ALL HAZARDS GUIDE
WELCOME

It is our pleasure to present to the community a new edition of the All Hazards Guide. This guide will help you prepare your family and your property for a variety of potentially significant hazards that you may face here in Highlands County. This guide is designed to answer many questions you might have when preparing to deal with these natural and man-made disasters. When these hazards occur, the consequences can be devastating if we have not properly prepared to protect our lives and property. Most of us realize the importance of preparing for the more significant hazards such as hurricanes.

However, many of these preparations are universal for all threats, including a family disaster plan and emergency supplies kit. Take time to create your family or business disaster plan by using this guide to assist you and visiting www.floridadisaster.org

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EVACUATION MAP

When preparing to deal with these natural and man-made disasters. When these hazards occur, the consequences can be devastating if we have not properly prepared to protect our lives and property. Most of us realize the importance of preparing for the more significant hazards such as hurricanes.
Each year from June 1 through Nov. 30 is hurricane season. We are at risk of being impacted by a hurricane. Unfortunately, previous hurricane seasons are not accurate indicators of our present risk. Whether it is forecasted to be a “higher than average,” “average” or “lower than average” season, activity-wise, our risk is the same. It only takes one hurricane to affect a community!

**Wind**

Hurricanes are categorized by sustained winds of 74 mph to 157+ mph. Wind caused damage is to some degree dependent upon the local building codes in effect at the time of construction, how well, and how long they have been enforced.

**Tornadoes**

Tornadoes may form in the rain bands of a hurricane and cause significant damage. Tornadoes are commonly found in the right front quadrant of the storm. These tornadoes are not as intense as those in the Midwest tornado belt, but they can inflict tremendous damage with little or no warning.

**Storm Surge**

Storm surge is an abnormal rise of water generated by the storms that move ashore prior to and during a hurricane making landfall. As the storms make landfall, inundation levels (depth of water above ground level) of 2 to 30 feet may occur along coastal areas and major rivers of Florida. This is enough to inundate most populated areas. The severity of damage depends upon the hurricane’s size, forward speed, its direction of movement and intensity. Storm surge has the potential to cause the greatest loss of life, cripple communications, cause sewers and storm water basins to back up and contaminate drinking water supplies. Storm surge can leave roads, streets and bridges filled with sand and debris, and in some cases structurally unstable.

**Heavy Rain**

Over the past 30 years, freshwater flooding has caused more drowning deaths than storm surge flooding. Torrential rains associated with slow moving, or stationary, tropical storms and hurricanes on average produce 16 inches of rain within a 24-36-hour period. Heavy rains can create massive health problems and have a disastrous effect on a community’s ability to recover quickly.

**Anticipate flooding**

As a hurricane or tropical storm moves closer to our area, the Emergency Operations Center will be activated. Emergency Management personnel will remain in frequent contact with the National Hurricane Center and the local Weather Service office to closely monitor the development and progress of the hurricane or tropical storm.

Your local Emergency Management Agency will utilize the area media outlets to provide frequent updates on the storm, recommend emergency protective actions and issue evacuation orders. If you do not evacuate when ordered you will be without fire rescue, law enforcement or emergency medical support until the waters subside.
## SAFFIR-SIMPSON WIND SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sustained Winds</th>
<th>Types of Damage Due to Hurricane Winds</th>
<th>Historic Storms</th>
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| 1        | 74-95 mph       | **Very dangerous winds will produce some damage:**  
- Older (pre-1994 construction) mobile homes could be destroyed, especially if they are not anchored properly. Well build homes can have damage to roof, shingles, vinyl siding and gutters.  
- Unprotected windows may break if struck by flying debris.  
- Large branches of trees could snap and shallowly rooted trees may be toppled.  
- Extensive damage to power lines and poles likely will result in power outages that could last a few days to several days. | Hurricane Hermine (2016) |
| 2        | 96-110 mph      | **Devastating damage will occur:**  
- Devastating damage to newer mobile homes, well-built homes and other buildings will experience significant damage.  
- Many uprooted trees, significant road blockage.  
- Most commercial signs destroyed.  
- High risk of injury or death to people, pets and livestock due to debris.  
- Electricity and water could be unavailable for days to weeks. | Hurricane Ike (2008) |
| 3        | 111-129 mph     | **Catastrophic damage will occur:**  
- Complete destruction to newer mobile homes, catastrophic damage to well-built homes and other buildings.  
- Residential areas will be isolated by downed trees and power poles.  
- Nearly all commercial signage, fences and canopies will be destroyed.  
- Steel frame in older industrial buildings can collapse.  
- Electricity and water could be unavailable for weeks to months. | Hurricane Katrina (2008)  
Ivan (2004)  
Jeanne (2004) |
| 4        | 130-156 mph     | **Catastrophic damage will occur:**  
- Complete destruction to newer mobile homes, catastrophic damage to well-built homes and other buildings.  
- Residential areas will be isolated by downed trees and power poles.  
- Nearly all commercial signage, fences and canopies will be destroyed.  
- Steel frame in older industrial buildings can collapse.  
- Electricity and water could be unavailable for weeks to months. | Hurricane Charley (2004)  
Irma (2017) |
| 5        | 157 mph or higher | **Catastrophic damage will occur:**  
- Almost complete destruction of all mobile homes will occur, regardless of age or construction.  
- High percentage of industrial and low-rise apartment buildings will be destroyed.  
- High percentage of frame homes will be destroyed.  
- Nearly all trees and power poles will be downed.  
- Power and water outages can last for months. Affected areas can be uninhabitable for weeks to months. | Hurricane Andrew (1992)  
Michael (2018) |
Preparing Your Boat for a Hurricane

**Precautions for Boat Owners**

The key to protecting your boat from hurricanes or any severe, threatening weather is planning, preparation and timely action. *The following precautions and checklists are meant as guidelines only.*

Each boat owner needs a plan unique to the type of boat, local boating environment, the severe weather conditions likely to occur in that region and the characteristics of safe havens and/or plans for protection. Listen to your local Emergency Operations for specific evacuations related to boats.

**Do Not Stay Aboard.**

Winds during any hurricane can exceed 100 mph and tornados are often associated with these storms. First and foremost, protect human life.

1. Prior to the hurricane season, develop a detailed plan of action to secure your vessel in the marina. If permitted, remove your boat from the threatened area, or take your boat to a previously identified hurricane refuge. Before hurricane season, practice your plan to ensure that it works.

2. Arrange for a friend to carry out your plans if you are out of town during hurricane season.

3. Check your lease or storage rental agreement with the marina or storage area. Know your responsibilities and liabilities as well as those of the marina.

4. Consolidate all records, including insurance policies, a recent photo of your vessel, boat lease agreement with the marina or storage area, and telephone numbers of appropriate authorities (i.e., harbor master, Coast Guard, insurance agent, etc.) and keep them in your possession.

5. Maintain an inventory of both the items removed and those left on board. Items of value should be marked so that they can be readily identified if dispersed by the storm.

6. When a hurricane is approaching and after you have made anchoring or mooring provisions, remove all movable equipment such as canvas, sails, dinghies, radios, cushions, biminis and roller furling sails. Lash down everything you cannot remove such as tillers, wheels, booms, etc. Make sure the electrical system is cut off unless you plan to leave the boat in the water, and remove the battery to eliminate the risk of fire or other damage.

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**Picking Up the Pieces**

**WATER PRECAUTIONS**

After a natural disaster, damaged water pipes can cause pressure to drop, possibly letting in contaminated ground water. The concern with the water is bacterial contamination.

- Disinfect tap water you use for anything, including for your pets.
- Boil it for at least 10 minutes, or use chemicals: eight drops of chlorine bleach (without scent or other additives) or tincture of iodine per gallon. Let the water sit at least 10 minutes before drinking.
- If you wash dishes in tap water, rinse them in extra-chlorinated water. Use about 15 drops of chlorine on the dishes to keep them clean until next use.
- Showering or bathing in tap water is fine. If you cut yourself shaving, apply a disinfectant such as rubbing alcohol or antibiotic cream.

**FOOD SAFETY RULES**

- Don’t trust your sense of smell.
- Throw away perishables.
- Wipe the interior of any food container with baking soda and water.
- Fill your freezer with plastic jugs of water. A full freezer stays cold longer. Keep the freezer door closed as much as possible. Foods will stay frozen longer. Meats and solid items stay frozen longer than baked goods. Refreezing partially thawed food is risky. Generally, if the foods still contain ice crystals, they’re okay to refreeze although their quality may suffer. Dry ice keeps food frozen for approximately 1 to 4 days. Without air conditioning, food waste will start to smell rapidly. Use small plastic garbage bags; tie or seal and place in a larger bag or can outdoors.

**CLOTHING & FURNITURE PRESERVATION**

- Take down wet draperies and spread to dry.
- Take furniture outside to dry, but don’t put in the sun. Put under a covered patio or tarp.
- Elevate wet upholstered furniture if it is resting on carpet.
- Hang comforters and blankets out to dry.
- Dry pillows outdoors, but not in direct sunlight.
After The Storm

After major storms our lives can change drastically. These disasters affect everyone to some extent. Relief supplies and other aid will be arriving as quickly as possible, but it may take several days. Try to remain calm, patient and understanding. Your attitude affects you and everyone around you.

Remember that the longest and hardest part of dealing with a hurricane is the recovery.

There may be residual flooding and roads may be blocked for days or weeks, making damaged areas inaccessible. This may mean that you will not be allowed back to your home for days, or possibly weeks.

Emergency workers want your return home to be as safe as possible and need time to clear safe access and secure hazards. Listen to local media for re-entry information and do not go into unsafe areas. Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges. Do not go sightseeing.

If you evacuated out of the area consider staying away for a few extra days.

Before you decide to return, consider the following:

- Power will be out for an undetermined period of time.
- Telephone service will be out or limited. This includes 911 calling.
- Municipal water supplies may be unsafe to drink without boiling or chemical treatment. Treat all water as unsafe until you are notified that it is safe.
- Sewer lift stations will not work, meaning toilets will not flush and sinks not drain, and they may backup into your home or property.
- Inspect your home for damage. Check for water and sewer line damage. Check the electrical system. Turn off the main breaker until you are sure the system is safe. Check for natural gas and/or bottled gas leaks. Do not enter or stay in a structure if you smell gas.
- Be careful when you go outside and pay attention to where you walk and stand. Avoid any downed wires or standing water. Report downed wires to your utility company or to emergency services.
- Check above you for low hanging objects or loose things that could fall.
- Beware of wild animals that might be dangerous. Fire ants, bees, wasps, snakes, rodents and wild animals will be seeking high ground. They can create health and safety hazards.
- Be careful of domestic animals, even ones you know. They may be frightened or injured and more dangerous than you expect.
- Do not connect generators to your house wiring! Service personnel can be killed, or fires started elsewhere. Use your generator only in a well-ventilated area and shut it down during refueling.
- REMEMBER: Insurance companies will send special disaster assistance teams, as will the state and federal governments. Still, it may be more than a week before those teams are able to get into operation.
- Take pictures of the damage, both to the house and its contents for insurance claims.
- Have all your insurance documents ready and be patient!
- When help does arrive, some may be in the form of the unscrupulous fortune seekers. Do not sign repair contracts until you have checked out the contractor. Do not pay for any services until the work has been completed.
- Ask for a valid contractor’s license. Is the contractor bonded? Does the price seem fair? Are high-pressure tactics being used? Report the suspicious contractor to authorities to be checked out! If you see unfairly high prices being charged, report it! Local authorities want to help our residents by requiring competence and fairness.

For more information, contact the Emergency Operations Center at 863-402-6800.
Risk Shelters: When Highlands County will be impacted by high winds, the following shelters may be opened. As these shelters approach capacity, we may open a second tier of approved shelters (not listed). Note not all shelters on this list may be opened. Media will need to be monitored to receive information on open shelters or if shelters are at capacity. Risk shelters are typically meant to house people for 12-72 hours until the storm or threat passes. Because these centers must open quickly, it may not be possible to provide comfort items to evacuees (such as cots and blankets), until post-storm sheltering is in place.

AVON PARK
Avon Park Recreation Center
207 E. State St., Avon Park

LAKE PLACID
Lake Placid High School
202 Green Dragon Drive, Lake Placid

SEBRING
Alan Jay Arena
781 Magnolia Ave., Sebring

SPECIAL NEEDS
Bert J. Harris Jr. Agricultural Center
4509 George Blvd., Sebring

Below are some items you should consider bringing when going to a shelter:

- Drinking water
  (1 Gallon per Person per Day)
- Food & Snacks
  (at minimum a 3 day supply)
- Lawn chair or bed roll
- Book or electronic entertainment item with head phones
- Prescriptions
- Identification and Copies of Important Documents
- Sanitation Items
- Change of clothing

Remember weapons and alcoholic beverages are not permitted. The only animals allowed are registered service animals.

There is a substantial shelter space deficit throughout SW Florida. So, if you have a safe place to go, plan to use that location instead of a risk shelter. But, if you have no safe place to go, shelters will be open.

Here are some important points to remember if you choose to go to a risk shelter:

- When you arrive, give your name and address to the shelter manager so you can be located, if necessary.
- If you leave the shelter, check out with the shelter manager.
- Accountability is important for your safety.
- Shelters are not able to provide any conveniences or luxuries.
- Bring your family’s disaster survival kit to ensure proper provisions.

Protecting your Pets

In a hurricane, pets are subject to the same hazards as we are and have many of the same needs. Remember, risk shelters do not permit pets! The best plan is to identify a safer location that allows pets (a friend’s home or pet friendly hotel). That way, you can keep your pets with you when you evacuate.

- Check the internet to locate hotels that accept pets.
- You should also have a supply kit for your pets. Include non-perishable food, water and medications.
- Keep a sturdy cage or carrier to comfortably hold your pet and/or a collar and leash.
- Make sure all vaccinations are up-to-date and keep a copy of the records.
- Also keep several good photos to help identify your pet should you become separated.
- Place identification on your pet’s collar or consider using a microchip to identify your pet.
- Consult your veterinarian for more details.
People with Special Needs

• Some people have medical issues that cannot be accommodated in a regular risk shelter.

• For those people whose health would quickly and dramatically deteriorate in a risk shelter and have no other safe place to go, there are Special Care shelters available.

• You must complete an application to see if your medical issues qualify for a Special Care shelter. There are specific criteria and requirements to be eligible for the Special Care shelter, which may vary somewhat from county to county.

• You must have a caregiver with you during your stay at the Special Care shelter.

• During an emergency we have very limited staff working in the shelters, so your caregiver is critically important for your health and safety.

• As at any other shelter, you must bring your emergency supplies with you.

• In any emergency situation you should have a plan for where you will go if you cannot return to your home because of damage.

• Your local Emergency Operations Center can help you register and answer any questions.

10 QUESTIONS to ask if your family member resides in an assisted living facility, or nursing home

1. Does the facility have a currently approved Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan? If yes, may I see a copy of the approval letter? If no, ask them why, as it is required.

2. Do you maintain a minimum 72-hour supply of food, water, medications, etc. for each resident?

3. Do you have an emergency generator? If yes, to what does it supply power during a blackout?

4. Under what circumstances would my family member be evacuated?

5. Can my family member be released to me for the purpose of evacuation?

6. Who will notify me of the impending evacuation of my family member?

7. Whom should I call to receive current information on my family member?

8. What facilities might my family member be evacuated to? Where are they located?

9. Who will notify me that my family member is returning to this facility?

10. If my family member evacuates with me, who do I contact to determine when the facility is open and operating?
What is a tornado?

A tornado is a violent storm with whirling winds of up to 300 miles per hour. It appears as a funnel shaped cloud, from gray to black in color, which extends to the ground from the base of the thunderstorm.

A tornado spins like a top and may sound like the roaring of an airplane or locomotive. In Florida, summer tornadoes generally move at speeds less than 20 MPH and can move in any direction.

Winter tornadoes tend to move at speeds less than 40 MPH and generally move from the southwest to northeast. Their direction of travel can be erratic and may change suddenly.

These short-lived storms are the most violent of all atmospheric phenomena and the most destructive over a small area.

For Tornado Watches:

When conditions are right for a tornado, there are a few things, listed below, you should do:

Stay tuned to a local weather station or listen to your NOAA Weather Radio.

Secure any loose objects outdoors, or move them inside.

For Tornado Warnings:

This means a tornado has been spotted near your area or is predicted to come your way. TAKE SHELTER IMMEDIATELY!! Do not leave shelter until you are sure no further danger exists. Remember, there is no guaranteed safe place during a tornado.

Here are some examples of places you may be in:

In a Motor Vehicle: The least desirable place to be during a tornado is in a motor vehicle. Never try to outrun a tornado in your car. Stop your vehicle and get out. Seek shelter elsewhere. Do not get under or next to your vehicle. A ditch or ground depression will help if a tornado shelter is not nearby.

At School: Follow the school disaster plan. Stay away from auditoriums, gymnasiums and other areas with wide, free-span roofs. Go into center hallways and stay away from windows.

Open Country: Move away from the tornado’s projected path at right angles. Seek shelter in a ditch, ravine, or culvert. Even a low spot in the ground will give you some protection. Stay away from trees and remember to protect your head.

In a Home or Condo: The best place to go is the innermost hallway on the lowest floor. An interior closet is relatively safe. An interior bathroom is even better. The walls are close together and the bathtub, sink and toilet help support debris in case the house collapses. AVOID WINDOWS since flying debris does most of the killing. The worst kind of flying debris is broken glass. DO NOT open any windows to equalize pressure when a tornado approaches. If a tornado actually gets close enough for the pressure drop to be experienced, the strong winds have probably already caused the most significant damage. Opening windows may actually increase damage.

In a Mobile or Manufactured Home: These homes are easy to damage by flying debris and are one of the least desirable places to be during a tornado. If a tornado approaches seek other shelter immediately. Go to a tornado shelter on foot, if possible. Do not drive your car. Do not get under your mobile home. If no other shelter is available, lie down in a ditch or a ground depression.

Tornado Watch or Tornado Warning?

The National Weather Service broadcasts severe weather conditions over the emergency alerting system as well as NOAA Weather Radio.

When they post a tornado watch they want the public to know that conditions are right for a tornado. When a tornado warning is posted for a given area, a tornado has been sighted or has been detected on radar. The warning will include those cities in the path of the storm. In general, a watch means, “Caution, Watch the Sky” and a warning means “Danger, Take Cover.”

What protective actions should I take for tornadoes?
UTILITY TIPS

WATER

Locate the emergency water shut-off valve for your residence and remove any shrubbery or obstructions. Test the water shut-off valve to be sure that it is operational. If the shut-off valve is not operational have it repaired or replaced.

Turn the emergency water shut-off valve to the off position if you are leaving your residence prior to a storm. This will help minimize damage to the interior of your home should a pipe burst inside.

Follow the manufacturer’s recommendations on turning off your hot water heater and unplug it. Some hot water heaters may be damaged if the water supply is turned off for an extended period of time.

Locate your sewer clean-out lid and remove any shrubbery or obstructions in case the clean-out needs to be accessed. Due to power outages, water treatment plants will be operating under limited conditions. Water pressures will be reduced!

Because of reduced pressures and the limited operations of lift stations, WATER CONSERVATION IS A MUST! Just because power has been restored to your home does not mean that power has been restored to all lift stations or water and wastewater treatment plants.

- Turn off all sprinklers.
- Remember to reset your irrigation timer once power has been restored.
- Abstain from running dishwashers and clothes washers.
- Limit the amount of water used during a shower or the amount to fill the bathtub.
- Limit the amount of toilet flushing.
- Abstain from any other outdoor use of water that is not absolutely necessary.

ELECTRICITY

A strong storm or hurricane can cause significant damage, resulting in widespread power outages. Restoration efforts must be prioritized, starting with facilities that provide the most critical services:

Damaged power plants and power lines from the plants, since these must be fixed before service can be restored anywhere.

Organizations that provide critical infrastructure functions to the community, such as hospitals, police and fire stations.

Major power lines that serve large numbers of customers.

Smaller power lines such as service to a single street.

Individual homes or businesses still without power.

KEEPING SAFE DURING A POWER OUTAGE

When a power outage occurs, safety is a very important concern. Here are some basic tips that will keep you, your family and your employees safe while the power is out:

- Assume all cables and wires are energized and stay away.
- Keep away from flooded and debris-laden areas because they may be hiding downed lines.
- Run your portable generator outside your house or building and connect appliances or equipment directly to it.
- If you leave your home, turn off appliances that may have been on when the power went out, or turn off your main breaker.
- Avoid driving in damaged areas. You might interfere with rescue or restoration efforts, as well as jeopardize your own safety.

Help keep telephone lines clear for emergency calls. Only call to report downed power lines, or if your neighbors’ power has been restored and you are without electricity. Don't trim trees or remove debris located near downed power lines. If you must remove debris from your home, don’t pile it under or near electrical lines or equipment.

Any damage to your home's electric system must be repaired by a licensed electrician and inspected by a designated agency before power can be restored.

Check your weather-head (located on the roof where your service connects to the pole) and your meter box to make sure they are not damaged.

If you suspect there is water in the walls or ceiling, stay away from electrical outlets and contact a licensed electrician to repair the damage.

If you need to live in temporary quarters on your property, a licensed electrician can install a temporary service pole. After the pole is inspected by a designated agency your electric utility can provide power.
When the power goes off many residents turn to emergency generators to power refrigerators, freezers, lights, fans and other appliances. If you use a generator, extreme caution is required. While convenient and useful, generators can create hazards for homeowners and electric utility workers. Always read and follow the manufacturer’s safety and operating instructions.

- Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless and tasteless poison gas. It is a component of the exhaust from the generator engine. The symptoms of exposure are subtle, but deadly. Never run your generator inside your home, garage or in any enclosed space. Inexpensive CO detectors, similar to smoke alarms, are available and recommended as an added safety precaution.

- To avoid Carbon Monoxide poisoning never use a generator indoors or in attached garages. Only operate the generator outdoors in a well-ventilated, dry area away from air intakes to the home.

- To avoid electrocution, plug individual appliances into the generator using heavy duty, outdoor rated cords with a wire gauge adequate for the appliance load. Do not operate more appliances and equipment than the output rating of the generator. This will overload and damage the generator and possibly create a fire hazard.

- If a generator is connected to the house wiring, the home must have a transfer switch installed by a licensed electrician. A transfer switch connects a house to the generator and disconnects it from the utility power. This prevents back feeding, or energizing circuits outside your home. Back feeding most commonly occurs when a generator is connected directly to the electric panel or circuit in a home. Feeding power back into the utility system during an outage will energize the transformer serving the house and could pose a serious threat to crews working to restore power in the area who may not know they are working with an energized line.

- Do not store fuel indoors. Gasoline and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly labeled, non-glass, safety containers. They should not be stored in a garage if a fuel-burning appliance is in the garage. The vapor from gasoline can travel invisibly along the ground and be ignited by pilot lights or electric arcs caused by turning on the lights. Avoid spilling fuel on hot components. Put out all flames or cigarettes when handling gasoline. Always have a fully charged, approved fire extinguisher located near the generator. Never attempt to refuel a portable generator while it is running.

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A STORM

After a major storm event such as a hurricane, local governments in combination with the state and federal government may declare a state of emergency. If this happens and there is need of debris collection, Highlands County will work in conjunction with FEMA to engage with private contractors through contracts which are in place prior to the event. Highlands County will make several locations available for disposal of debris for these contractors. Residents may also haul their debris material to the Highlands County Landfill located at 12700 Arbuckle Creek Road in Sebring. This will be the only location where the public may dispose of debris material themselves. The FEMA/Highlands County debris collection program will be available for collection of qualifying debris. Please see requirements below.

- Public roadways will be immediately cleared of debris from the travel ways by the maintaining agency for the roadway (FDOT, Highlands County, municipality, etc.) as a first priority. Following the initial road clearing effort, residents may start placing debris from qualifying areas in the public right-of-way for collection.

- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) roadways (such as Highway 27, Highway 98, SR-64, SR-66, SR-70, SR-17)- FDOT will make one pass through their roadways collecting debris in the right-of-way. Once FDOT crews make their one pass, all future debris from properties adjoining these roadways will have to be taken to the Highlands County Landfill for disposal. This will be the responsibility of the property owner.

- Local Road Right-of-ways - Highlands County, City of Avon Park, City of Sebring, Town of Lake Placid, Sun'n Lake Improvement District, Spring Lake Improvement District: Highlands County will engage the private contractor under contract in accordance with FEMA guidelines. Per FEMA requirements, only debris originating from improved residential properties placed in the public right-of-way will be collected. Depending on several factors, maintained right-of-ways may be cleared before crews clear non-County/City maintained public right-of-ways. Public maintained roadways are typically identified by a green road name sign with white lettering.

- Private Right-of-Ways - Private right-of-ways such as those maintained by property owner associations may be considered if allowed by FEMA. The maintaining entity of these roadways will need to contact the Highlands County Engineering Department for requirements to be included in the FEMA Private Property Debris Removal program.

The FEMA/Highlands County debris collection program will be available for collection of qualifying debris. Please see requirements below.
Applications will need to be filed with Highlands County and approval received from FEMA prior to any work occurring by the FEMA contractors. Approval for collection may take as long as 30-days, or possibly more. Private maintained roadways typically have a white road name sign with green letters.

- Private roadways easements - The FEMA program does not allow collection of debris material from private roadways easements. Property owners with any debris from properties accessed from these easements will be required to make arrangements to have the debris disposed of properly. These roads also have a white road name sign with green letters.

- Areas that WILL NOT be included in the private property debris removal program include commercial properties, golf courses, agriculture properties, industrial properties, and vacant properties of all zonings.

**What will be collected from qualifying areas?**
Vegetative debris such as trees and branches or inert building material debris. The vegetative debris and inert building materials need to be kept separate from each other. Mixing of materials may result in delays in getting picked up or may result in non-pick up completely. This does not include any hazardous waste, furniture, clothing, or other household waste items. Non-qualifying items should be properly disposed of at the Highlands County Landfill or set out for normal garbage collection following requirements of your solid waste service provider.

The length of the clearing project will vary depending on severity of the damage and the amount of debris to be collected. It is important that any debris qualifying for collection be placed in the right-of-way as soon as safely possible. All material to be collected should be ready for collection within 30 days after the event if possible to avoid being missed. Check the Highlands County website (hcbcc.org) or County Facebook page for collection deadlines or more information should an event occur.

Remember when placing material in the right-of-way for collection, to keep piles out of the travel lanes, out from under other trees or branches and stay away from obstacles such as fire hydrants, mail boxes, trees, low power lines, and utility poles.
For more information, call Emergency Operations Center at 863-385-1112 or Emergency Management’s Citizen Emergency Information Line at 863-402-6800.

Most property owners have homeowner’s insurance coverage insuring them from catastrophic loss. However, a homeowner’s policy does not protect you from loss in flooding or rising water. To insure your home from Flood (rising water) you must have a separate flood insurance policy. Our county qualifies and participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. We qualify by making building requirements stringent and in accordance with the Florida Building Code and local flood damage prevention ordinances.

If you don’t have a Flood Insurance policy, check with your insurance agent for a price quote on your home and your personal property. Don’t wait until the hurricane warning has been issued. There is a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance becomes effective, unless you are purchasing a new home with a mortgage. Additional information can be obtained from your county Emergency Management office. The Department of Financial Services (DFS) recommends every homeowner should have an insurance check up with their agent before hurricane season starts. Do I need flood insurance, check on windstorm coverage, do I need more coverage, and what does my policy cover and exclude?

If you rent, DFS recommends that you purchase Renters Insurance to cover your contents in the home or apartment. There are free consumer guides, including homeowner’s insurance information available on our website under the listing of Consumer Help. You will also find an Insurance Library available to answer your questions. Do not forget to download your Homeowner’s Financial Tool Kit from www.myfloridacfo.com, helping you make informed decisions when it comes to disasters.

**BEFORE THE STORM**
- Make sure you know your coverage
- Check your policy for flood and windstorm coverage
- Know what your current policy does and does not cover
- Update your list of personal belongings
- Safeguard your records

**AFTER THE STORM**
- Report damage to your insurance agent or insurance company immediately
- Make and document emergency repairs
- Make copies of anything that is given to the adjuster or sent to the insurance company.
- Take precautions if damages require you to leave your home
- Secure your property. Remove valuable items. Lock windows and doors.
- Contact your insurance agent and leave a phone number where you can be reached.

**LOOTING**
Looting has occurred in many communities after a hurricane. Criminals may take advantage of the opportunity to enter evacuated homes and businesses. Local law enforcement agencies and, if necessary, the National Guard will do everything possible to minimize looting.

For more information, call Emergency Operations Center at 863-385-1112 or Emergency Management’s Citizen Emergency Information Line at 863-402-6800.
SEVERE WEATHER

THUNDERSTORMS & LIGHTNING

It doesn’t have to be raining for lightning to strike. Almost all lightning will occur within 10 miles of its parent thunderstorm, but it CAN strike much farther than that. Lightning detection equipment has confirmed bolts striking almost 50 miles away, but these are very rare. Thunderstorms can produce several types of hazardous weather including large hail, damaging winds, flash floods and tornados. [Lightning is the number one cause of weather-related fatalities in Florida, averaging 10 fatalities and 40 injuries a year. Approximately half of the deaths and injuries occur during outdoor recreational activities, about 40% of those occur on the water.]

Where to Go
The safest location during a thunderstorm is inside a large enclosed structure. If lightning strikes the building, the plumbing and wiring will conduct the electricity more efficiently than a human body. If no buildings are available, then an enclosed metal vehicle such as an automobile, van or school bus makes a decent alternative.

Where NOT to Go
Not all types of buildings or vehicles are safe during thunderstorms. Buildings are NOT SAFE (even if they are “grounded”) if they have exposed openings. These include beach shacks, metal sheds, picnic shelters/pavilions, carports, and baseball dugouts. Porches are dangerous as well. Convertible vehicles offer no safety from lightning, even if the top is “up.” Other vehicles which are NOT SAFE during lightning storms are those which have open cabs, such as golf carts, tractors, and construction equipment. Remember, it is not the rubber tires of a vehicle that protect you from lightning. The metal shell of a vehicle gives the electricity from the lightning a path to flow around you.

What to Do
Once inside a sturdy building, stay away from electrical appliances and plumbing fixtures. You may want to unplug valuable electrical equipment so they will not be damaged. As an added safety measure, go to an interior room. If you are inside a vehicle, roll the windows up and avoid contact with any conducting paths leading to the outside of the vehicle such as radios, CB’s, and the ignition or you could be badly burned if lightning strikes.

What NOT to Do
Lightning can travel great distances through power lines, especially in rural areas. Do not use electrical appliances, including corded telephones and desktop computers, unless it is an emergency. Cordless phones, cell phones, laptop and tablet computers are safe to use. Stay away from the windows and do not take a shower or use the bathtub.
What should I do if I am in a boat on the open water during a thunderstorm?

Thunderstorms over the coastal waters in Florida are generally unpredictable. Even with the best weather reports, boaters can still be caught in open waters when a thunderstorm develops. With or without a lightning protection system, it is critical to take additional precautions to protect yourself.

Stay in the center of the cabin, if so designed. If there is no cabin, stay low in the boat. Don’t be a stand-up lightning rod!

Keep arms and legs in the boat. Don’t dangle them over the side.

Stop fishing, water skiing, scuba diving, swimming or other water activities when there is lightning or even when weather conditions look threatening. Lightning can strike well ahead of a storm.

Disconnect and do not use or touch the major electronic equipment, including the radio, throughout the duration of the storm.

Lower, remove or tie down the radio antenna and other protruding lightning protection system.

To the degree possible, avoid contacting two components connected to the system at the same time. For example, the gear levers and the spotlight may both be connected to the system. If you have a hand on both when lightning strikes, the path of the electric current could be directly through your heart – a very deadly path!

At least one person on board should be competent in CPR and First Aid. Many individuals struck by lightning can be saved with prompt First Aid.

HEAT EMERGENCIES

Heat emergencies are of three types: heat cramps (caused by loss of salt), heat exhaustion (caused by dehydration) and heat stroke (shock).

Remove the victim from the heat and have him/her lie down. Apply cool compresses, elevate the feet, drink fluids and use a fan to blow cool air. Get medical help if needed.

Heat emergencies are easily preventable by taking precautions in hot weather. If the problem isn’t addressed, heat cramps (caused by loss of salt from heavy sweating) can lead to heat exhaustion (caused by dehydration), which can progress to heat stroke.

Heat stroke, the most serious of the three, can cause shock, brain damage, organ failure, and even death.

The early symptoms of a heat emergency include: Profuse sweating, fatigue, thirst, and muscle cramps.

Later symptoms of heat exhaustion include: Headache, dizziness and lightheadedness, weakness, nausea and vomiting, cool moist skin, and dark urine.

The symptoms of heat stroke include: Fever, irrational behavior, confusion, dry, hot and red skin, rapid shallow breathing and pulse, seizures and unconsciousness.

Call 911 if:

- The person loses consciousness at anytime.
- There is any other change in the person’s alertness (for example, confusion or seizures).
- Fever (temp above 104°F)
- The person shows signs of shock (bluish lips and finger-nails and decreased alertness).
- Other symptoms of heat stroke are present (like rapid pulse or rapid breathing).
- The person’s condition does not improve, or worsens despite treatment.

Prevention

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in hot weather.
- Rest frequently and seek shade when possible.
- Avoid exercise or strenuous physical activity outside during hot or humid weather.
- Drink plenty of fluids every day. Drink more fluids before, during, and after physical activity.
- Be especially careful to avoid overheating if you are taking drugs that impair heat regulation, or if you are overweight or elderly.
FLOODS

What causes flooding?
Because of the low land elevations and the high-water tables over much of our area, flooding is likely to occur in some areas during summer showers and thunderstorms. A storm with a considerable amount of rain in a short period of time will cause flooding in low-lying areas throughout the county even though the canal network and drainage ditches will alleviate some flooding.

What protective measures do I need to take for floods?
Protective measures are broken down into four stages: Preparatory stage; Flood Warning; During the Flood; After the Flood.

Preparatory Stage
Keep a stock of food that requires no cooking.
Keep a first aid kit available.
Keep your vehicle fueled.
Consider purchasing flood insurance for your home and belongings (Check the insurance section of this guide for further information).
Turn to radio or television or NOAA Weather Radio for flood warnings.
Obey warnings from emergency officials; evacuate when notice is issued.
Know your evacuation zone and route to a place of safety.
Know what supplies to take with you.
Shut off electricity and water to your home prior to leaving.
Be cautious and avoid flood prone areas when evacuating.

Steps should be taken to reduce property losses.
Move furniture to upper floors or higher locations.
Sandbags can help slow down flood waters from reaching your possessions.
Retrofitting, such as building flood walls or elevating a structure is a way of minimizing loss due to flooding.
Know what your current insurance policy does and does not cover. Coverage may be subject to change with certain improvements to your home and require adherence to certain regulations.
Flood Warning Stage
Store drinking water in sterile, covered containers. Move valuable objects higher. Place them on shelves, tables and countertops. Turn off electricity.

During the Flood Stage
Stay on higher ground. Do not drive on a flooded road. If your vehicle stalls, abandon it immediately and seek higher ground. Don’t attempt to wade across a flowing stream that is above your knees. Don’t allow children to play in standing water. It may be contaminated with chemicals or sewage.

After the Flood Stage
Do not eat fresh food that has come into contact with floodwater. Drink only bottled or previously stored water. Stay away from disaster areas. You may hamper rescue recovery operations. Do not handle live electrical equipment. Report downed power lines to the local law enforcement authorities. Keep tuned to local radio and television stations for instructions on how to obtain medical care and emergency assistance such as water, food, clothing, shelter and updated weather reports and conditions.

HIGHLANDS COUNTY IS STORM READY
StormReady is a voluntary program created by the National Weather Service to help communities prepare and protect residents from hazardous weather. StormReady is a nationwide program focused on helping community leaders and emergency managers strengthen local safety programs. At this time there are 1,868 StormReady sites nationally. StormReady communities are better prepared for hazardous weather conditions through planning, education and awareness.

To be officially StormReady, a community must:
• Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center
• Have more than one method of receiving severe weather forecasts and warnings, and alerting the public
• Create a system that monitors local weather conditions
• Promote public readiness through community seminars
• Develop a hazardous weather plan, to include training severe weather spotters (SKYWARN) and training exercises.

For more information, visit www.weather.gov/stormready
WILDFIRE SAFETY

Before
- Keep the surfaces beneath decks, sheds, propane tank, vehicles and boats free of debris, leaves and flammable vegetation. Maintain a 30-foot “safe zone” around your home, with no dry vegetation or flammable items.
- Select building materials, plants, and yard decorations that are resistant to fire.
- Clean out gutters and downspouts of debris and leaves. Make sure you have a non-flammable roof covering and assembly.
- Have two ways out of your neighborhood just in case one way is blocked.

During
- Listen to local radio and TV stations for wildfire information.
- Evacuate immediately if evacuation is instructed or if you think the wildfire is close.
- Close all home openings to limit exposure to smoke and dust.
- Move outside furniture and plants indoors.

After
- Do not return until officials declare the area safe.
- Use caution when entering burned areas, as hot spots may still exist and can flare up without warning.
- Wet debris down to minimize breathing in dust.
- Do not drink water that you think may be contaminated.
- Discard food that has been exposed to smoke or dust.

For more wildfire tips, please call your local Florida Forest Service at 863-462-5160 or visit www.FreshFromFlorida.com
HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

CHEMICAL
The word reminds us of the latest news story about an accident or environmental damage from improper storage, use or disposal of chemicals. However, many aspects of modern life are made possible or improved by responsible use and handling of chemicals.

AROUND THE HOUSE
When we think of hazardous chemicals, we tend to think of manufacturing plants, trains, cars or trucks. While this is valid, we should also consider our own kitchen cabinets, garage, pool and other places in our home where potentially harmful chemicals are a part of our everyday life. We become so familiar with them that we may have forgotten that they can injure or even kill us.

No matter how comfortable you are with a product, here are some important safety reminders:
• ALWAYS follow label directions
• Never mix chemicals
• Use only for approved purposes and in approved concentrations
• Store and dispose of safely, in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions
• Keep away from children
• Never store in containers that look like food or something to drink
• Understand first aid directions
• Keep the number of your local poison control center handy

If you suspect someone has been exposed to a chemical, consult your physician or FL Poison Information Network at: 1-800-222-1222

If injuries are serious or the victim has trouble breathing, call 911!
TRANSPORTATION

Everyday, hazardous materials are transported safely by highway, rail, air and sea. Because of the design, construction and safety features of chemical transportation containers, significant releases are rare. However, there are occasional accidents. In an accident you can be affected either at home or on the highway. If you are at home you will be notified through the media or local public safety agencies. Follow instructions quickly and carefully. You may be ordered to evacuate or to “shelter in place” depending on the chemicals involved. If ordered to evacuate do so immediately.

Shelter in Place means to stay inside where you are. If you are directed to shelter in place, close all windows and doors and turn off the air conditioner. Use duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal around doors, windows and other openings. If this is not available, damp towels or blankets can be used. The goal is to prevent outside air from entering your home. Do not go outside or open doors or windows until local authorities tell you it is safe. Once the all clear is given, you should ventilate your home by opening doors and windows to purge any possible contaminants.

If you see or are involved in a traffic accident, take special care to avoid hazardous chemicals. Do not walk or drive through a vapor cloud or spill. Pay attention to any placards – diamond shaped panels with numbers and/or symbols on them. Provide the placard number to authorities. Small quantities of hazardous material may not have a placard.

The most important step to protect yourself and others is to avoid or reduce exposure to the chemical. If able, evacuate. Move crosswind to safety and keep other people from entering the area.

Nuclear Power Plants

Florida has three nuclear power plants: Crystal River, north of Tampa; St. Lucie, north of Palm Beach; and Turkey Point, south of Miami. Even under worst-case conditions, an accidental release at any of these plants should not spread dangerous radioactivity over our area. However, we might receive evacuees from other counties. They pose no health risk. However, agricultural products from those areas would not be permitted to enter into our food supply.

Radioactive Materials

It is possible that a transportation accident could involve a radioactive substance. These materials are packed in limited quantities in very strong, well-marked containers. If you see a marked package or suspect radioactive material may be present, move away from the area and advise emergency responders. Do not attempt to move it yourself. Call 911.

Biohazard Material

Another hazardous material that may be seen in transit is biohazard material. Health care facilities generate and dispose of this material, which, may at first glance, appear to be ordinary garbage. Biohazard material could expose you to disease causing agents. As with other hazardous materials, you can usually avoid exposure by not contacting or handling the material or container. Call the authorities and explain the situation.
What is Terrorism?
The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in the furtherance of political or social objectives.”

Terrorist acts are intended to:
• Cause mass casualties & panic
• Produce a loss of critical resources
• Disrupt vital services and the economy

What are the most likely targets?
• Public assembly areas
• Public and government buildings
• Mass transit
• Places of high economic impact
• Telecommunications facilities
• Historic or symbolic places
• Amusement parks
• Special events
• Large structures and bridges

Visiting these places is part of our way of life. You should not avoid them, but have a heightened sense of awareness when you visit them.

When you travel:
• If you are traveling to a foreign country, check the U.S. Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov/ for any travel advisories or procedure changes. Keep your identification papers in a secure place at all times.
• Check with the airlines in advance for any special safety procedures in place.
• Cooperate with officials who are responsible for security inspections.

How can I prepare?
Learn shelter in place procedures and prepare a sheltering kit. Shelter in place procedures are used for chemical or biological attacks (or even a hazardous spill)!

Procedures for sheltering in place include:
• Identify a safe room in the home with as few doors and windows possible. Bring/store your disaster supply kit in the safe room.
• Shutting off the ventilation system and latching all doors and windows to reduce airflow from the outside.
• Use precut plastic sheeting to cover openings where air can enter the room, including doors, windows, vents, and electrical outlets.
• Tape plastic sheeting around all doors and windows using duct tape to ensure a good seal.
• Listen to a battery-powered radio for the all clear. Chemicals used in an attack will be carried in the wind and will dissipate over time.

If there is an explosion:
• Take cover if heavy debris is falling. Leave the building as quickly as possible.
• NEVER take an elevator if there is a fire or if you question the structural integrity of the building.
• Use fire escapes and assist individuals with physical disabilities to evacuate.

As always...
See Something,
Say Something!
ACTIVE SHOOTER
How to respond when an active shooter is in your vicinity

QUICKLY DETERMINE THE MOST REASONABLE WAY TO PROTECT YOUR OWN LIFE. CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS DURING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION.

1. Run
   - Have an escape route and plan in mind
   - Leave your belongings behind
   - Keep your hands visible

2. Hide
   - Hide in an area out of the active shooter’s view.
   - Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors

3. Fight
   - As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger fight.
   - Attempt to incapacitate the active shooter
   - Act with physical aggression and throw items at the active shooter

CALL 911 WHEN IT IS SAFE TO DO SO

HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES ON THE SCENE

1. HOW YOU SHOULD REACT WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES:
   - Remain calm, and follow officers’ instructions
   - Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
   - Keep hands visible at all times
   - Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety
   - Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling
   - Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises

2. INFORMATION YOU SHOULD PROVIDE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OR 911 OPERATOR:
   - Location of the victims and the active shooter
   - Number of shooters, if more than one
   - Physical description of shooter(s)
   - Number and type of weapons held by the shooter(s)
   - Number of potential victims at the location
Home Fire Safety Checklist

• Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home, in every bedroom and sleeping area.
• Test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors every month.
• Check batteries in smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors every six months and replace when needed.
• Replace smoke detectors every 10 years.
• Keep at least one fire extinguisher in your home.
• Keep flammable items at least three feet away from the stove, space heaters, and fireplaces.
• Turn off stove if you are going to leave the kitchen, even for a short period of time.
• NEVER smoke in bed.
• Unplug small kitchen appliances when not in use.
• Make sure matches and lighters are out of reach of children.

In the event of a fire:

• Get low to the ground and crawl to an exit. (Door or window)
• Check door handles with the back of your hand. If handle is hot look for an alternate escape route.
• If smoke, heat, or flames block your exit route, hang a sheet or towel outside your window to let fire departments know where you are.
• Once you are out, stay out and go to your designated meeting place.
• Call 911
• NEVER go back inside for possessions, pets or even other people who may be still in the building.

After a fire:

• Stay out of fire-damaged homes until fire authorities give clearance to do so.
• Seek medical treatment for any injured persons or animals.
• Let friends and family know you are safe and how to contact you.
• Discard any consumable items in your home that was exposed to smoke or dust.

TRAINING
Training and Presentation Opportunities are available by calling Highlands County Public Safety at 863-385-1112.

Opportunities Include but are not limited to:
Fire Safety
Preparedness
Hands Only CPR
Stop the Bleed
Fire Extinguisher Training
And others!
WHERE CAN I GET RELIABLE INFORMATION?

The Highlands County Board of County Commissioners and Highlands County Fire Rescue. Preparedness and emergency information will be directly provided via Facebook, County website (www.hcbcc.org) and our Everbridge application. We will also provide news releases to all local media including radio and TV interviews.

Who can I call?
Emergencies ................................................................. 911
Citizens Information Line ............................... 863-402-6800
Public Safety ................................................................. 863-385-1112
(Fire Rescue, Emergency Management)
Sheriff’s Office ....................................................... 863-402-7200
Public Information .............................................. 863-402-6833
Sebring Police Department ......................... 863-471-5107
Sebring Fire Department .............................. 863-471-5105
Lake Placid Police Department .................. 863-699-3757
Avon Park Fire Department ......................... 863-453-6557
Department of Health ......................................... 863-386-6040

Utilities issues
Avon Park Utilities ............................................. 863-382-5901
Sebring Utilities ................................................... 863-471-0166
Lake Placid Utilities .......................................... 863-441-2075
Duke Energy ............................................................. 1-800-700-8744
Florida Power & Light Company ............ 1-888-488-7703
Glades Electric ....................................................... 863-946-6200
Peace River Electric ............................................. 1-800-282-3824

Special Improvement Districts
Sun ‘n Lake of Sebring .................................. 863-382-2196
Spring Lake ........................................................... 863-655-0615

Which radio, television and newspaper cover our area?

RADIO
WWTK AM 730
WITS AM 1340
WWLL FM 105.7
WWOJ FM 99.1
WJCM AM 1050

TELEVISION
Comcast Channel 6
Fort Myers WINK Channel 11
WHRT Channel 7
Tampa WTVT Channel 13
WFLA Channel 8
Tampa WFTS Channel 28
Orlando WFTV Channel 9
Tampa WTOG Channel 44
WTFTS Channel 10

NEWSPAPER
Highlands News-Sun