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## FLORIDA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS ENCOURAGE RESIDENTS TO DEVELOP STORM DISASTER PLANS

*Hurricane season runs June 1 through November 30*



### Contact:

Amy Cormier, Health Educator Consultant/Public Information Officer

Amy.Cormier@flhealth.gov

863-462-5800

**Okeechobee, Fla.** — With hurricane season officially starting June 1, the Florida Dept of Health in Okeechobee County encourages everyone to prepare for severe weather emergencies now.

### Get A Plan!

The best way to cope with a disaster is to have a plan. 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 basic needs, like food and medications. The Florida Department of Emergency Management provides an interactive online tool, [Get a Plan!](#), to help families and businesses stay prepared. This useful tool allows you to answer a series of questions and create a plan customized for you.

### Sales Tax Holiday for Disaster-Preparedness Supplies

The 2021 Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday was passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis. This is an opportunity to save money when buying supplies for your emergency preparedness kit. This sales tax holiday begins Friday, May 28, 2021, and extends through Sunday, June 6, 2021. For more information and updates on the list of qualifying items, please visit <https://floridarevenue.com/disasterprep/Pages/default.aspx>.

### Make a Kit

As we watch for upcoming storms, think about what you might need to keep on hand in order to be prepared. The Florida Division of Emergency Management recommends that you have enough supplies to last you and your family for a minimum of seven days. Each individual or family disaster supply kit differs, based on personal needs. Review the list below for the basic items to include in your kit. For more information, visit

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/hurricane-supply-checklist/>.

- **Water:** Enough for drinking, cooking and sanitation purposes—pack a minimum of 1 gallon daily per person per day for 7 days.

- **Food:** Nonperishable packaged or canned food and juices, snacks and foods for those with dietary restrictions (i.e., infants, people with diabetes, etc.).
- **Cooking Supplies:** Manual can opener, cooking tools and fuel, paper plates and plastic utensils.
- **Flashlight and extra batteries**
- **Pillows, blankets and/or sleeping bags**
- **Clothing:** Complete change of clothes suitable for the current climate. Stock up on diapers if you have an infant. Include sturdy shoes to protect feet from debris or other sharp objects post-storm.
- **First Aid Kit, Prescription Medications and Other Medicines:** People with health issues may need to carry written instructions for care and medication (including medication dosages), a list of medical devices and a list of current doctors.
- **Radio:** Battery-operated and NOAA weather radio.
- **Toiletries**
- **Cleaning Supplies:** Garbage bags, moisture wipes and other items.
- **Cash:** Banks and ATMs may not be working for long periods following a disaster.
- **Important documents:** Store all critical documents in a waterproof container and save electronically. Documents like insurance, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, etc.
- **Special Items:** Assess all family member needs. Plan for infants, elderly and individuals with access and functional needs (i.e. medical items, baby bottles, etc.).
- **Pet Care Items:** Proper identification, immunization records, ample supply of food and water, carrier or cage, medications, muzzle and leash, and a photo of you and your pet together to validate ownership.

## Know Where to Find Shelter

The time may come when you need to evacuate your home and go to a safer place. In certain situations, it may be safest for you to evacuate to a shelter. A hurricane evacuation shelter is a refuge of last resort, a place to go if you can't stay at home or with a relative, friend or co-worker, or at a nearby hotel. Hurricane shelters are also available for people who have no other place to go. The Florida Division of Emergency Management maintains a list of [open shelters on their website](#).

If you have a disability or a special need, such as a medical condition, it's vital that you register with your [local emergency management office](#). All emergency management offices maintain a list of people within the community who have disabilities or special needs so they can be assisted quickly during an emergency.

If you are eligible for a Special Needs Shelter, your kit should include the following: a list of medications and dosage, a 30-day supply of medications, vital medical equipment for those who may be electrically or oxygen dependent, backup energy sources for essential medical equipment, any special dietary needs or food, as well as personal information, including photo ID, insurance card, emergency contacts, and your primary care providers contact information.

And if you have pets, be sure that the shelter has a place for them and their supplies.

**Stay Connected.**

During severe weather and other emergencies, stay connected to local radio, television and social media outlets.

The State Assistance Information Line (SAIL), a toll-free hotline, is activated to provide accurate and up-to-date information on emergency or disaster situations impacting the State of Florida. The SAIL hotline is: 1-800-342-3557.

You can also get helpful information from the Florida Department of Health's official social media accounts. One of the fastest ways to receive accurate health-related information is to monitor [@HealthyFla](#) on Twitter and on [Facebook](#).

For more information on how to prepare for hurricane season, please contact your Florida Dept of Health in Okeechobee County (863) 462-5800

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**About the Florida Department of Health**

The department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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