit highlandsfl.gov, and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram under Highlands County Board of County Commissioners and Highlands County Fire Rescue.

YOUR DISASTER PLAN

Prevent panic and confusion by making sure everyone knows where to go and what to do in an emergency, whether at home or at work.

KNOW YOUR RISK

Learn what disasters might affect your area. Prepare yourself for emergencies by taking first aid and CPR courses.

PICK TWO MEETING PLACES

One should be outside your home or business for sudden events such as a fire. The second should be outside your neighborhood, in case you cannot get home or family members get separated.

CHOOSE A CONTACT PERSON

Ask someone outside of the area to coordinate communications in a disaster. Family members should call this person to report their location. Send your contact copies of important papers (ID, insurance, etc.)

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO

Include contact information in your phones and make emergency contact cards.

THINK ABOUT EVACUATION

If and when you have to evacuate, decide ahead of time where you would go and how you will get there. Ask friends or family if you could stay with them. Highlands County DOES NOT have designated evacuation zones. If Highlands County issues an evacuation order in the event of a disaster, these orders will NOT refer to designated evacuation zones but instead will refer to geographic boundaries or landmarks.



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GENERATION PREPARED CHECKLIST

- Know what disasters are most likely in my area
- Create an evacuation plan (from home, work and school)
- Create a disaster plan
- Put together a disaster supply kit
- Create a communication plan
- Practice your evacuation plan and review meeting/rally points
- Know how to shut off water, power and gas in an emergency
- Take a hands-only CPR course
- Take a Stop the Bleed course
- Take a fire extinguisher course
- Attend a preparedness seminar or presentation
- Talk to family, friends and co-workers about being prepared

SEVERE WEATHER

What is a tornado?

A tornado is a violent storm with whirling winds of up to 300 miles per hour. It appears as a funnel shaped cloud, from gray to black in color, which extends to the ground from the base of a thunderstorm.

A tornado spins like a top and may sound like the roaring of an airplane or locomotive. In Florida, summer tornadoes generally move at speeds less than 20 MPH and can move in any direction.

Winter tornadoes tend to move at speeds less than 40 MPH and generally move from the southwest to northeast. Their direction of travel can be erratic and may change suddenly.

These short-lived storms are the most violent of all atmospheric phenomena and the most destructive over a small area.



Protective actions in a tornado

1. **Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio** and/or battery-powered commercial radio and extra batteries.
2. Many mobile phones are capable of receiving **Wireless Emergency Alerts** (WEAs). These alerts can inform you about life-threatening weather conditions in your immediate area.
3. Know the terms used to describe tornado threats:
 - a. **Tornado Watch** "Caution, Watch the Sky"
Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms.
 - b. **Tornado Warning** "Danger, Take Cover"
A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately if a Tornado Warning is issued for your area. The warning will include those cities in the path of the storm.
4. **If a tornado threatens** when you are in a home or condo, seek shelter in a small, windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest level of a sturdy building.
5. **Mobile or manufactured homes** are not safe during tornadoes. Abandon mobile and manufactured homes and go to the nearest sturdy building immediately.
6. **If you are caught outdoors**, seek shelter in a sturdy building, NOT a mobile home or portable structure.
7. **If you are caught in the open with no sturdy shelter available**, move away from the tornado's projected path at right angles. Seek shelter in a ditch, ravine, culvert or ground depression. Stay away from trees and cover your head with your hands.
8. **If you are at school**, follow the school disaster plan. Stay away from auditoriums, gymnasiums and other areas with wide, free-span roofs. Go into center hallways and stay away from windows.
9. **If you are in a motor vehicle**, never try to outrun a tornado in your car. Stop your vehicle and get out. Seek shelter elsewhere. Do not get under or next to your vehicle. A ditch or ground depression will help if a tornado shelter is not nearby.

Thunderstorms & Lightning

It doesn't have to be raining for lightning to strike. Almost all lightning will occur within 10 miles of its parent thunderstorm, but it CAN strike much farther than that. Lightning detection equipment has confirmed bolts striking almost 50 miles away.

Thunderstorms can produce several types of hazardous weather including large hail, damaging winds, flash floods, and tornadoes.

Lightning is the number one cause of weather related fatalities in Florida, averaging 10 fatalities and 40 injuries a year. Approximately half of the deaths and injuries occur during outdoor recreational activities, and about 40% of those occur on the water.

WHERE TO GO

The safest location during a thunderstorm is inside a large enclosed structure. If lightning strikes the building, the plumbing and wiring will conduct the electricity more efficiently than a human body. If no buildings are available, then an enclosed metal vehicle such as an automobile, van or school bus makes a decent alternative.

WHERE NOT TO GO

Not all types of buildings or vehicles are safe during thunderstorms. Buildings are NOT SAFE (even if they are "grounded") if they have exposed openings. These include beach shacks, metal sheds, picnic shelters/pavilions, carports, and baseball dugouts. Porches are

dangerous as well. Convertible vehicles offer no safety from lightning, even if the top is "up." Other vehicles that are NOT SAFE during lightning storms are those that have open cabs, such as golf carts, tractors, and construction equipment. Remember, it is not the rubber tires of a vehicle that protect you from lightning. The metal shell of a vehicle gives the electricity from the lightning a path to flow around you.

WHAT TO DO

Once inside a sturdy building, stay away from electrical appliances and plumbing fixtures. You may want to unplug valuable electrical equipment so they will not be damaged. As an added safety measure, go to an interior room. If you are inside a vehicle, roll the windows up, and avoid contact with any conducting paths leading to the outside of the vehicle such as radios, CB's, and the ignition or you could be badly burned if lightning strikes.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Lightning can travel great distances through power lines, especially in rural areas. Do not use electrical appliances, including corded telephones and desktop computers, unless it is an emergency. Cordless phones, cell phones, laptop and tablet computers are safe to use. Stay away from the windows and do not take a shower or use the bathtub.

What should I do if I am in a boat on the open water during a thundertorm?

Thunderstorms over the coastal waters in Florida are generally unpredictable. Even with the best weather reports, boaters can still be caught in open waters when a thunderstorm develops. With or without a lightning protection system, it is critical to take additional precautions to protect yourself.

- Stay in the center of the cabin, if so designed. If there is no cabin, stay low in the boat. Do not be a stand-up lightning rod!
- Keep arms and legs in the boat. Do not dangle them over the side.
- Stop fishing, water skiing, scuba diving, swimming or other water activities when there is lightning or

even when weather conditions look threatening. Lightning can strike well ahead of a storm.

- Disconnect and do not use or touch the major electronic equipment, including the radio, throughout the duration of the storm.
- Lower, remove or tie down the radio antenna and other protruding rods or poles.
- To the degree possible, avoid contacting two components connected to the system at the same time.
- At least one person on board should be competent in CPR and first aid. Many individuals struck by lightning can be saved with prompt first aid.

Floods

Because of the low land elevations and the high-water tables over much of our area, flooding is likely to occur in some areas during summer showers and thunderstorms. A storm with a considerable amount of rain in a short period of time will cause flooding in low-lying areas throughout the county even though the canal network and drainage ditches will alleviate some flooding.

What protective measures do I need to take?

Protective measures are broken down into four stages: Preparatory Stage, Flood Warning, During the Flood; After the Flood.

PREPARATORY STAGE

1. Keep a stock of food that requires no cooking.
2. Keep a first aid kit available.
3. Keep your vehicle fueled.
4. Consider purchasing flood insurance for your home and belongings.
5. Turn to radio or television or NOAA Weather Radio for flood warnings.
6. Obey warnings from emergency officials; evacuate when notice is issued.
7. Know your evacuation zone and route to a safe place.
8. Know what supplies to take with you.
9. Shut off electricity and water to your home before leaving.
10. Be cautious and avoid flood prone areas when evacuating.

Steps should be taken to reduce property losses.

1. Move furniture to upper floors or higher locations.
2. Sandbags can help slow down flood waters from reaching your possessions.
3. Retrofitting, such as building flood walls or elevating a structure is a way of minimizing loss due to flooding.

Know what your current insurance policy does and does not cover. Coverage may be subject to change with certain improvements to your home and require adherence to certain regulations.

FLOOD WARNING STAGE

1. Store drinking water in sterile, covered containers.
2. Move valuable objects higher. Place them on shelves, tables and countertops.
3. Turn off electricity.

DURING THE FLOOD STAGE

1. Stay on higher ground.
2. Do not drive on a flooded road.
3. If your vehicle stalls, abandon it immediately and seek higher ground.
4. Don't attempt to wade across a flowing stream that is above your knees.
5. Don't allow children to play in standing water. It may be contaminated with chemicals or sewage.

AFTER THE FLOOD STAGE

1. Do not eat fresh food that has come into contact with floodwater.
2. Drink only bottled or previously stored water.
3. Stay away from disaster areas. You may hamper rescue recovery operations.
4. Do not handle live electrical equipment.
5. Report downed power lines to the local law enforcement authorities.
6. Keep tuned to local radio and television stations as well as your local government communication outlets for instructions on how to obtain medical care and emergency assistance like water, food, clothing, shelter and updated weather reports and conditions.

Highlands County is StormReady

StormReady is a voluntary program created by the National Weather Service (NWS) to help communities prepare and protect residents from hazardous weather. StormReady is a nationwide program focused on helping community leaders and emergency managers strengthen local safety program. At this time there are 1868 StormReady sites nationally. StormReady communities are better prepared for hazardous weather conditions through planning, education and awareness.

To be officially StormReady, a community must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency

operations center

- Have more than one method of receiving severe weather forecasts and warnings, and alerting the public
- Create a system that monitors local weather conditions
- Promote public readiness through community seminars
- Develop a hazardous weather plan, to include training severe weather spotters (SKYWARN) and training exercises.

For more information, visit weather.gov/stormready

Heat Emergencies

Heat emergencies are easily preventable by taking precautions in hot weather. If the problem isn't addressed, three types of heat emergencies may occur – **heat cramps** (caused by loss of salt from heavy sweating) can lead to **heat exhaustion** (caused by dehydration), which can progress to **heatstroke**.

Heatstroke, the most serious of the three, can cause shock, brain damage, organ failure, and even death.

The early symptoms of a heat emergency include: profuse sweating, fatigue, thirst, and muscle cramps.

Later symptoms of heat exhaustion include: headache, dizziness and lightheadedness, weakness, nausea and vomiting, cool moist skin, and dark urine.

The symptoms of heatstroke include: fever, irrational behavior, confusion, dry, hot and red skin, rapid shallow breathing and pulse, seizures and unconsciousness.

Remove the victim from the heat and have him/her lie down. Apply cool compresses, elevate the feet, drink fluids and use a fan to blow cool air. Get medical help if needed.

CALL 911 IF:

- The person loses consciousness at anytime.
- There is any other change in the person's alertness (for example, confusion or seizures).
- Fever (temp above 104°F)
- The person shows signs of shock (bluish lips and finger-nails and decreased alertness).
- Other symptoms of heat stroke are present (like rapid pulse or rapid breathing).
- The person's condition does not improve, or worsens despite treatment.

PREVENTION

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in hot weather
- Rest frequently and seek shade when possible.
- Avoid exercise or strenuous physical activity outside during hot or humid weather.
- Drink plenty of fluids every day. Drink more fluids before, during, and after physical activity.
- Be especially careful to avoid overheating if you are taking drugs that impair heat regulation, or if you are overweight or elderly.

FIRE SAFETY

Wildfires

BEFORE

- Keep the surfaces beneath decks, sheds, propane tank, vehicles and boats free of debris, leaves and flammable vegetation. Maintain a 30' feet "safe zone" around your home, with no dry vegetation or flammable items.
- Select building materials, plants, and yard decorations that are resistant to fire.
- Clean out gutters and downspouts of debris and leaves. Make sure you have a non-flammable roof covering and assembly.
- Have two ways out of your neighborhood just in case one way is blocked.

DURING

- Listen to local radio and TV stations as well as your local government communication outlets for wildfire information

- Evacuate immediately if evacuation is instructed or if you think the wildfire is close.
- Close all home opening to limit exposure to smoke and dust
- Move outside furniture and plants indoors

AFTER

- Do not return until officials declare the area safe.
- Use caution when entering burned areas, as hot spots may still exist and can flare up without warning.
- Wet debris down to minimize breathing in dust
- Do not drink water that you think may be contaminated
- Discard food that has been exposed to smoke or dust.

For more wildfire tips, please call your local Florida Forest Service at 863-467-3220 or visit FreshFromFlorida.com

HOME FIRE SAFETY CHECKLIST

- ❑ Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home, in every bedroom and sleeping area.
- ❑ Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors every month.
- ❑ Check batteries in smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors every six months and replace when needed.
- ❑ Replace smoke detectors every ten years
- ❑ Keep at least one fire extinguisher in your home.
- ❑ Keep flammable items at least three feet away from the stove, space heaters, and fireplaces.
- ❑ Turn off stove if you are going to leave the kitchen, even for a short period of time.
- ❑ NEVER smoke in bed.
- ❑ Unplug small kitchen appliances when not in use.
- ❑ Make sure matches and lighters are out of reach of children.

IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE

- Get low to the ground and crawl to an exit. (Door or window)
- Check door handles with the back of your hand. If handle is hot look for an alternate escape route.
- If smoke, heat, or flames block your exit route,

hang a sheet or towel outside your window to let fire departments know where you are.

- Once you are out, stay out and go to your designated meeting place.
- Call 911
- NEVER go back inside for possessions, pets or even other people who may be still in the building.

AFTER A FIRE

- Stay out of fire-damaged homes until fire authorities give clearance to do so.
- Seek medical treatment for any injured persons or animals.
- Let friends and family know you are safe and how to contact you.
- Discard any consumable items in your home that was exposed to smoke or dust.

TRAINING

Training and Presentation Opportunities are available by calling Highlands County Public Safety at 863-402-6800.

Opportunities include but are not limited to:

- Fire safety
- Preparedness
- Hands-only CPR
- Stop the Bleed
- Fire extinguisher training

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

CHEMICALS

The word reminds us of the latest news story about an accident or environmental damage from improper storage, use or disposal of chemicals. However, many aspects of modern life are made possible or improved by responsible use and handling of chemicals.

AROUND THE HOUSE

When we think of hazardous chemicals, we tend to think of manufacturing plants, train cars or trucks. While this is valid, we should also consider our own kitchen cabinets, garage, pool and other places in our home where potentially harmful chemicals are a part of our everyday life. We become so familiar with them that we may have forgotten that they can injure or even kill us.

No matter how comfortable you are with a product, here are some important safety

reminders:

- ALWAYS follow label directions
- Never mix chemicals
- Use only for approved purposes and in approved concentrations
- Store and dispose of safely, in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- Keep away from children
- Never store in containers that look like food or something to drink
- Understand first aid directions
- Keep the number of your local poison control center handy

If you suspect someone has been exposed to a chemical, consult your physician or FL Poison Information Network at 1-800-222-1222

If injuries are serious or the victim has trouble breathing, call 911!

OTHER HAZARDS

How should citizens prepare for terrorism?

Unlike with a hurricane or a flood, there will likely be NO WARNING for a terrorist attack. We can make sure our families know what we would do to account for each other in a disaster. A family disaster plan is critical and should be in place at all times. Your plan should include emergency contacts, identification of meeting points, disaster supply kit, and more.

Before, during, and after a terrorist incident...

BEFORE

Be alert and aware of your surroundings.

Take precautions when traveling. Be aware of conspicuous or unusual behavior. Do not accept packages from strangers. Do not leave luggage unattended.

Learn where emergency exits are located.

Be ready to enact your family disaster plan.

DURING

Building explosion: Leave as quickly and calmly as possible. If items are falling from above – get under a sturdy table or desk.

Fire: Stay low to the floor and exit as quickly as possible. Cover nose and mouth with a wet cloth. If a door is hot to the touch, do not open it – seek an alternate escape route. Stay below the smoke at all times.

AFTER

If you are trapped in debris: Use a flashlight. Cover your mouth with a piece of cloth. Tap on a pipe or wall so that rescuers can hear where you are. Use a whistle if available and shout as a last resort – shouting can result in inhalation of dangerous amounts of dust.

Assisting victims: Untrained persons should not attempt to rescue people in a collapsed building. Wait for emergency personnel to arrive.

Chemical agent: Authorities will instruct you to either seek shelter and seal the premises or evacuate immediately.

Visit floridadisaster.org for more information on family disaster plans, emergency contact lists, identification of meeting points and disaster supply kits.

How to respond to an active shooter

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life. Customers and clients are likely to follow the lead of employees and managers during an active shooter situation.

RUN

- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Leave your belongings behind
- Keep your hands visible

HIDE

- Hide in an area out of the active shooter's view.
- Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors

FIGHT

- As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger fight.
- Attempt to incapacitate the active shooter
- Act with physical aggression and throw items at the active shooter

CALL 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO

When law enforcement arrives on the scene

1. How you should react when law enforcement arrives:

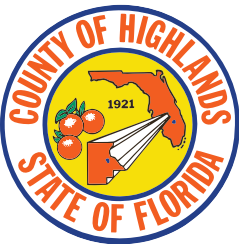
- Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
- Keep hands visible at all times
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety
- Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises

2. Information you should provide to law enforcement or 911 operator:

- Location of the victims and the active shooter
- Number of shooters, if more than one
- Physical description of shooter(s)
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s
- Number of potential victims at the location

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS



Emergencies.....	911
Citizens Information Line	863-402-6800
Public Safety (Fire Rescue, Emergency Management)	863-385-1112
Sheriff's Office	863-402-7200
Public Information Office	863-402-6833
Avon Park Fire Department	863-453-6557
Sebring Police Department	863-471-5107
Sebring Fire Department	863-471-5105
Lake Placid Police Department	863-699-3757
Florida Department of Health	863-386-6040
Animal Services.....	863-655-6475

Utilities Issues

Avon Park Utilities	863-382-5901
Sebring Utilities	863-471-0166
Lake Placid Utilities	863-441-2075
Duke Energy	1-800-700-8744
Florida Power & Light Company	1-888-488-7703
Glades Electric	863-946-6200
Peace River Electric	1-800-282-3824
Comcast	1-800-266-2278; 863-385-2578
Century Link	1-800-261-1691

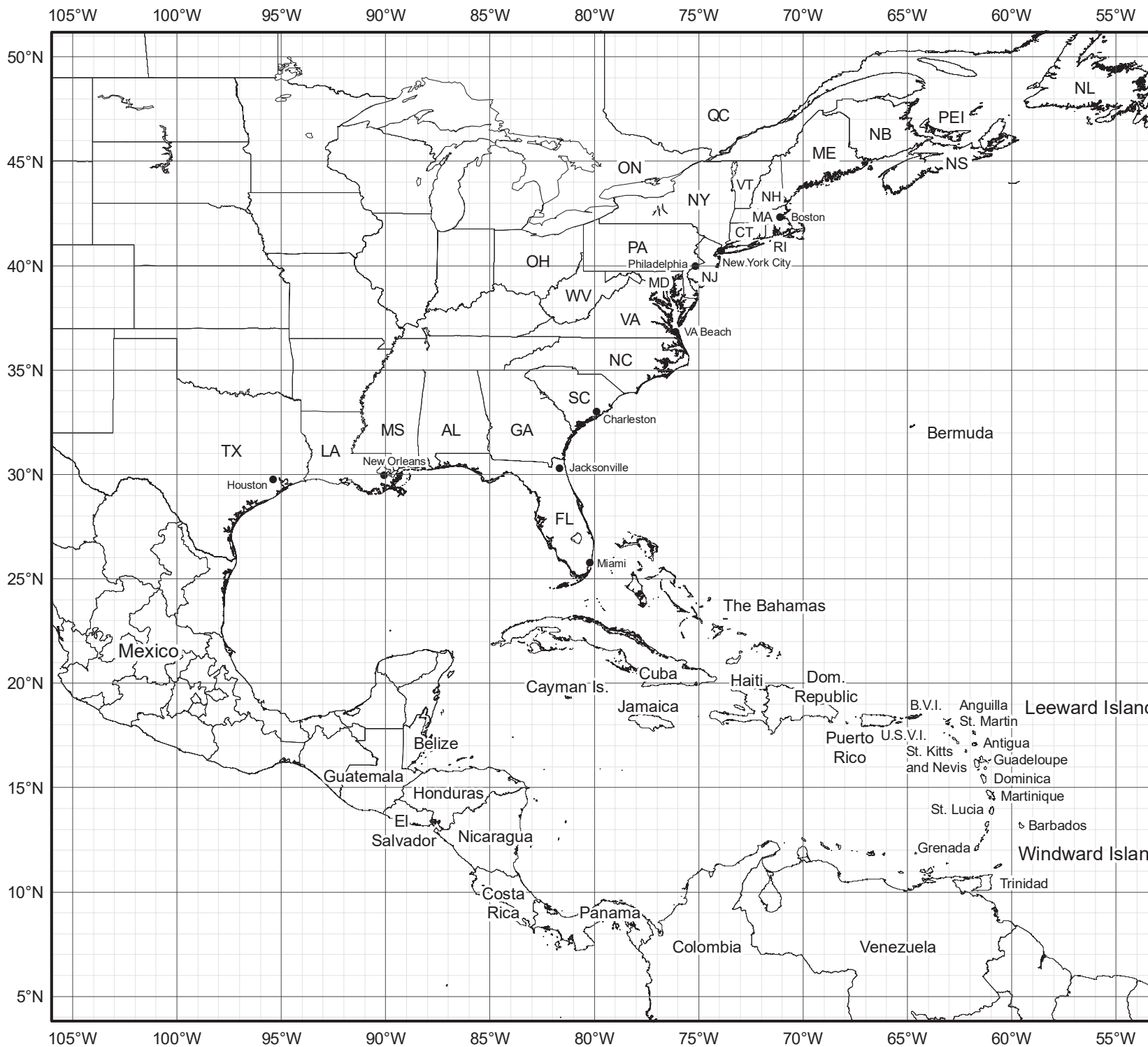
Waste Management

Highlands County	863-655-0005
Avon Park	863-452-4433
Sebring	863-471-5115
Lake Placid.....	863-699-3747

Government

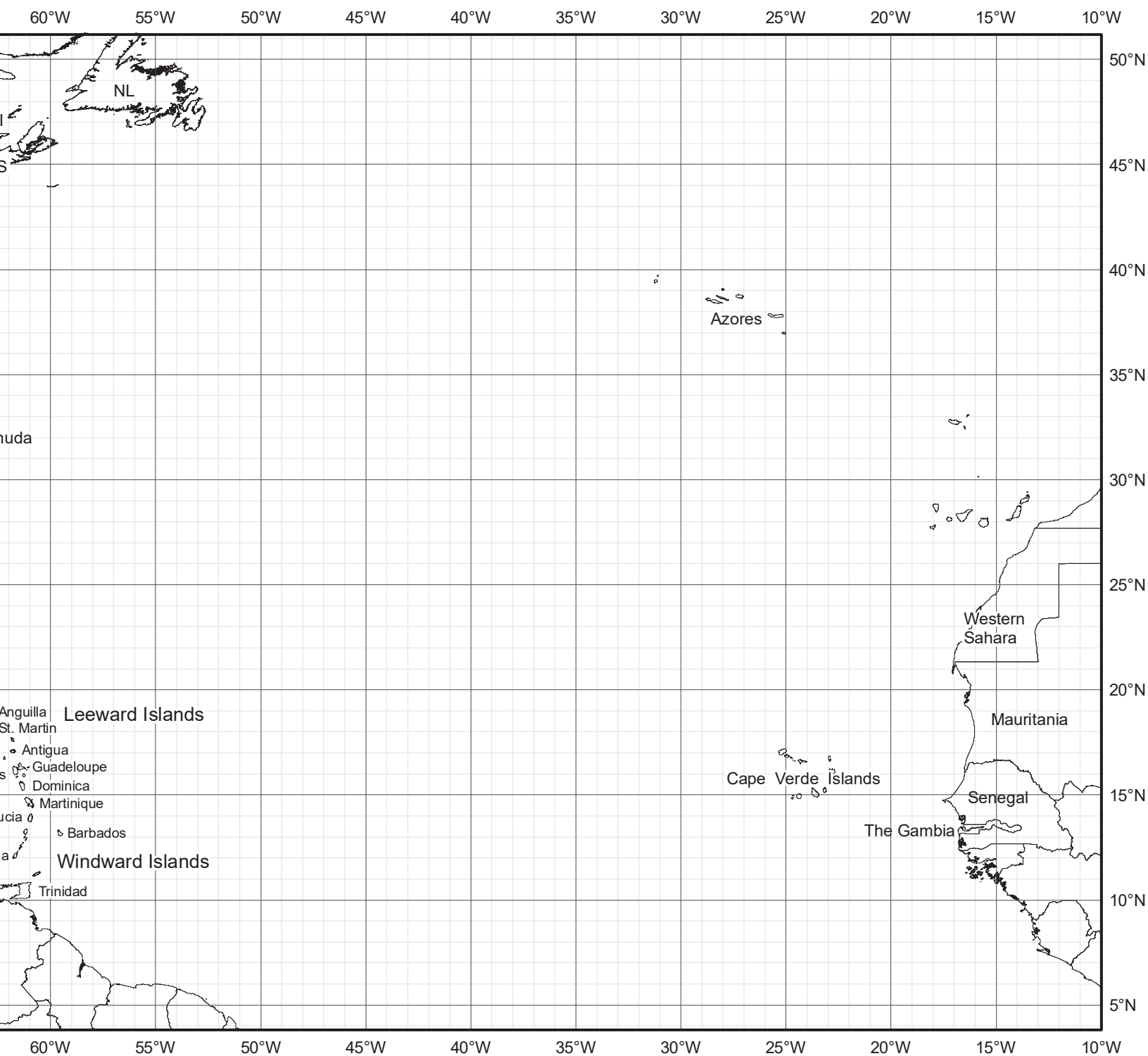
Highlands County Board of County Commissioners	863-402-6500
City of Avon Park	863-452-4400
City of Sebring	863-471-5100
Town of Lake Placid	863-699-3747
Sun 'n Lake of Sebring Special Improvement District	863-382-2196
Spring Lake Special Improvement District	863-655-0615

HURRICANE TRACKING MAP



ATLANTIC BASIN HURRICANE TRACKING CHART
PROVIDED BY NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER, MIAMI, FLORIDA

HURRICANE TRACKING MAP



WHAT TO EXPECT IN A HURRICANE

Each year from June 1 through Nov. 30 is hurricane season. We are at risk of being impacted by a hurricane. Unfortunately, previous hurricane seasons are not accurate indicators of our present risk. Whether it is forecast to be a “higher than average,” “average” or “lower than average” season, activity-wise, our risk is the same. It only ever takes one hurricane to affect a community!

WIND

Hurricanes are categorized by sustained winds of 74-157-plus MPH. Wind caused damage are to some degree dependent upon the local building codes in effect, how well, and how long they have been enforced.

TORNADOES

Tornadoes may form in the rain bands of a hurricane and cause significant damage. Tornadoes are commonly found in the right front quadrant of the storm. These tornadoes are not as intense as those in the Midwest tornado belt, but they can inflict tremendous damage with little or no warning.

STORM SURGE

Storm surge is an abnormal rise of water generated by the storms that move ashore prior to and during a hurricane making landfall. As the storms make landfall, inundation levels (depth of water above ground level) of 2 to 30 feet may occur along coastal areas, and major rivers of Florida. This is enough to inundate most populated areas. The severity of damage depends upon the hurricane’s size, forward speed, its direction of movement and intensity. Storm

surge has the potential to cause the greatest loss of life, cripple communications, cause sewers and storm water basins to back up and contaminate drinking water supplies. Storm surge can leave roads, streets and bridges filled with sand, debris and, in some cases structurally unstable.

HEAVY RAIN

Over the past 30 years, freshwater flooding has caused more drowning deaths than storm surge flooding. Torrential rains associated with slow moving, or stationary, tropical storms and hurricanes on average can produce 16 inches of rain within a 24-36-hour period. Heavy rains can create massive health problems and have a disastrous effect on a community’s ability to recover quickly.

ANTICIPATE FLOODING

As a hurricane or tropical storm moves closer to our area, the Emergency Operations Center will be activated. Emergency Management personnel will remain in frequent contact with the National Hurricane Center and the local Weather Service office to closely monitor the development and progress of the hurricane or tropical storm.

Your local Emergency Management Agency will utilize the area media outlets to provide frequent updates on the storm, recommend emergency protective actions, and issue evacuation orders. If you do not evacuate when ordered you will be without fire rescue, law enforcement or emergency medical support until the waters subside.

BEING PREPARED

It is important to involve your entire household in disaster planning. Take action by creating a disaster plan and ensure the entire family knows what to do in the event of an emergency or disaster, including where to meet, and how to communicate if normal lines of communication are unavailable.

To create a disaster plan, visit Ready.gov or call Highlands County Emergency Management for more information.

Following an emergency or disaster, you may lose access to basic services, such as power and water, and be subject to limited or no access to essentials

like food and water. With that in mind, stock up on essentials now and build a disaster supply kit to last you and your family for a minimum of 7 days. These supplies include food, water, medicine, batteries, etc. Each family and business is advised to be adequately stocked and prepared to face this hurricane season. Each individual or family disaster supply kit will differ based on personal needs.

Review the list below to help you get started on basic items to include in your kit. Assess your individual and family needs to determine other critical items to include.

SHELTERS

There is a substantial shelter space deficit throughout SW Florida. So, if you have a safe place to go, plan to use that location instead of a public shelter. But, if you have no safe place to go, shelters will be open.

RISK SHELTERS

When Highlands County will be impacted by high winds, the following shelters may be opened. As these shelters approach capacity, the county will open a second tier of approved shelters (not listed).

AVON PARK

Avon Park Recreation Center
207 E. State St.

LAKE PLACID

Lake Placid High School
202 Green Dragon Drive

SEBRING

Highlands County Fair Convention Center
781 Magnolia Ave.

SPECIAL NEEDS

*** REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center
4509 George Blvd., Sebring

WHAT TO BRING TO A SHELTER

- Drinking water (1 gallon per person per day)
 - Food and snacks (at minimum a 3-day supply)
 - Lawn chair or bed roll
 - Book or electronic entertainment item with headphones
 - Prescriptions
 - Identification and copies of important documents
 - Sanitation items
 - Change of clothing
- Remember weapons and alcoholic beverages are not permitted. The only animals allowed are registered service animals.

Please note that not all shelters listed here may be opened. Media will need to be monitored to receive information on open shelters or if shelters are at capacity.

Risk shelters are typically meant to house people for 12-72 hours until the storm or threat passes. Because

these centers must open quickly, it may not be possible to provide comfort items to evacuees (such as cots and blankets), until post-storm sheltering is in place.

Here are some important points to remember if you choose to go to a shelter:

1. When you arrive, give your name and address to the shelter manager so you can be located, if necessary.
2. If you leave the shelter, check out with the shelter manager.
3. Accountability is important for your safety.
4. Shelters are not able to provide any conveniences or luxuries.
5. Bring your family's disaster survival kit to ensure proper provisions.

PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

1. Some people have medical issues that cannot be accommodated in a regular risk shelter.
2. For those people whose health would quickly and dramatically deteriorate in a risk shelter and have no other safe place to go, there are Special Needs shelters available.
3. You must complete an application to see if your medical issues qualify for a Special Needs shelter. There are specific criteria and requirements to be eligible for the Special Needs shelter, which may vary somewhat from county to county.
4. You must have a caregiver with you during your stay at the Special Needs shelter. During an emergency we have very limited staff working in the shelters, so your caregiver is critically important for your health and safety.
5. As at any other shelter, you must bring your emergency supplies with you.
6. In any emergency situation you should have a plan for where you will go if you cannot return to your home because of damage.
7. Registration is required.
Visit highlandsfl.gov for the application or call Highlands County Emergency Management at 863-402-6800.

PROTECTING YOUR PETS

In a hurricane, pets are subject to the same hazards as we are and have many of the same needs. Remember, risk shelters do not permit pets! The best plan is to identify a safer location that allows pets (a friend's home or pet-friendly hotel). That way, you can keep your pets with you when you evacuate.

- Check the internet to help locate hotels that accept pets.
- You should also have a supply kit for your pets. Include non-perishable food, water and medications.
- Keep a sturdy cage or carrier to comfortably hold your pet and/or a collar and leash.
- Make sure all vaccinations are up-to-date and keep a copy of the records.
- Keep several good photos to help identify your pet



should you become separated.

- Place identification on your pet's collar or consider using a microchip to identify your pet.
- Consult your veterinarian for more details.

Highlands County is working on providing a pet-friendly shelter option in the future for Highlands County residents.

As always, please monitor local media as well as your local government communication outlets for updates.

AFTER THE STORM

DEBRIS PICKUP

If a state of emergency is declared and there is need of debris collection, Highlands County will work in conjunction with FEMA to engage with private contractors. The public may choose to haul debris material to the Highlands County Landfill at 12700 Arbuckle Creek Road in Sebring.

FIRST

Public roadways will be immediately cleared of debris from the travel ways by the maintaining agency for the roadway (FDOT, Highlands County, municipality, etc.) as a first priority.

SECOND

Following the initial road clearing effort, residents may start placing debris from qualifying areas in the public right-of-way for collection.

Any debris qualifying for collection must be placed in the right-of-way as soon as safely possible. All material to be collected should be ready for collection within 30 days after the event if possible to avoid being missed. Check the Highlands County website (highlandsfl.gov) or the County Facebook page (search for [highlandsfl.gov](https://www.facebook.com/highlandsfl) on Facebook) for collection deadlines.

Remember when placing material in the right-of-way for collection, to keep piles out of the travel lanes, out from under other trees or branches and stay away from obstacles such as fire hydrants, mail boxes, trees, low power lines, and utility poles.

1. **Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) roadways** (such as U.S. 27, U.S. 98, SR 64, SR 66, SR 70, SR 17): FDOT will make one pass through their roadways collecting debris in the right-of-way. Once that is done, all future debris from properties adjoining these roadways will have to be taken to the Highlands County Landfill for disposal. This will be the responsibility of the property owner.
2. **Local road right-of-ways**; Highlands County, City of Avon Park, City of Sebring, Town of Lake Placid, Sun 'n Lake Improvement District, Spring Lake Improvement District: Only debris originating from improved residential properties placed in the public right-of-way will be collected. Public maintained roadways are typically identified by a green road name sign with white lettering.
3. **Private right-of-ways**: Private right-of-ways such as those maintained by property owner associations may be considered if allowed by FEMA. The maintaining entity of these roadways will need to contact the Highlands County Engineering Department for requirements to be included in the FEMA Private Property Debris Removal program. Applications will need to be filed with Highlands County and approval received from FEMA prior to any work occurring by FEMA contractors. Approval for collection may take as long as 30-days, or possibly more. Private maintained roadways typically have a white road

name sign with green letters.

4. **Private roadways easements:** The FEMA program does not allow collection of debris material from private roadways easements. Property owners with any debris from properties accessed from these easements will be required to make arrangements to have the debris disposed of properly. These roads also have a white road name sign with green letters.

AREAS NOT INCLUDED in the private property debris removal program include commercial properties, golf courses, agriculture properties, industrial properties, and vacant properties of all zonings.

WHAT WILL BE COLLECTED

- Vegetative debris such as trees and branches or inert building material debris.
- The vegetative debris and inert building materials must be separate from each other.
- Mixing of materials may result in delays in getting picked or may result in non-pick up completely.
- This does not include any hazardous waste, furniture, clothing, or other household waste items.
- Non-qualifying items should be properly disposed of at the Highlands County Landfill or set out for normal garbage collection following requirements of your solid waste service provider.

For more information, call the Emergency Management's Citizen Emergency Information Line at 863-402-6800.

WATER PRECAUTIONS

After a natural disaster, damaged water pipes can cause pressure to drop, possibly letting in contaminated ground water. The concern with the water is bacterial contamination. Disinfect tap water you use for anything, including for your pets. Boil it for at least ten minutes, or use chemicals: eight drops of chlorine bleach (without scent or other additives) or tincture of iodine per gallon. Let the water sit at least 10 minutes before drinking. If you wash dishes in tap water, rinse them in extra-chlorinated water. Use about 15 drops of chlorine on the dishes to keep them clean until next use. Showering or bathing in tap water is fine. If you cut yourself shaving, apply a disinfectant such as alcohol or antibiotic cream.

FOOD SAFETY RULES

- Don't trust your sense of smell.
- Throw away perishables.
- Wipe the interior of any food container with baking soda and water.
- Fill your freezer with plastic jugs of water. A full freezer stays cold longer. Keep the freezer door closed as much as possible. Foods will stay frozen longer. Meats and solid items stay frozen longer than baked goods. Refreezing partially thawed food is risky. Generally, if the foods still contain ice crystals, they're okay to re-freeze although quality may suffer. Dry ice keeps food frozen for approximately 1-4 days. Without air conditioning, food waste will start to smell rapidly. Use small plastic garbage bags; tie or seal and place in a larger bag or can outdoors.

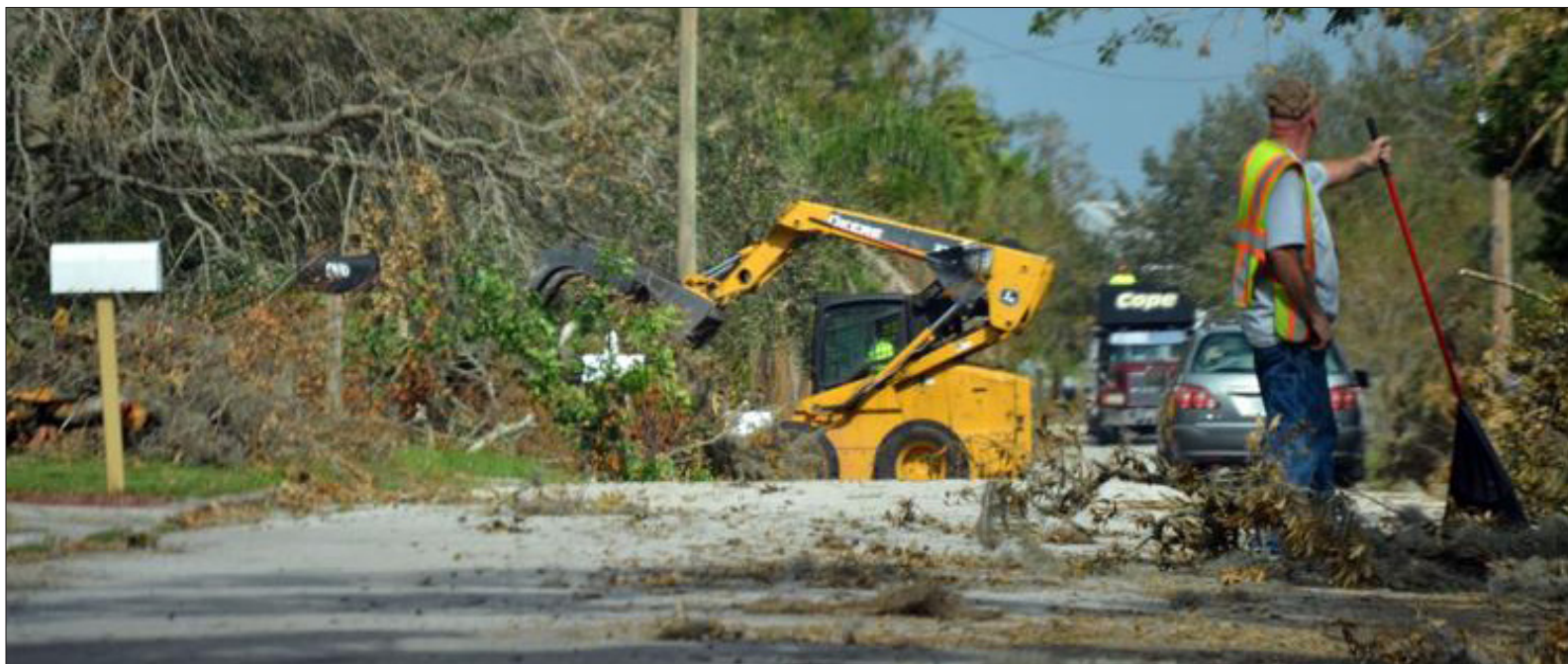


Photo courtesy Highlands News-Sun

KEEP SAFE DURING A POWER OUTAGE

1. Assume all cables and wires are energized and stay away.
2. Keep away from flooded and debris-laden areas because they may be hiding downed lines.
3. If you leave your home, turn off appliances that may have been on when the power went out, or turn off your main breaker.
4. Avoid driving in damaged areas. You might interfere with rescue or restoration efforts, as well as jeopardize your own safety.
5. Help keep telephone lines clear for emergency calls. Only call to report downed power lines, or if your neighbors' power has been restored and you are without electricity.
6. Don't trim trees or remove debris located near downed power lines. If you must remove debris from your home, don't pile it under or near electrical lines or equipment.
7. Any damage to your home's electric system must be repaired by a licensed electrician and inspected by a designated agency before power can be restored.
8. Check your weather-head (located on the roof where your service connects to the pole) and your meter box to make sure they are not damaged.
9. If you suspect there is water in the walls or ceiling, stay away from electrical outlets and contact a licensed electrician to repair the damage.
10. If you need to live in temporary quarters on your property, a licensed electrician can install a temporary service pole. After the pole is inspected by a designated agency, your electric utility can provide power.

GENERATOR USE AND SAFETY

1. Generators can provide power to your home or business in case of a power outage or shortage.
2. Determine the appliance or equipment you want to use.
3. Determine if a portable or stationary generator is required.
4. Determine if you will need multiple outlets or multiple types of outlets on your generator.
5. NEVER connect a portable generator to building wiring. There is an extreme danger of generator back-feed for the public (downed wires, etc.) and utility workers. Plug appliances, etc., directly into the generator.

6. Place the generator outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents that could allow carbon monoxide (CO) to come indoors. **Exhaust fumes are deadly.**
7. Before refueling your generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Do not forget to check the oil every time you add gas. Keep generators dry. Conserve fuel by limiting use of appliances.
8. Store safely outside in labeled approved storage container.
9. Stationary (whole house) generators run off gas utility lines or an LP tank and supply electrical power to preselected circuits. They MUST be professionally installed by a licensed electrician.

WATER

1. Locate the emergency water shut-off valve for your residence and remove any shrubbery or obstructions. Test the water shut-off valve to be sure that it is operational. If the shut-off valve is not operational, have it repaired or replaced.
2. Turn the emergency water shutoff valve to the off position if you are leaving your residence prior to a storm.
3. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations on turning off your hot water heater and unplug it.
4. Locate your sewer clean-out lid and remove any shrubbery or obstructions in case the clean-out needs to be accessed.
5. Due to power outages, water treatment plants will be operating under limited conditions and water pressures will be reduced.
6. Because of reduced pressures and the limited operations of lift stations, WATER CONSERVATION IS A MUST. Just because power has been restored to your home, does not mean that power has been restored to all lift stations or water and wastewater treatment plants.
 - Turn off all sprinklers.
 - Remember to reset your irrigation timer once power has been restored.
 - Abstain from running dishwashers and clothes washers.
 - Limit the amount of water used during a shower or the amount to fill the bathtub.
 - Limit the amount of toilet flushing.
 - Abstain from any other outdoor use of water that is not absolutely necessary.

SIX STEPS TO PROPER INSURANCE PROTECTION

1. Insure your home for its reconstruction cost, not its real estate value.
2. If you rent, you need insurance to protect your belongings.
3. Know your flood risk, Standard homeowner's policies do not cover damage from floods, including storm surge from a hurricane. Remember, there is a 30-day waiting period for flood insurance to go into effect. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL A STORM IS THREATENING.**
4. Set aside funds to pay your hurricane deductible.
5. Get covered for the costs of building code upgrades.
6. Inventory your home's contents to accurately price coverage and speed up the claims process.

Highlands County qualifies and participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. We qualify by making building requirements stringent and in accordance with the Florida Building Code and local flood damage prevention ordinances.

There are free consumer guides, including homeowner's insurance information available on the county website under the listing of Consumer Help. You will also find an Insurance Library available to answer your questions. Do not forget to download your Homeowner's Financial Tool Kit from myfloridacfo.com to help you make informed decisions when it comes to disasters.

Additional information can be obtained from your county Emergency Management office.

LOOTING

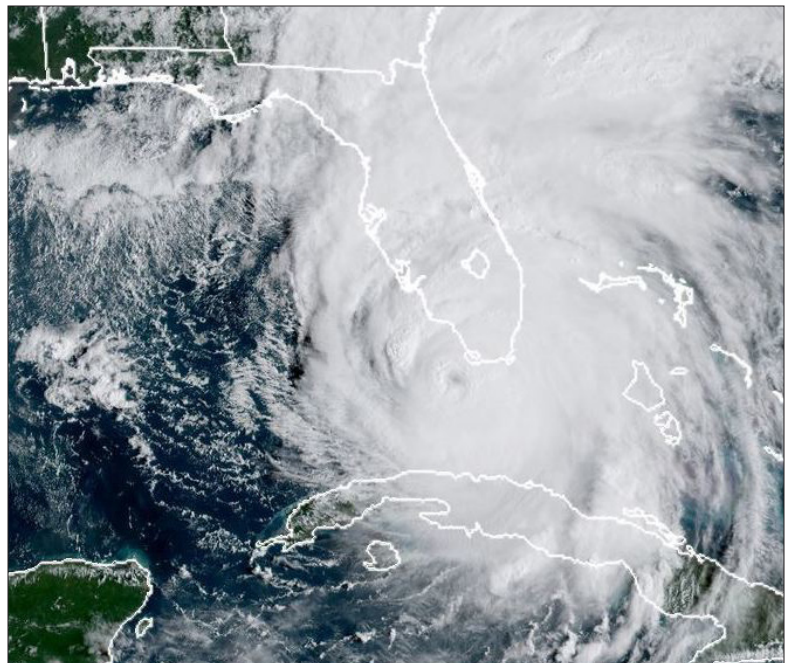
Looting has occurred in many communities after a hurricane. Criminals may take advantage of the opportunity to enter evacuated homes and businesses. Local law enforcement agencies and, if necessary, the National Guard will do everything possible to minimize looting.

INSURANCE CHECKLIST BEFORE THE STORM

- Make sure that you know your coverage
- Check your policy for flood and windstorm coverage
- Know what your current policy does and does not cover
- Update your list of personal belongings
- Safeguard your records

AFTER THE STORM

- Report damage to your insurance agent or insurance company immediately
- Make and document emergency repairs
- Make copies of anything that is given to the adjuster or sent to the insurance company.
- Take precautions if the damages require you to leave your home
- Secure your property. Remove valuable items. Lock windows and doors.
- Contact your insurance agent and leave a phone number where you can be reached.



STAY INFORMED

In times of emergency, get official county updates from our communication outlets:

- Follow us on Facebook @ [highlandsfl.gov](https://www.facebook.com/highlandsflgov) and on Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor @HighlandsFLBCC
- Call us at 863-402-6800
- Sign up for AlertHighlands at bit.ly/alerthighlands