

CHARLOTTE COUNTY DISASTER GUIDE



**Prepare
NOW**

**Survive
DURING**

**Be Safe
AFTER**

If a disaster struck, would your family be ready? Would your business be ready? Follow the tips and checklists in this guide to protect your loved ones, your home and your business.

OVERVIEW:

Prepare before hurricane season starts. Atlantic hurricane season starts June 1.

Know what to do before, during, and after a hurricane: prepare now, survive during, be safe after.

Put together a **disaster plan** with your family and for your business before a hurricane.

Have **emergency supplies** in place at home, at work, and in the car.

Know your local community's **evacuation** plan and evacuation routes and how to receive alerts.

Listen to local officials.



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DISASTER PLANNING GUIDE

Hurricanes are dangerous and can cause major damage because of storm surge, wind damage, and flooding. Storm surge is historically the leading cause of hurricane-related deaths in the United States.

This guide was developed by the Charlotte County Emergency Management Office to help you make your family and business plans. It also directs you to additional resources where you can get more information and assistance.

Government cannot do this alone. It takes the “whole community” to effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster. This includes our neighborhood and condo associations, faith-based, volunteer, civic organizations, schools, business community, and residents. You can get training by joining a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) in your neighborhood. Visit CharlotteCountyFL.gov/CERT for information.

Get involved and spread the word at your school, work, club or place of worship. This is what it takes to make our community safer and more resilient.

Prepare NOW

PUT TOGETHER A PLAN

Make sure everyone knows where to go and what to do in an emergency by putting together a family disaster plan and a business continuity plan.

Plan Basics

- How will we receive alerts and warnings?
- Where will we go? What are the evacuation routes? As a last resort, what shelter will we go to?
- How will we communicate with each other?
- Where will we meet if we get separated?

Know Your Evacuation Zone: Is your house or business in a hurricane evacuation zone? Visit www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/KnowYourZone to find out. You should also learn if your house is at risk for flooding - check your FEMA Flood Zone (visit msc.fema.gov).



Choose a Contact Person: Ask someone out of the area to be a contact if you are separated in a disaster, to have family members report their location.

Keep Contact Information Up-To-Date: Include contact information in your phones and make emergency contact cards to carry with you.

Think Ahead About Evacuation: Determine if and when you would evacuate, where you would go and how you will get there. Have multiple options. Stay with friends or family if they are in a safer evacuation zone and not being asked to leave. If you are in a safe area, invite them to stay with you.

Practice your disaster plans often with your family and office.

Find more disaster planning information at Ready.gov and the Charlotte County Emergency Management Office www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/EM.

Prepare Your Home, Office and Belongings Ahead of Time

- Check your disaster supplies.
- Refill prescriptions. Maintain at least a two-week supply of medication.
- Clear your yard of furniture, potted plants, bicycles, trash cans and other objects that can cause damage in heavy winds.
- Keep landscaping trimmed. Make sure yard waste will be picked up before storms.
- Protect windows and glass doors with plywood or storm shutters.
- If flooding could threaten your home, move important items such as electronics and antiques off the floor.
- Fill your car's gas tank, check oil, water and tires.
- Secure your boat early. Drawbridges will be closed to boat traffic after an evacuation order is issued.
- Get cash. Banks and ATM's don't work without electricity and few stores will be able to accept credit cards or checks.
- Never sweep or blow yard leaves, pine needles, grass clippings or soil into the street or stormwater system. This clogs up the stormwater pipes and prevents water from draining.
- If you own a business, follow your Business Continuity Plan. For more information on how to create a Business Continuity Plan, go online to disastersafety.org or ready.gov.

Personal Safety

Wherever you are evacuated, in a public shelter, or at home, follow the latest guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect yourself and family from any current health risks.

- What supplies will you need for protection? (Soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, face masks, etc.)
- What are the current social gathering guidelines?

Visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) for the most current information.

Keep Your Pets Safe

Don't leave your pets and don't use your pet as an excuse not to evacuate. Don't put yourself, your family and your pet at risk! You are responsible for planning for your pet.

Take your Pet Disaster Supplies if you evacuate, go to friends/relatives, a public shelter (Charlotte County public shelters are pet-friendly) or a hotel. Find pet-friendly hotels at petswelcome.com.

After the storm passes, be careful with your pet outdoors. Familiar scents and landmarks may be altered and confuse your pet. Other dangers may be present, such as downed power lines, animals and insects brought in with high water, and contaminated food or water. Nearly 80% of pets displaced by a storm are never reunited with their owners.



Pet Evacuation Supply Checklist:

- Proper ID collar and rabies tag/license
- Vaccination papers (Pet-friendly shelters and boarding facilities may require proof of vaccinations within the past 12 months.)
- Carrier or cage (large enough for your pet to move around)
- Leash
- Ample food supply (at least two weeks) and non-electric can opener if needed
- Water (minimum of 7-day supply)
- Water/food bowls
- Any necessary medications
- Specific care instructions
- Newspapers, cat litter, scoop, plastic trash bags for handling waste
- Proper ID on all belongings (including emergency contact information if you evacuate)
- Photo of you with your pet
- A comfort item (favorite toy or blanket)
- Microchipping your pet is strongly recommended

Persons with a Disability, under Home Healthcare, and Homebound Patients

People who are disabled or in poor health (either mentally or physically) or those who are without the support of family or friends should plan ahead for an emergency. Please ask for help if you need it and volunteer to help those who do.

- Identify if you may need additional help during an emergency.
- Plan ahead for accessible transportation or other needs based on disability. For home health patients, tell your health agency and oxygen company where you will be during a hurricane. If you are homebound but not under the care of a home health agency, contact your physician to determine a plan of action.
- If you require respirators or other electric-dependent medical equipment, make medical arrangements with your physician and register with FPL.
- If you evacuate, take medications, written instructions regarding your care, special equipment and bedding with you.
- If you will need assistance in an evacuation or need to go to a special needs shelter, you must preregister ahead of time. Preregister online at snr.floridadisaster.org or you can download a printable application at www.charlottecountyfl.gov or contact Emergency.Management@CharlotteCountyFL.gov 941.833.4000. Completion of an application does not guarantee the availability of a shelter or medical treatment during an event. Whenever possible, alternate plans for evacuation that do not include public shelters should be made.
- Special needs shelters do not provide hands-on medical care, only medical monitoring. Bring one caregiver with you.
- Certified service animals are allowed. Plan and bring their supplies.



About Insurance

Understanding what is—and is not—covered in your homeowner's or renter's insurance policy is a necessity. Insurance needs change over time, talk with your agent and make sure you are protected:

- Insure your home for its reconstruction cost, not its real estate value.
- If you rent, insure your belongings.
- Standard policies do not cover damage from floods, including storm surge. There is a 30-day wait period for flood insurance to go into effect. Don't wait until a storm is threatening.



Get alerted about emergencies by signing up for our Emergency Alert Program. Receive alerts about:

- Tornadoes
- Hurricanes
- Tropical Storms
- Severe Thunderstorms
- Freeze Warnings
- Marine Warnings
- Mosquito Spraying

Receive messages wherever you specify: home, mobile or business phones, email address, text messages and more. You pick where, you pick how.

Sign up today at www.AlertCharlotte.com



COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM (CERT)

The CERT Program educates people about disaster preparedness for hazards that may impact their area. CERT members learn to assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when professional responders are not immediately available to help. CERT members also are encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community.

The CERT program is a hands on all-risk, all-hazard training. This valuable 3-day course is designed to help you protect yourself, your family, your neighbors and your neighborhood in an emergency situation.

Find training information, manuals, brochure, and more online: CharlotteCountyFL.gov/CERT

CERT Training

Disaster preparedness: Instructs team members how to prepare themselves and their community for the various types of hazards that may occur.

Team organization and disaster psychology: Learn to work well in a team setting under stressful emergency event.

Fire safety: Covers proper techniques for preventing and extinguishing small fires.

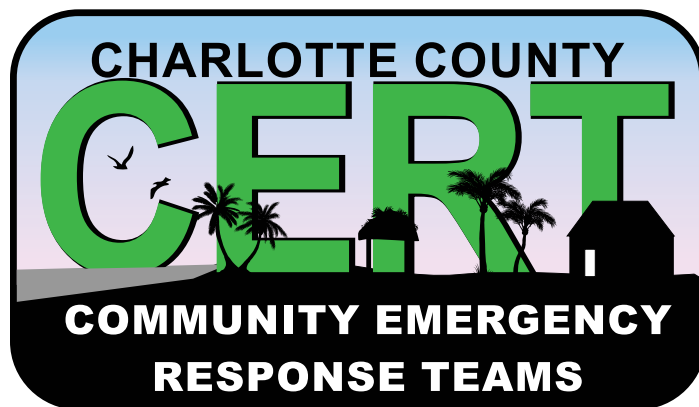
Medical operations: Conduct triage, establish medical treatment areas, and provide basic first aid for victims.

Basic search and rescue: Learn search and rescue planning, techniques, and rescuer safety.

Terrorism Awareness: Define terrorism, terrorist goals, weapons, and indicators of a terrorist attack.

CERT's Role in the Community

The Charlotte CERT program has a role for everyone. Members use a combination of CERT training and community knowledge to serve their neighbors in a time of disaster.



Charlotte County CERT members serve the community during a disaster as shelter workers, call center operators, and as a support role during wildfires. CERT members also participate in public outreach events, support Fire & EMS by providing first aid at large events and provide lifesaving training throughout the community.

Become a CERT Member

The three-day Basic Training is scheduled on a quarterly basis. Training is at no cost and open to the public. Anyone under 18 needs to fill out a parent consent form to attend training. For more information, email CharlotteCountyCERT@gmail.com.

Get Involved

Charlotte County CERT offers supplemental training and opportunities to volunteer. For more information, email CharlotteCountyCERT@gmail.com.

CCFLARES AMATEUR RADIO

CCFLARES (Charlotte County Florida ARES) is fully committed to support digital communication modes via Amateur Radio. Winlink-Email is actively deployed, tested and exercised throughout our teams. We continually upgrade and test our digital infrastructure for dependability and reliability.

Our Mission:

To partner with our community to create, maintain, and improve a portfolio of reliable emergency communications capabilities.

Find more information online at ccflares.org.

EVACUATE OR STAY?

If you are:

- in an area prone to flooding
- or
- in a mobile home, manufactured home or RV
- or
- in an evacuation zone that is ordered to evacuate by local authorities

you should evacuate no matter what.

If you are not in any of these areas, then it may be safer for you to stay in your home.

If You Can Stay Home, Shelter in Place

While it is the responsibility of the homeowner to know if their home is strong enough to withstand a hurricane, generally homes built after 2002 include features that make them more resilient to hurricanes. There are also improvements you can make to your home to strengthen it against future storms. Know your home by visiting floridadisaster.org/planprepare/home.

If you live in a sound structure outside the evacuation area and do not live in a mobile home, manufactured home or RV, stay home and take these precautions:

- Protect windows, doors and garage doors.
- Clean and fill bathtubs and sinks before a storm so you'll have water for flushing and cleaning.
- Store enough drinking water in clean containers; plan on minimum one gallon per person per day.
- Offer to shelter friends or relatives who live in vulnerable areas or mobile homes.
- Check your Disaster Supplies, including at least a seven day supply of non-perishable foods. Don't forget a non-electric can opener.
- Find a safe room in your home, usually an interior, windowless reinforced room such as a closet or bathroom on the lower floor.



- Monitor your battery-operated radio, NOAA weather radio or TV for the latest advisories and other emergency information.
- Wait for official word that the danger is over.
- If flooding threatens your home, turn off electricity at the main breaker.
- If you lose power, turn off major appliances (air conditioner, water heater etc.) to reduce damage from surge when power is restored.
- Don't travel until you are told it is safe to do so.

If You Must Evacuate

If you live in an area prone to flooding, an evacuation area or a mobile home, manufactured home or RV, don't panic. Move at a steady pace and leave as soon as possible to ensure you can get to where you will weather the storm. Do not take chances with your life by staying at home or waiting until it's too late!

- Move inland away from the storm surge and inland flooding, to a destination is not within a zone that has been ordered to evacuate.
- It is recommended that residents evacuate tens of miles, not hundreds, to avoid traffic jams.
- Evacuate early if you can to avoid heavy traffic
- Take enough supplies for your family.
- Take your pets and their supplies.
- Take important papers, including driver's licenses, special medical information, insurance policies, property inventories.
- Let friends and relatives know where you are going.
- Make sure your neighbors have a safe ride.
- Turn off your electricity, water and gas if officials tell you to do so.
- Protect and lock your windows and doors.
- Stay tuned to your local radio and television station for emergency broadcasts.



Hotel or Motel

If you plan to go to a hotel or motel, check for availability and make your reservation in advance. Make sure your destination is not in an evacuation zone. If you have pets, petswelcome.com can help.

Shelters

Charlotte County has very few buildings, public or private, above the Red and Orange evacuation zones and suitable for sheltering. Charlotte County has no certified Red Cross shelters.

Shelter space is extremely limited and all other means of evacuation and sheltering should be considered before going to a public shelter.

In the event of a hurricane, one or more Charlotte County-staffed shelters may be opened, depending on the size and direction of an approaching storm. Check local media and www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov to find open location(s).

- **Kingsway Elementary School**
23300 Quasar Blvd., Port Charlotte
- **Liberty Elementary School**
370 Atwater St., Port Charlotte
- **Neil Armstrong Elementary School**
22100 Breezeswept Ave., Port Charlotte
- **Harold Ave. Regional Park Recreation Center**
23400 Harold Ave., Port Charlotte

Special Needs Shelters

Special Needs Shelters are for individuals whose medical conditions cannot be addressed in a general shelter. Persons requiring the additional level of care must pre-register so that adequate planning can take place to open this specialized type of shelter. Pre-register online at snr.floridadisaster.org or download a printable application at www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov or Emergency.Management@CharlotteCountyFL.gov 941.833.4000. Completion of an application does not guarantee the availability of a shelter or medical treatment during an event. Whenever possible, alternate plans for evacuation that do not include public shelters should be made.



What to Bring to a Shelter:

You will need to bring supplies for each family member and pet (all Charlotte County shelters are pet friendly).

- Sleeping bag, sleeping pad and/or blankets
- Pillow
- Personal Flashlight & Headlamps
- Disinfectant supplies, hand sanitizer, soap, cloth face coverings
- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Soap – you may choose to purchase body wipes for quick wipe downs instead of soap
- Feminine hygiene products
- Cell phones
- Chargers/ backup battery
- Extra sets of clothes suitable for the season
- Extra socks and sturdy shoes
- Food or snacks (72+ hours worth)
- Books or magazine
- Prescription Medications, Eyeglasses
- Pet Care Items (see list on page 3)
- Important Documents (see list on page 11)
- Water (1 gallon per person per day for three days)

Vehicle Considerations

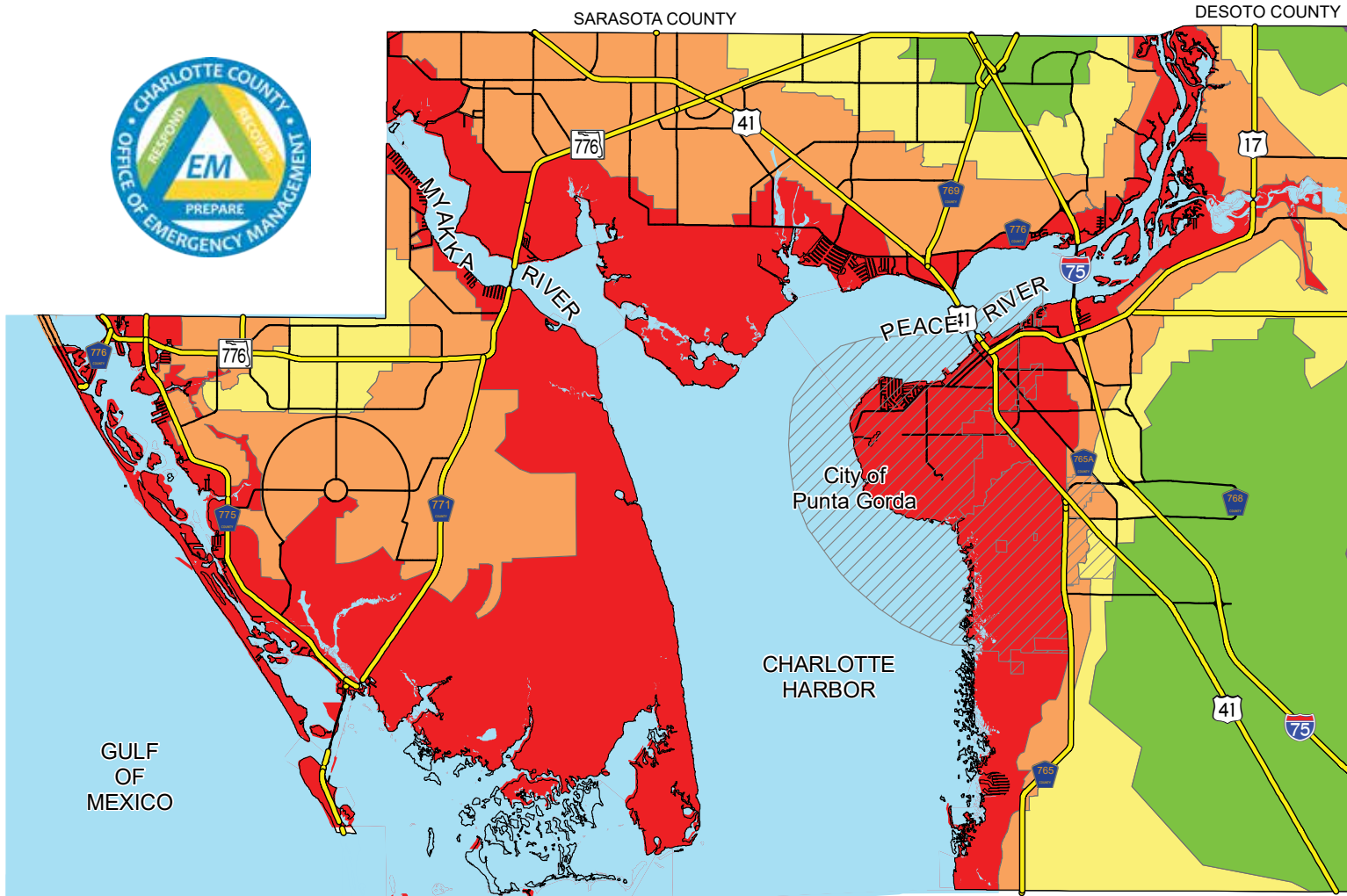
Remember to keep your vehicle's gas tank at least half-full during hurricane season to avoid long lines at gas stations and gas shortages prior to a storm.

Evacuations don't have to be hundreds of miles - having at least half a tank of gas ensures you can evacuate the necessary tens of miles to a safe sheltering location when a storm threatens your community.

Electrical Vehicle Considerations

- Evacuation routes may not offer charging stations and there may be long traffic delays, so maintain a substantial level of charge.
- Salt water submersion can cause battery fires in electric vehicles (EVs).
- Do not interact with vehicles with signs of damaged or overheating batteries including leaking fluids, sparks, smoke, bubbling noises, or unusual odors.

CHARLOTTE COUNTY EVACUATION MAP



LEGEND

Evacuation Zones

RED	A	YELLOW	C	PURPLE	E
ORANGE	B	GREEN	D	Non-Evac. Zone	

 Evacuation Routes



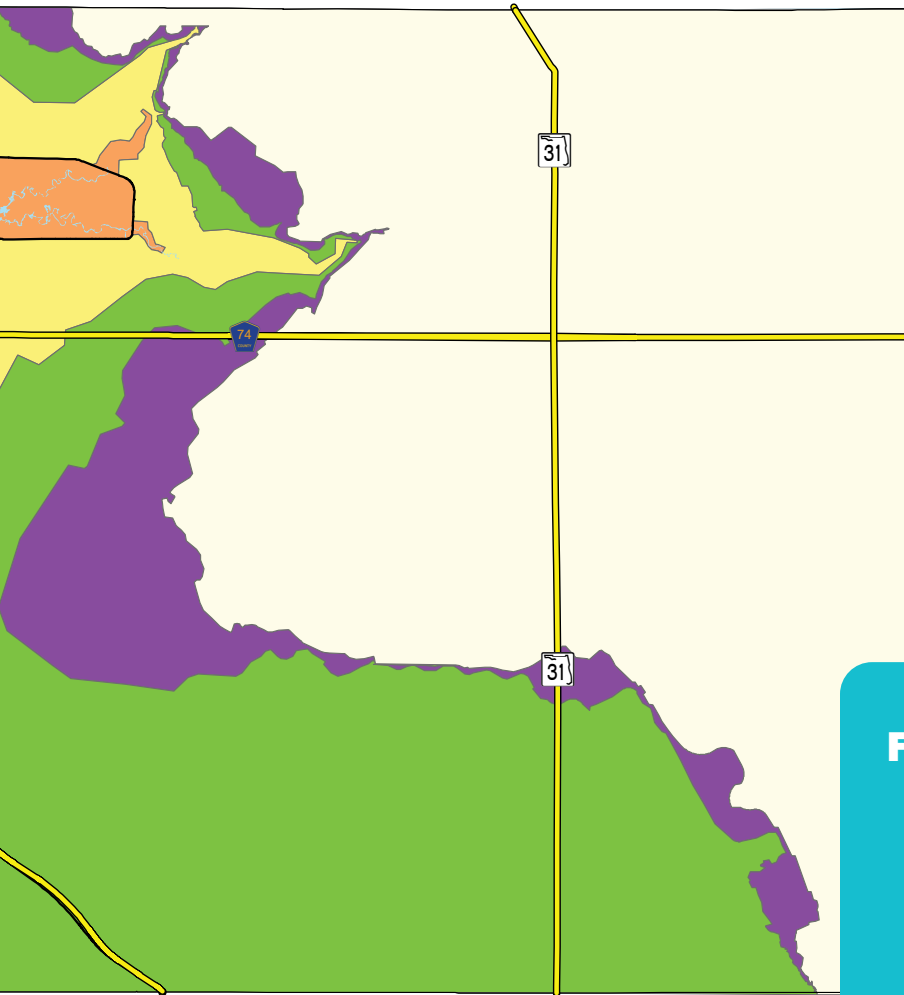
 2 0 1 2 Miles

Using The County Evacuation Map

1. Locate where you live and work on the map
2. Determine whether you are in an evacuation area, and if so, what color and letter (ex. Orange=B).
3. If you are in an evacuation area or a mobile home/manufactured home/RV, decide where you will go if ordered to evacuate. Your choices include:
 - Home of a relative or friend outside the evacuation zone
 - Hotel/motel outside the evacuation zone (make arrangements early)
 - Leave the area entirely
 - A public shelter (verify the shelter is open before you go).

You can also find your evacuation zone online: www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/KnowYourZone.

Note: All persons living in mobile homes/manufactured homes/RVs should evacuate before the onset of Tropical Storm force winds, regardless of where you are located in the county.



LEE COUNTY

Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale

Category	Sustained Winds
1	74 - 95 mph
2	96 - 110 mph
3	111 - 129 mph (major)
4	130 - 156 mph (major)
5	156 mph or more (major)

Storm Surge is a Deadly Threat

The evacuation zones (colored areas) on the map are vulnerable to storm surge. Storm surge is produced by water being pushed towards the shore by the force of the winds moving around the storm. **Storm surge is historically the leading cause of hurricane-related deaths in the United States.**

Storm surge creates a path of destruction, wiping out structures as it rapidly surges inland and then recedes. This is a life threatening situation for anyone who ignores mandatory evacuation orders and stays in vulnerable areas.

Flood Zone vs. Storm Surge



Flood zones are geographic areas defined by FEMA as having varying levels of flooding risk.



Storm surge is the abnormal rise of water pushed onto shore by hurricanes or tropical storms.

Storm surge evacuation zones are areas vulnerable to storm surge. They are broken down into five color-coded zones. This is how we communicate who needs to evacuate.

Evacuation Zones

RED	A	ORANGE	B	YELLOW	C
GREEN	D	PURPLE	E		

HOW TO STAY INFORMED

Social Media

- @OEMCharlotteCounty on Facebook
- @charlottefleoc on Instagram
- @CCOEM on Twitter
- Nextdoor.com
- Sign up for AlertCharlotte.com

Websites

Charlotte County Emergency Management - CharlotteCountyFL.gov/EM

FEMA - fema.gov

Florida Division of Emergency Management - floridadisaster.org

Florida Highway Patrol Traffic - flhsmv.gov/florida-highway-patrol/traffic-incidents

National Hurricane Center - nhc.noaa.gov

National Weather Service - weather.gov

Disaster Planning Guide (this publication online) - CharlotteCountyFL.gov/disasterguide

National Weather Radio

A weather radio can save your life by alerting you of approaching hazardous weather. They can be bought locally and programmed for Charlotte County alerts only if you chose. Charlotte County FIPS code is 012015.

This service is provided by the National Weather Service. The alert is tested every Wednesday. Find more online: www.weather.gov/nwr/

National Weather Service

National FEMA Alerts (Wireless Emergency Alerts) for Smartphones are short text messages to alert you of imminent threats, amber alerts, and presidential alerts. You will be alerted no matter where you are in the nation. If you are near a cell tower that is being alerted, you will get it on your cell.

Batteries

If your radio requires batteries, be sure to have a supply on hand to keep your radio on through a power outage of several days.

Local Radio Stations

- WCCF AM 1580
- WENG AM 1530, FM 98.1, FM 107.5
- WBCG FM 98.9
- WCKT FM 100.9
- WCVU FM 104.9
- WGPU FM 90.1
- WIKX FM 92.9
- WINK FM 96.9
- WMKO FM 91.7

Go to www.ontheradio.net for more information.

Local TV Stations



Charlotte County TV (CC-TV) on Comcast channels 20 & 97 or stream: CharlotteCountyFL.gov/CCTV

Over the air (antenna)

- WINK CBS 11.1
- WBBH NBC 20.1
- WZVN ABC 26.1
- WWSB ABC 40.1
- WFTX FOX 36.1

DISASTER SUPPLY KIT CHECKLIST

General:

- At least two weeks supply of medication, medical supplies used regularly and a list of allergies
- List of the style, serial number, and manufacturer information of required medical devices
- Flashlight (Do not use candles and be sure to have enough batteries)
- Radio (Battery operated or hand cranked radio, a NOAA weather radio)
- Cash (Banks and ATMs may not be available after a storm)

Pet Care:

- Pet food and water (at least two weeks worth)
- Proper identification
- Medical records/ microchip info/ Vaccination papers
- A carrier or cage
- Muzzle and leash
- Bowls for water and food
- Medications
- Supplies for your service animal

First Aid:

- First Aid Manual
- Sterile adhesive bandages and gauze pads of different sizes
- Hypoallergenic adhesive, tape
- Triangular bandages
- Scissors, tweezers, sewing needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tube of petroleum jelly
- Safety pins
- Soap
- Non-latex gloves
- Sunscreen
- Aspirin or other pain reliever
- Anti-diarrheal medicine, antacid, laxative
- Cotton balls, cotton swabs

Special Needs:

- Be sure to include specialty items for infants, small children, the elderly, and those family members with a disability.

Important Documents:

(Items should be kept in a water proof container)

- Insurance cards
- Medical records
- Bank numbers
- Credit card numbers
- Copy of social security card
- Copies of birth and/or marriage certificates
- Other personal documents
- Set of car, house, and office keys
- Service animal I.D., veterinary records, and proof of ownership
- Information about where you receive medication, the name of the drug, and dosage
- Copy of will

Food and Water:

- Nonperishable food (enough for at least seven (7) days, packaged or canned food and beverages, snack foods, juices, baby food, and any special dietary items)
- Non-electric can opener
- Disposable plates, napkins, cups and utensils
- Water (1 gallon per person per day for at least seven (7) days)

Clothing:

- Include seasonal or rain gear and sturdy shoes or boots.

Vehicle:

- Keep your motor vehicle tanks filled with gas

Phone Numbers:

Maintain a list of important phone numbers including:

- Evacuation sites
- Doctors and Veterinarians
- Banks
- Schools

Public Health Supplies:

- Face masks
- Disinfectant wipes
- Hand sanitizer
- An out of town contact
- Friends & family

Survive DURING

Stay informed: listen for emergency information, alerts, and weather updates on local radio and TV stations, websites, and on NOAA Weather Radio. Tune in to the latest information and listen to local officials. See page 10 for more ways to stay informed.

If you choose not to evacuate, you may become trapped in a building due to rising flood water. If waters continue to rise, go to the highest level of the building, but do not climb into a closed attic.

First responders cease operations and cannot respond when sustained winds reach 39 MPH.

Take refuge in a safe room in your home, usually an interior, windowless reinforced room such as a closet or bathroom on the lower floor.



Be Safe AFTER

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A DISASTER

After a disaster, you may be without power and many of the other services you rely on (water, sewer, phone, cell phone, and businesses) for days. Immediate response may not be possible, so you must be self-reliant.

Listen to local officials for information and special instructions. BE PATIENT. You might not be able to return to your home or business until search and rescue operations are complete and hazards are cleared. Crews work to clear the main roads as quickly as possible to make it safe for emergency vehicles and other crews to pass. Give them time to clear major debris and make the roads safe to pass.

Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. **Turn Around. Don't Drown!**

Until power is restored, many traffic signals will not work. Treat any intersection where traffic signals are out as a four-way stop.

Powerlines may be down and roads and bridges may be closed. There may also be localized flooding, uncleared debris and standing water. Proceed with caution when you do venture out.

At your house, walk around your home or business first to survey damage and enter with caution.

- If you suspect a gas leak, leave immediately then call 911 or your natural gas provider from a safe location.
- If your building has been flooded, have a licensed electrician inspect the electrical system and appliances before turning the power back on.
- Be extremely careful with fire.
- Let your out-of-town contact know you are safe.

Post-Storm Safety Precautions

- Use grills outdoors and away from windows.
- Avoid candles; use battery-operated lights.
- Stay tuned to your local media for up-to-date emergency information.
- Always supervise children - DO NOT WADE IN FLOOD WATERS.
- Be aware of snakes, insects, and other animals driven to higher ground by floods.
- Drink plenty of fluids, rest and ask for help when you need it.
- Don't burn trash.

Staying Informed Without Power

In the aftermath of a large storm event which results in widespread power outages, Charlotte County libraries and recreation centers that are safe to access will serve as fixed locations for basic daily information, usually in the form of printed flyers, some locations may have charging stations and more amenities. All locations will be based on accessibility and road conditions and information may not be at all locations:

- Ann & Chuck Dever Regional Park
6961 San Casa Drive
Englewood, FL 34224
- Harold Avenue Regional Park
23400 Harold Avenue
Port Charlotte, FL 33980
- Centennial Park
1120 Centennial Blvd.
Port Charlotte, FL 33953
- Port Charlotte Beach Park
4500 Harbor Blvd.
Port Charlotte, FL 33952

- South County Regional Park
670 Cooper Street
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
- Tringali Park
3460 North Access Road
Englewood, FL 34224
- Englewood Charlotte Public Library
3450 North Access Rd.
Englewood, FL 34224
- Port Charlotte Public Library
2280 Aaron St.
Port Charlotte, FL 33952
- Punta Gorda Charlotte Library
401 Shreve St.
Punta Gorda, FL 33950
- Mid-County Regional Library
2050 Forrest Nelson Blvd.
Port Charlotte, FL 33952

Information will also be available at emergency food and water points of distribution.

Keeping a battery-powered radio and batteries can also help you stay informed. See page 10 for more information.



Portable Generator Safety

- NEVER connect a portable generator to building wiring. Plug appliances directly into the generator.
- Place generators outdoors and away from doors, windows, and vents that could allow deadly exhaust fumes to come indoors.
- Before refueling your generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Don't forget to check the oil.
- Keep the generator dry.
- Store fuel outside in labeled, approved containers.

Cleanup & Repairs

- Know what your insurance policy covers and what you will need to submit a claim. Take photographs of all damage before repairs and keep all receipts.
- Be careful during clean-up. Wear protective clothing and work with someone else.
- Avoid downed or dangling power lines.
- Be careful when clearing fallen trees; call professionals to remove large, uprooted trees.
- Use proper safety equipment such as heavy gloves, safety goggles, heavy boots, long-sleeve shirts and long pants. Tie back long hair.
- Permits may be required for demolition or repairs, reconstruction, roofing, or filling. Contact the Charlotte County Community Development: www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov or call 941.743.1201.

Chain Saw Safety

Chain saws are inherently dangerous. Follow all safety precautions when using a chain saw:

- Always read the operating manual thoroughly prior to operating a saw.
- Follow all manufacturer safety guidelines for starting, cutting, and fueling.
- Wear protective equipment: chaps, gloves, earplugs, and a hard hat (in case of kickback or falling debris).
- Ensure firm footing, remove loose material from underfoot; spread feet in a wide, balanced stance.
- Keep the work area clear to avoid tripping hazards.



- Always maintain control and a firm grip on the saw.
- Always be alert to saw kickback.
- Never cut above chest height, control is difficult.
- Use a pole saw for cuts above your head.
- Do not over-reach or under-reach when cutting; you will be off balance.
- Estimate what the reaction of what you're cutting will be; will it whip up, down, or toward you.
- Identify and keep an escape route clear.
- Remember, even the smallest injury with a chain saw usually requires professional medical attention.



Protect Against Contractor Fraud

- Hire only licensed contractors. Unlicensed contracting during a State of Emergency is a felony.
- Be cautious of anyone coming to your home uninvited and offering to do home repairs or asking you to pull the permits. These may be indications they are not properly licensed.
- Report possible unlicensed activity in Charlotte County by contacting the Community Development Department at 941.743.1201 or BuildingConstruction@CharlotteCountyFL.gov
- Obtain a written estimate or contract. Insist on start/completion dates and payment terms in the contract. Do not pay in full before work begins or pay the final balance until work is completed to your satisfaction. NEVER pay with cash.

Disaster Safety Tips

Tornado

Safety Tips

- Have a NOAA Weather Radio and/or a commercial radio and extra batteries.
- Many mobile phones are capable of receiving Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs). These alerts can inform you about life-threatening weather conditions in your immediate area.
- Seek shelter in a small, windowless interior room or hallway on the lowest level of a sturdy building.
- Mobile homes and RVs are not safe during tornadoes. Abandon mobile homes/RVs and go to the nearest sturdy building immediately.
- If you cannot quickly walk to a sturdy building, immediately get into a vehicle, buckle your seat belt and try to drive to the closest sturdy building.
- If flying debris occurs while you are driving, pull over and park. If you can safely get noticeably lower than the level of the roadway, lie in that area, covering your head with your hands. Otherwise, stay in your vehicle with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows, covering with your hands and a blanket if possible.

Know the terms used to describe tornado threats:

Tornado Watch - Tornadoes are possible. Remain alert for approaching storms.

Tornado Warning - A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Take shelter immediately if a Tornado Warning is issued for your area.



Fire

Ahead of time, create an evacuation plan, including where you will go and how you will get there. Unlike a hurricane, with fire you may only have a moment's notice. Have two escape routes out of your home or business and out of your neighborhood. Have a plan for evacuating your pets.

Fire drills help you practice your evacuation plan. Make sure everyone knows at least two escape routes from your home and business.

Smoke detectors are essential for every home. The average time to safely exit a home filling with smoke is two minutes. Smoke detectors will help alert you to the danger, providing a valuable early warning for you to get out of your home and call 911. Check your smoke detectors and replace the batteries regularly.

Disease Outbreak

Follow the latest guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)) to protect yourself, your family and your business from any current health risks or outbreaks.





Flood

If flooding threatens, get to higher ground. Take dry clothing, a flashlight and a portable radio with you.

Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. **Turn Around. Don't Drown!** Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

Do not allow children or pets near high water, storm drains or ditches. Flood waters may be contaminated.

Hazardous Materials Incident

Follow the directions given by public officials quickly.

If told to evacuate:

- Move to the location designated by public officials.
- Stay calm. Quickly gather what you will need, unless you are told to leave immediately.
- Keep car windows/air vents closed. Do not use the air conditioner until you are out of the evacuation area.

If told to stay indoors & shelter-in-place:

- Stay inside until local officials say you can leave safely. Bring pets indoors.
- Close all doors and windows. Seal gaps under doorways and windows with damp towels and duct tape. Turn off heating, cooling or ventilation systems.
- If you are told to protect your breathing, cover your nose and mouth with a cloth or towel.

Terrorism/Violent Crime

See Something - Say Something. Call Charlotte County Sheriff's Office 941.639.2101 (Englewood 941.474.3233) or call Florida's toll-free hotline 1.855.352.7233 (1.855.FLA.SAFE) to report any suspicious activity. If it is an emergency, CALL 911!

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

Police, Fire, EMS Emergencies	911
Charlotte County Sheriff's Office	941.639.2101
–Englewood.....	941.474.3233
Emergency Management	941.833.4000
Charlotte County Government.....	941.743.1200
Charlotte County Health Dept.	941.624.7200
Charlotte County Public Works.....	941.575.3600
Charlotte County Animal Control.....	941.833.5690
Charlotte County Solid Waste	941.764.4360
–Englewood.....	941.697.4000
Charlotte County Utilities	941.764.4300
Charlotte County School District	941.255.0808
Punta Gorda Government	941.575.3302
Punta Gorda Public Works	941.575.5050
Punta Gorda Utilities.....	941.575.3339
Florida Power and Light.....	1.800.468.8243
Salvation Army	941.629.3170
American Red Cross	1.800.733.2767

**Call Center – Official Information
During Disasters 941.833.4000**

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