

What should I do when I am told to evacuate?

It is important to be prepared before a disaster occurs, and evacuating an area is necessary or required. Experts suggest having a plan in place and practicing it to see if it is possible to gather items and leave within a 10-minute span.

Know Where to Go

If you are told to evacuate, it is important to follow the instructions of local law enforcement. Consider the following tips to ensure you evacuate the area you are in quickly and safely:

- Identify a location where it is safe to go. Have more than one option in case your first choice is not safe. Contact friends or family beforehand to set up different available accommodations and to let them know where you are going.
- Find out where emergency shelters and feeding stations are located. Local radio and television stations typically broadcast these locations.
- Have a primary and backup route for leaving. Remember that roads may become blocked or impassable during a disaster. Have a map of the area in the car at all times in case it becomes necessary to reference it.
- Identify a specific meeting place for everyone to gather in case family members are separated at the time of evacuation.
- Have a battery-operated radio available, and listen to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio or local radio for evacuation instructions. Further information on NOAA can be found online (www.noaa.gov).
- When arriving at your safe location, register with the American Red Cross' Safe and Well list (<https://safeandwell.communityos.org/cms/index.php>). This will help relatives, friends and neighbors locate you.

Before an emergency presents itself, be sure to have important documents in one easily accessible location. If possible, store them in a small, fireproof safe. These documents should include:

- Insurance policies
- Bank account numbers
- Birth certificates
- Marriage certificate
- Passports
- Prescriptions
- Social Security cards
- Recent tax returns
- Wills
- House deed
- Stocks, bonds and other negotiable certificates
- An inventory of the contents in the home (a video or DVD with this information is most helpful).

The other items to pack depend on the number of people being evacuated and how long the evacuation is expected to last. Some items to consider include:

- Cash (ATMs may not work or may be out of money along the evacuation route)
- Wallet

- Blank checks
- Credit cards
- Photographs of all family members (at current age for identification purposes)
- Cell phones/PDAs and chargers
- Medications, prescriptions and first aid kit
- Bottled water (at least one gallon per person and pet per day)
- Non-perishable, ready-to-eat food
- Manual can opener
- Change of clothing for each person (for one to seven days)
- Bedding (blankets, sleeping bags, pillows)
- Toiletries
- Special items for infants, elderly or disabled family members
- Pet ID tags
- Pet food and other items (leashes, litter boxes)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Waterproof matches
- Battery-powered radio and extra batteries
- Computer hard drive or laptop.

During an emergency, it is difficult to grab every cherished possession, but packing family heirlooms (or original and irreplaceable keepsakes) is worth considering. Determine the importance of these items in advance.

Scanning and uploading photos onto a website helps with retrieval later if computer discs or hard drives with these images are damaged.

Make sure the vehicle you are evacuating in has at least a half tank of gas at all times during travel.

Pack other items that may be needed during travel. Consider the following suggestions:

- A first aid kit, food and water close to the driver's seat (for quick accessibility)
- Pre-moistened wipes
- Paper, pencils and pens
- Plastic bags
- Bleach for disinfecting
- Booster cables
- Class ABC fire extinguisher
- Bag of sand
- Flares
- Short rubber hose (for siphoning)
- Shovel
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Basic tool set

Secure your home before finally evacuating. Have a task checklist to use to ensure no important steps are overlooked. The following tasks may need to be completed before leaving:

- Board up windows or protect them with storm shutters or tape.
- Store drinking water in jugs and bottles for later use because public drinking water may be contaminated, even after the "all clear" signal is given and residents can return.
- Close garage door but leave it unlocked (disconnect automatic garage door opener if applicable).
- Close or cover outside vents and shutters.
- Move overstuffed furniture away from windows.
- Store items such as patio furniture, garbage cans and planters.
- Turn off appliances, thermostats, fireplaces and stoves.
- Lock doors and windows.

- Remove combustible items from around the outside of the house.
- Turn off natural gas at meter.
- Disconnect propane tank.
- Turn on exterior lights.
- Moor boats securely, or move them to a designated safe area.
- If instructed, tie a large white cloth to front door knob or other signal to allow rescue workers to know everyone has vacated the home.

Resources

- Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- National Hurricane Center: www.nhc.noaa.gov
- U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration: www.fhwa.dot.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 800-982-8161

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: NGCare

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