

Are You Ready?

Ready or not, hurricane season is just a month away and we need to be prepared

BY CRISTINA ARMAND

Since Hurricane Andrew struck South Florida in 1992, I have made sure that every June my family checks its inventory of hurricane supplies to see what we need. Andrew was a surprise at our house but also a hard lesson. We were prepared when the busy 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons rolled around.

When stocking up, you should have enough supplies so that your family is self-sufficient for the first 72 hours after the storm. Below are some tips that will help everyone prepare for this hurricane season:

- Stock up on non-perishable foods such as canned goods, powdered or single-serve drinks, cereal, and cookies. Always have a manual can opener in your house to open any cans. Have one gallon of water per person per day and half a gallon per pet per day. Each person in your household should have a flashlight, and a battery-operated lantern is useful at night. Also have a battery-operated radio or TV so you can stay informed. Don't forget the extra batteries! Have a first aid kit nearby and have some unscented bleach or water purification tablets. Extra cash is important.
- Have a way to heat up food. This can be in the form of a portable camp stove or a barbecue grill. It is a good idea to have extra stove fuel, charcoal with lighter fluid, or propane. Also stock up on plastic plates, cups and eating utensils, as well as aluminum foil.
- Gather personal supplies such as prescription medicines. A one-month supply is recommended. If you wear contact lenses, make sure you have an extra pair along with glasses and plenty of saline solution. Also make sure you have enough personal hygiene products and toilet paper in your home. Have ways to keep your family entertained during and after the storm such as books, magazines, board games, or dominos.
- Remember to stock up on diapers for babies. Also make sure you have enough formula, food, medication, and diaper rash cream.
- Don't forget about your pets! Make sure you stock up on dry or canned food. Look at your pet's identification tag and make sure your contact information is legible. Don't forget to have their carrying container nearby in case of evacuations.
- Place all of your important documents in a waterproof container. These documents should include insurance and banking information, proof of occupancy such as a driver's license or a recent utility bill for your address, and photo inventory of your belongings.

There are many other supplies you can have on hand. These are just the basics. Also have a fire extinguisher on hand in case of an emergency. You should also have a toolbox, masking or duct tape, outdoor extension cords, spray paint, and roofing tarp in case they are needed after the storm.

After the 2004 and 2005 hurricane season, many residents purchased a generator. If you have one, it is recommended that you have a carbon monoxide detector in your home. Carbon monoxide is known as a silent killer because it is a colorless, odorless and tasteless gas. Having a detector can save your life.

For more information and tips on what to do before, during, and after a storm visit the Miami-Dade County Web site at www.miamidade.gov, or call the Answer Center at 3-1-1.

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