



SURVIVING THE STORM

IT'S EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

When it comes to evacuating there are many decisions to make. One of those choices is whether to stay in Pinellas County or drive hundreds of miles to an out-of-town location. Finding high ground in Pinellas County is possible. The green areas on the map to the right are high enough to not be impacted by surge flooding from any hurricane. Even for a Category 5, a structure in these areas that is hardened to withstand high winds can provide safe shelter. Evacuating tens of miles to shelter within the county has its advantages. You can avoid traffic jams and the uncertainty that comes with hitting the crowded highways as other counties evacuate along with Pinellas. You can avoid going elsewhere in the state only to find that the storm has shifted and now you are in harm's way. And, you will avoid the crowds when it comes time to head home. If staying in Pinellas seems like a good decision, plan ahead to find safe shelter by asking friends, relatives or co-workers if they are willing to host you and your family during a storm or find a hotel or motel in the area.

SURGE KILLS

The greatest killer of people during hurricanes is storm surge – the dome of water pushed ashore by powerful hurricane winds. Storm surge isn't a gradual rising of water. It rushes in and out sweeping anything not secure back out to sea. People included. During Hurricane Katrina, residents of coastal Mississippi were caught off guard by storm surge flood waters. Entire buildings were moved and some of the people who didn't evacuate are still among the missing. Pinellas County is extremely vulnerable to surge flooding because of its coastal and low-lying geography. In fact, a Category 3 storm could flood 42 percent of county's households.

Staying safe from surge flooding is easy. If a hurricane is predicted for Pinellas County and you live in a zone that has been ordered to evacuate, get out. Do not stay in an area at risk for surge flooding. Do not plan to escape to higher floors and do not wait until the last minute. Get to higher ground and survive the storm.

