

Key Points from Hurricane Preparedness Seminars Held in 2018 & 2019

Please note that Cape Royal is now considered to be located in Zone A. Though this seems to fluctuate between Zone A and Zone B, the most recent determination is Zone A.

Below is a compilation of information gained from speakers at Hurricane Preparedness seminars held at Cape Royal in 2018 & 2019. The speakers from either of those years included: Matt Devitt (Wink News Meteorologist), Fire Chief Ben Mickuleit, Deputy Chief Shawn Brant (Matlacha/Pine Island Fire District, and Lee Mayfield from Lee County Safety Emergency Management.

Surge

A major clarification was offered on the meaning of “surge” as it relates to hurricanes in our area. During Hurricane Irma, there was a misunderstanding in the media, hurricane centers, etc. that confused people regarding the meaning of the height of a surge. Without repeating the confusion, the 2018 seminar speakers clarified that the actual surge hitting any of our homes is the expected height stated by the hurricane center experts, LESS the height of your home elevation. So, for example, if the surge is expected to be 10’, and your home elevation is 8’, that would indicate that you could expect a 2-foot flood. Of course, there are no guarantees, and flooding could be caused by various reasons in addition to surge, but this provides a guideline.

The stated predictions on surge statistics, wind statistics, etc. are generally projections based upon worst-case-scenarios.

Leaving or Staying at Home

Several questions were asked about whether it makes sense to ride out a hurricane in one’s home, or to evacuate. The general consensus of the speakers was that it is better to evacuate early than to wait until a crisis is imminent and have to either find a local shelter, try to head out on roads that are jammed, or try to get flights out on airplanes that are generally booked by that time. One of the speakers also strongly encouraged traveling *north* out of Cape Coral vs. heading east/west—though it just depends on where the storm has been slated to travel. The span of a hurricane is so wide and precarious that it can move from coast to coast and back again, or cover the width between the coasts, such that no place from east to west is safe. Area schools are expected to be made available for hurricane shelters, for those who wish to stay in the area.

Deputy Chief Brant clarified that if there is a mandatory evacuation, this does not mean that someone will come door-to-door to evacuate you from your home. That decision is still up to the homeowner. However, the emergency personnel must evacuate when winds reach 40 mph, and/or if there is some other imminent danger. ***Persons remaining in their homes would stay at their own peril, and no one would be able to rescue or provide emergency medical help should it be needed, until such time that emergency crews can return.*** Emergency personnel are only allowed to return when the weather abates.

In the event of high winds, the speakers stated that it was better to be on ground level and in rooms that have no windows. However, in the event of a *surge*, it is best to be on the second floor of a house that has a second floor! As the wind generally abates just before a surge, the timing is too difficult to anticipate. Best to not be there when the hurricane is coming through. But if you are, take your location into consideration during the winds and possible surge.

If there are downed power lines, do NOT touch them!

Disabled Family Member?

If you or a family member is disabled in some way, Lee County has a list for Special Needs shelters that you register for ahead of time. They will actually come and pick you up, along with your significant other, etc. Check the Lee County web site. (www.leeecoc.com). Also, more information is available in the hurricane preparedness brochures mentioned in this document.

Advisable to Cut Lanai Screens?

The question came up on whether it is advisable to remove or cut screens in lanais to avoid wind damage. One suggestion was to remove the screen doors on either end of your lanai. This allows the wind to pass through to remove wind pressure. You can also cut one screen on either end of your lanai—either by cutting the perimeter of the screen, or by cutting a large “X” across the screen. This will require repair after the hurricane has passed, but at least will likely reduce or avoid more costly repairs of large screens, lanai structure, or even movement/destruction of the entire lanai structure off its base.

Keep Gas Tanks in Vehicles Full

When a hurricane is predicted, be sure to keep the gas tanks in your vehicles full. One of the speakers suggested that, in the event of evacuating, it is better to drive only one vehicle if possible, so that you do not have multiple vehicles stranded should you run out of gasoline.

Communication

The Cape Royal HOA Board will make every effort possible to communicate with its members—generally by email. It is also helpful to participate with the network “NextDoor”. When you are away from the Cape Coral area, it is advisable to use phone apps and computer apps to access local news, such as WINK News. Local news stations are more likely to have more reliable information specific to our area. It is advisable to consult the web site AlertLee.com. Also, if you have a mobile phone, it is advisable to install [LeePrepares](#), which also features the [AlertLee](#) information. This will not be active until there is an emergency.

Other Resources to Review

A booklet titled “All Hazards Guide” was handed out by the Fire District speakers. Extra copies were left at the clubhouse.

WINK News normally makes hurricane preparedness guide available at most Publix grocery stores. Just ask at the Customer Service counter. Walgreen's stores generally have a much-abridged version made available by TV2.

If a hurricane WATCH is issued (meaning that conditions are possible within 48 hours), do the following:

- Check the lists below to determine which items you need to have on hand (if you haven't done so already).
- Secure the outside of your home, including securing or moving inside all lawn furniture and other loose items. Remember to check the exterior walls of your home and lanai to determine if anything could come loose and become airborne. (Some people opt to bring in globes from their coach-lights.)
- Board up or shutter windows to prevent shattering.
- If sliding glass doors are unshuttered, secure and wedge them to prevent them from lifting from their tracks.
- Unplug any appliances that you are not using, with the exception of the refrigerator). **The refrigerator/freezer should be turned to their coldest settings.** Leave a sealed bag of a few ice cubes in the freezer. If they are melted at any point, you will know that the food in the freezer must be discarded for safety.
- To prepare for a surge, if you have valuables or important papers, it is advisable to place them on as high a shelf or other high permanent structure in your house as possible.
- Take photos of all rooms in your house for future insurance claim purposes.

Note: A hurricane WARNING means that conditions are possible within 36 hours.

Check Lists to Consider:

Be sure to check one or more of the hurricane brochures for in-depth details, but below are some things to have on hand, some of which you will want to take with you in a vehicle should you evacuate:

Food Service Supplies to Have on Hand in the Event of a Hurricane:

- Drinking Water: 1 gallon/person per day for 3-7 days (For home use, you may consider purchasing a “WaterBOB,” which is a bladder for the bathtub that holds water without the need to purchase the individual gallons of water. It would still be advisable to have some gallons available to take with you during an evacuation.)
- Non-perishable food for a 3-7 day supply. (Best if can be used without cooking)
- Manual can opener
- Juice/soft drinks/instant coffee or tea
- Plastic wrap/zip-lock bags/garbage bags
- Paper plates, cups, aluminum foil
- Cooler for food storage and ice
- Lighter/matches, pots/pans (keep matches in a waterproof container)
- Camp stove or grill—outdoor use only!

Personal Items

- Sleeping bags, pillows, blankets
- Lawn chairs, folding chairs, cots
- Personal hygiene items (toothbrush, soap, deodorant, denture/dental care, etc.)
- List of emergency contact information
- Prescriptions and over-the-counter meds
- Spare glasses, sunglasses, contacts, cleaning solution
- Extra hearing aid batteries (if applicable)
- Baby/infant needs (if applicable)
- Pet and service animal needs (if applicable)
- Rain gear, hot and cold weather clothing
- Closed-toe work shoes (not just sandals)
- (If evacuating, take several changes of clothes per person)
- Extra cash**

Sanitation/Clean-up Supplies to Have on Hand”

- Water for cleaning—could be water drawn in a bathtub
- Unscented bleach to disinfect water
- Rubber gloves
- Wet wipes and waterless hand sanitizers
- Toilet paper, paper towels, sanitary supplies
- Assorted cleaners and disinfectants
- Brooms, mops, towels, and rags
- Bucket with tight fitting lid for emergency toilet or portable toilet

Basic Tools:

- Hammer, wrenches, screwdrivers, pliers, large scissors
- Specialized tools for water and gas valves, etc.
- Plastic tarps with grommets or roll plastic sheeting
- Assorted screws, nails or other fasteners
- Duct tape
- Canvas and/or leather work gloves
- (If applicable) Hand-crank for electric hurricane shutters)

Basic Safety Equipment:

- NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert (with crank or extra batteries) (easily purchased for \$20-\$40)
- First-aid kit and instruction book
- A landline telephone can help (does not require batteries or electricity)
- Battery powered television, radio, clock (cell phone apps can work for this)
- Flashlights
- Extra batteries
- Chemical light sticks (to replace candles)
- Whistle (to signal for help if needed)

Keep the Following Items in a Convenient Place (especially in the event of an evacuation)

- Cell phone(s)
- Phone Directory of Cape Royal Community
- Directory of Emergency Numbers
- Spare keys (home, vehicles, boats, etc.)
- Important papers
- ID (driver's license, insurance cards, passports, birth certificates, etc.) (in an air-tight waterproof container)
- Cash, credit cards, coins, checks
- Prepaid telephone cards if you don't have cell phone(s)
- Pens, pencils, and paper
- Maps and evacuation information
- Keepsakes, significant photos, etc.
- Books, Kindles, games and other quiet entertainment
- Medical equipment
- Cooler with ability to quickly add ice packs for medicines, food, etc.
- Medical alert tags
- First aid kit

Housing Your Vehicles Not Used for Evacuation:

There are several methods to greater protect any of your vehicles that you are not using for an evacuation. It is advisable to reinforce your garage doors (especially double doors) with a reinforcement kit that is available from some home improvement stores and on-line. This could allow you to more confidently leave your vehicles in your garage, though these do not address a surge/flooding. A second alternative is to leave the vehicle(s) in a parking garage.

Other:

Have unscented household bleach on hand to purify drinking water. Be sure that it is “Regular”—that is, *not* scented, *not* color safe, nor bleaches with added cleaners. Acquire a medicine dropper for use when treating possible tainted water for drinking. (16 drops bleach to 1 gallon water, if you have to treat for drinking water)

Be sure to photograph all rooms in your house, as well as any furniture, equipment or valuables that you may need for insurance purposes after a hurricane, and keep those photos backed up in a safe location.

Be sure to read the Hurricane Preparedness kits and brochures for more complete information. (The lists above are just a quick reference guide to initially assist you.)

REMEMBER...AFTER A HURRICANE:

- Routine services will be limited
- Roads will be impassable
- Power may be off for a considerable time
- Drinking water may be limited
- Septic systems may not function
- Cell phone infrastructure may be down

KEY PHONE NUMBERS IN THE EVENT OF A HURRICANE:

Lee County Emergency Operations Center: 239-533-0622

State of Florida Emergency Info 24-Hour Hotline: 800-342-3557

**Red Cross Food, Shelter, and Financial Assistance: 866-438-4636;
local chapter emergency number is 239-278-3401**

Lee Country Public Safety and EMS: 911

Traffic Conditions in Florida: 511