

Hurricane Preparedness Checklist 2026

Protect Your Home, Family & Property Before the Storm

Once a storm gets a name, stores sell out of water, plywood, and batteries within a day or two. Getting ready early means you're not stuck scrambling at the last minute with everyone else who waited too long.

Always follow evacuation orders from local officials. This checklist is here to help you plan, not to replace official emergency instructions.

1 WATER, FOOD & FIRST AID

Drinking water, 1 gallon per person per day, at least a 3-day supply

Water purification tablets or a portable filter as backup

Non-perishable food: canned goods, protein bars, nuts, dried fruit

Manual can opener

Cooler and ice packs to stretch what's in the fridge

First aid kit: bandages, antiseptic wipes, gauze, tape, scissors

Pain relievers and any personal prescription meds

N95 masks for the mold and dust that show up during cleanup

Work gloves and safety goggles

Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, heavy-duty trash bags

QUICK NOTE: Bacteria grows fastest between 40°F and 140°F, exactly where your fridge sits once the power's out. A closed fridge holds about 4 hours, a full freezer around 48. Anything that's been too warm for over 2 hours, toss it. Food poisoning with the ER already slammed is not the week you want.

2 POWER, LIGHTING & COMMUNICATION

LED flashlight for everyone in the house, plus spare batteries

Headlamp for hands-free work

Rechargeable or battery-powered work light for bigger spaces

NOAA weather radio, battery or hand-crank

Portable power bank and a solar charger

Generator, serviced and test-run before storm season heats up

Carbon monoxide detector, battery or battery-backup

Outdoor-rated, heavy-duty extension cords

Extra fuel in approved gas cans

Phone charged up, backup battery ready

Whistle to call for help

Emergency numbers written down somewhere that doesn't need a charge

Paper map, in case GPS goes down

Your evacuation zone looked up, local alerts turned on ahead of time

QUICK TIP: Skip the candles, an open flame in a dark, busy house is how fires start. Run the generator outside only, at least 20 feet from windows and doors, since carbon monoxide has no smell and builds up fast in any enclosed space, garage included.

3 WINDOWS, DOORS & GARAGE

Storm shutters, up or staged and ready to mount

Plywood pre-cut to fit each window

Storm shutter fasteners and hardware checked and on hand

Window locks and latches tested

Door reinforcement kit installed on exterior doors

Heavy-duty strike plates on entry doors

Door sweeps and threshold seals checked for gaps

Weatherstripping replaced anywhere it's gone thin

Garage door bracing kit installed

QUICK TIP: The garage door is usually the biggest, weakest opening in the house, and once it fails, wind gets inside and pushes up on the roof from underneath. Reinforcing it is one of the highest-impact things on this whole list.

4 ROOF & OUTDOOR AREAS

Roof shingles and flashing checked for anything loose

Gutters cleared, downspouts flowing

Loose siding or trim fixed

Fence posts and gates secured

Outdoor furniture and grills brought in or tied down

Tree branches trimmed away from the house and power lines

Propane tanks and sheds anchored down

QUICK TIP: If something can move, it'll move once the wind picks up, and it doesn't take much to turn a lawn chair or grill into a real hazard. Tie it down or bring it in before that becomes a problem.

5 FLOOD PROTECTION

Flood barriers set up at entry points

Sandbags at doors and low spots

Sump pump tested, battery backup ready

Tarps and plastic sheeting for quick patches

Waterproof storage bins for anything that needs to stay dry

Valuables and electronics moved up off the floor

QUICK TIP: Floodwater's rarely just water, it usually carries sewage, chemicals, and whatever else it passed through on the way in. Keeping it out protects your health as much as your house.

6 TOOLS & REPAIR SUPPLIES

REPAIR TOOLS

Adjustable wrench and hammer

Screwdriver set

Utility knife

Roofing tape and exterior caulk for temporary sealing

Duct tape

CLEANUP EQUIPMENT

Crowbar

Folding saw or chainsaw

Shovel

Rope

Zip ties

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Multi-tool

Hard hat

Work gloves

Safety goggles

QUICK TIP: Contractors get booked out for weeks after a storm rolls through, so small repairs and cleanup shouldn't have to wait that long. Having the right tools on hand means you can handle it yourself in the meantime.

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

This gets its own spot instead of getting buried in a go-bag, because it's usually what makes or breaks a smooth insurance claim.

Insurance policy documents (home, auto, flood if it's separate)

Government-issued ID and copies for everyone in the house

Property deed or mortgage paperwork

Medical records and a current prescription list

Written emergency contact list

Digital backups of all of it, saved to the cloud or a password-protected drive

Everything in a waterproof, portable pouch

GETTING READY TO LEAVE

Vehicle fueled up

Go-bags packed and staged by the door

Rooms and valuables photographed for insurance, before anything happens to them

Fridge and freezer set to their coldest settings

Electrical equipment turned off and unplugged

Gas and water shut off, if local officials say to

Windows locked, shutters closed

Pets, documents, and go-bags loaded up before you go

AFTER THE STORM: RECOVERY CHECKLIST

A SAFETY FIRST

Don't go in if you smell gas or the building's still surrounded by floodwater

Stay out of standing water, it can hide debris, chemicals, or worse

Gloves, boots, protective clothing for cleanup

Treat any downed power line as live, report it instead of touching it

B INSPECT THE PROPERTY

Photos of all the damage before you touch anything, for the claim

Check the roof, siding, and foundation

Check the electrical panel before restoring power

Call your insurance provider with the documented damage

C REPAIRS & TEMPORARY FIXES

Board up broken windows and damaged doors

Tarp a damaged roof to keep more water from getting in

Shut off the water main if pipes are visibly damaged

Make sure the home's structurally safe before staying overnight

Call a licensed contractor for anything beyond a temporary patch

D **CLEAN UP**

Pump out standing water

Get a dehumidifier and fans running

Disinfect anything that touched floodwater

Apply mold killer or mildew remover early, before it spreads

Toss anything that won't dry out all the way

FAMILY & PET GO-BAG

FOR THE HOUSEHOLD

A few days of clothes and medication per person

Cash in small bills, since ATMs and card readers often go down with the power

Rain gear and waterproof boots

Emergency blankets or a waterproof sleeping bag

Baby formula, diapers, and wipes, if there's a little one in the house

Hearing aid batteries, extra glasses, or mobility aids, for anyone who needs them

FOR PETS

A week of food, water, and any meds

Carrier or crate

Spare leash and ID tags

Vaccination records

A familiar toy or blanket to help keep them calm

Don't wait until it's too late. DK Hardware's got the shutters, generators, and tools on this list, so you can knock it out in one trip.