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## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH URGES RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO PREPARE FOR HURRICANE SEASON

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**FT. WALTON BEACH, Fla.** — Atlantic hurricane season officially starts on June 1, and the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) encourages all residents and visitors to prepare for severe weather emergencies now. Determine any risks to your home, property or business, and update your emergency plans and supplies before Florida is threatened by a storm. It's important to stay prepared [before](#) and [after](#) a storm.

"Residents must prepare before a storm is on the horizon," said Dr. Karen Chapman, Director of the Florida Department of Health in Okaloosa County. "There may not be adequate time to prepare if you wait until a hurricane is threatening our area."

### Get A Plan!

A key 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 essentials like food and water. 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 2019 Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday was passed by the Florida Legislature and signed into law by Governor Ron DeSantis. It's an opportunity to save some money and get supplies for your emergency preparedness kit. This sales tax holiday begins Friday, May 31, 2019 and extends through Thursday, June 6, 2019. For more information and a list of qualifying items, please see the Florida Department of Revenue's [Taxpayer Information Publication on the 2019 Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday](#).

### Make a Kit.

As we stay on the lookout for upcoming storms, think about what to keep on hand in order to be prepared. The Florida Division of Emergency Management recommends that you [maintain a well-stocked emergency preparedness kit](#) 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.

- **Water:** Enough for drinking, cooking and sanitation purposes—pack a minimum of 1 gallon daily per person for 7 days.
- **Food:** Non-perishable 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 and include sturdy shoes to protect feet from debris or other sharp objects post-storm.
- **First Aid Kit, Prescription Medication 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 open or available for extended 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 arise when you may need to evacuate your home to go to a safer place. In certain situations, it may be safest for you to evacuate to a more secure location like 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 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, back-up 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. Individuals going to a Special Needs Shelter should also have a caregiver to accompany them.

**Stay Connected.**

During severe weather and other emergencies, 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 FDOH'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](#).

**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.

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and Twitter at [@HealthyFla](#). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit [www.FloridaHealth.gov](#).

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