



Once a hurricane hits, utility outages could be long-lasting and widespread. Prepare ahead for the possibility of no power, no water and no sewer service during and after the storm. Prepare as if you were going primitive camping for a week.

## STAY SAFE DURING THE STORM

- Stay tuned to local news for updates.
- Close interior doors. Secure and brace external doors.
- If power goes out, use your weather radio for alerts. For light, use flashlights, battery-operated lanterns or chemical light sticks.
- Stay indoors and stay calm. Do not be fooled if there is a lull; it could be the eye of the storm and winds may pick up again.
- Parents should be patient with children struggling to cope with the situation.

### If your home is breached

- Take refuge in your safe room, an interior room, closet or hallway on the lowest level of your home. Remember, the center of your house is the safest.
- Lie on the floor under a table or other sturdy object if you cannot make it to a safe room.

- Consider leaving your home ONLY if remaining poses an imminent threat to your life.
- Wait until the storm has passed to tend to any damage.

## SURVIVE AFTER THE STORM

- As soon as it is safe to do so, county/city crews will begin clearing the roadways so that emergency personnel can assist residents and supplies can be brought into the area.
- It could take days for all of the roads in Pinellas County to be cleared. During this time, stay in your home. Wait for updates from officials.
- The conditions that you faced during the storm will likely continue while crews work to restore power, water and sewer service. Continue to use safety measures, such as boiling water, until officials announce that it is safe. Make use of your survival kit to meet your everyday needs.
- If emergency water and supplies are needed, they will be made available at specific staging areas. Announcements will be made at this time.

## Floodwaters

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- **Turn around - don't drown.** Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be quickly swept away.
- **Six inches** of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling.
- **One foot** of water will float many vehicles.
- **Two feet** of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including sport utility vehicles and pick-ups.



## What to Expect

### UTILITY OUTAGES

#### Power Outages

Electricity powers your lights, air conditioning, refrigerator, possibly your stove and all of the outlets that charge your phone, computers, radio, televisions, etc. Plan on what you will do without these items.

When power and water go out, there is a chance for danger in your own home, such as spoiled food, loss of safe drinking water and toilets that won't flush. You need to plan for these possibilities for during the storm, and in the days and even weeks afterward. Some things to prepare for:

#### Food Safety

It's important to know how long to keep your food before throwing it out. This is when non-perishable food is necessary.

**TWO DAYS** – The time frozen items can be stored safely if you keep the freezer door shut.

**SIX HOURS** – If the power is out for longer than this time, move perishable foods into an ice-filled cooler. Put a thermometer in the cooler to make sure it stays below 40°F. Meats and other perishable foods can stay above 40°F without spoiling for two hours. For more food safety information, contact the Florida Department of Health in Pinellas County at (727) 824-6900 or [www.pinellashealth.com](http://www.pinellashealth.com).



#### Generators

Whatever kind of generator you have, you should be running it at least once a month. If you bought a generator during past hurricane seasons and haven't run it, you need to test it and you may have to have it serviced. Call a generator repair service for expert advice.

A fuel-powered generator can keep your appliances going after a disaster and would keep you more comfortable, but there are several dangers:

- **CARBON MONOXIDE:** Use generators outdoors and away from windows and doors to avoid exposure to this deadly, colorless, odorless gas.
- **NEVER operate a generator indoors.**

- **FIRE:** Make sure the generator is cool when refilling the tank and store flammable fuel away from fuel-burning appliances.
- **ELECTRICAL SHOCK:** An electrical shock from your generator can also cause extreme harm.
- Keep the generator in a dry place.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator or use a heavy-duty, three-pronged extension cord.
- **NEVER** plug the generator into a wall outlet; this can cause electrocution.

#### Water Outages

It is always possible that the drinking water supply could be impacted during a disaster. Monitor the news for boil water notices, which means there's a possibility of contamination. In this case, you should be prepared to disinfect the water.

**BOIL** - Bring a pot of water to a **rolling boil for 1 minute** to ensure bacteria, viruses or parasites are gone.

**BLEACH** - Add 1/8 tsp. of unscented bleach per gallon of water and **let stand for 30 minutes**; bleach should contain 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite. This is **less effective**, but will work if there's no way to boil water. Bleach can also be used as a disinfectant by mixing - use nine parts water to one part bleach.

#### Sewer Outage

If a sewer outage is announced, DO NOT flush your toilet. Powered sewer lift stations may be down, which could cause a sewage back-up in your home. Use a portable toilet, like one used on a boat or camper. Or, set up an emergency toilet by using one of the following methods:

- **5-GAL BUCKET:** Line with heavy-duty trash bag and use household bleach as disinfectant. Make sure it has a tight lid.
- **TOILET BOWL:** Turn off your outside water supply first and flush once to empty before lining with a trash bag.

**Do not use cat litter** – Once given the OK by officials, dispose of the emergency toilet's contents into household commode. Thoroughly sanitize your emergency toilet with bleach before storing or disposal.

#### HAZARDOUS DRIVING

After a storm, roads may be littered with debris and many routes may be flooded. Avoid unnecessary travel and, if you must venture out, always obey "road closed" signs. **NEVER** drive through standing water. Remember: Turn around.

Don't drown. Treat any intersection with non-working traffic signals as an "all way" stop. Be prepared to stop at every intersection.



#### DELAYS IN ASSISTANCE

Emergency crews will be dispatched as soon as conditions are safe to clear major roads of debris and open up routes to reach places that have been severely damaged. **Be patient and stay home if it's safe.**

#### PRICE GOUGING

In a declared state of emergency, it is illegal to sell necessary goods or services at increased prices. If you believe a business or individual is price gouging, call Pinellas County Consumer Protection at (727) 464-6200 or the Attorney General's office at (866) 966-7226.

#### WHO TO CALL

- **9-1-1 for life-threatening emergencies.** Be aware that even emergency responders may not be able to help you during the height of the storm and they may not be able to reach you until roads are cleared. County crews will begin this work as soon as possible.
- **Citizen Information Center, (727) 464-4333 or V/TDD (727) 464-3075** – During and immediately after an emergency, county staff is available to answer residents' questions.
- **Duke Energy Outage Line, (800) 228-8485** for power outages or downed power lines.
- **Pinellas County Utilities customers, (727) 464-4000.** Other utilities customers, call your city's utility department for water or sewer issues or questions.
- **Pinellas County Public Works** – Residents in unincorporated Pinellas County can call Public Works Operations at (727) 464-8900. Residents of municipalities, can call your city's Public Works department.
- See "Important Contacts" on page 3.