

- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Complete change of clothing including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and sturdy shoes
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper – when diluted 9 parts water to 1 part bleach, bleach can be used as a disinfectant; in an emergency, use it to treat water by using 16 drops bleach/gallon of water (no scented or color-safe bleach or bleach with added cleaners)
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies, if appropriate, and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils; paper towels
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children, if appropriate

At home, add:

- Infant formula and diapers, if appropriate
- Pet food and extra water for your pet, if appropriate

First Aid Kit

Ask your doctor about storing prescription medications (e.g., high blood pressure or heart medicines, insulin) and keep at least a 3-day supply in your emergency kit. If they have expiration dates, be sure to replace them regularly.

Other items to include:

- 2 Pairs of latex or other sterile gloves
- Sterile dressings to stop bleeding and protect wounds; waterproof medical adhesive tape to hold them in place
- Antibiotic and burn ointments to prevent infection
- Adhesive bandages in a variety of sizes
- Eye wash solution
- Thermometer
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment
- Aspirin and non-aspirin pain relievers
- Contact lens solution and case, if appropriate; an extra pair of glasses
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid
- Laxative
- Tweezers, scissors
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant

Physical Safety

You may be ordered to evacuate. Don't be a hero – go! If possible, make arrangements to stay with friends or relatives away from the storm. Make sure your employees have a similar plan for evacuation. Take your emergency kit and important papers with you. (You should also copy those papers and keep them in another location.)

Whether you're in "Tornado Alley" or a "Hurricane Circle," it's a good idea to prepare a safe room. Wind can cause considerable damage to people as well as property. If a severe hurricane is predicted, board up your windows with strong plywood, at the least.

Keep a considerable distance between you and the wind. A safe room can be:

- The basement
- Atop a concrete slab-on-grade foundation or garage floor
- An interior room on the 1st floor

A below-ground safe room (in the basement, say) must be designed to avoid accumulating water during the heavy rains that often accompany severe windstorms. Here are other recommendations from ready.gov:

- The safe room must be built to withstand high winds and flying debris even if the building is severely damaged or destroyed
- It must be adequately anchored to resist overturning and uplift
- The walls, ceiling, and door must withstand wind pressure and resist penetration by objects and falling debris
- The walls must be independent of the structure of the building so that damage to the building will not cause damage to the safe room

If you can't build a safe room, locate the interior room farthest from windows on the lowest floor of the building and keep your emergency kit and other supplies there. It may be a bathroom or laundry room. It should not have windows and should have a sturdy door.

Make a plan and practice it

Whether at home or at work, plan a strategy for getting everyone to the safest room possible. Be sure to take into account any physically disabled, very young, or elderly persons who may need assistance. Also, keep the route to the safe room clear of debris and furniture.

Communication before, during, and after a disaster is crucial. Here are some things you can do:

- Include emergency preparedness information in employee newsletters, on the company intranet, periodic e-mails, and other employee communications
- Consider setting up a telephone calling tree, a password-protected page on the company website, an e-mail alert or a call-in voice recording to communicate with employees in an emergency
- Designate an out-of-town phone number where employees can leave an "I'm OK" message
- Provide everyone in the company with wallet cards detailing instructions on how to get company information in an emergency (include telephone numbers or Internet passwords for easy reference)
- Maintain open communications where employees are free to bring questions and concerns to company leadership
- Identify staff members who are responsible for communicating regularly to employees

If you have disabled people working for you:

- Ask them what assistance they will need
- Engage them in emergency planning
- Ask about communications difficulties, physical limitations, equipment instructions, and medication procedures
- Identify people willing to help co-workers with disabilities and be sure they are able to handle the job, especially if someone needs to be lifted or carried
- Plan how you will alert people who cannot hear an alarm or instructions

Don't forget any employees who do not speak English or don't speak it well. Learn how you can best communicate with them. Learn how to say things like "emergency" and "evacuate" in their language.

Once your plan is in place, practice it regularly, as you would fire drills. Make sure everyone knows where to go and what to do. If there are other tenants in your building, coordinate and practice evacuation and other emergency plans with them.

Plan at least 2 ways out of the building from every area of your building. Locate exits and mark them prominently. Provide employees with floor plans and site maps that include emergency exits, evacuation routes, and the location of the safe room. Install emergency lighting along the routes and at exits.

Decide who has the authority to order an evacuation and who will lock up after everyone is out. Do a head count or roll call to make sure no one is left behind! Designate an assembly site, one location near your facility and another in the general area in case you have to move farther away.

Also decide who has the authority to declare the "all clear."

Insurance

This may seem obvious, but worth mentioning nonetheless. Be sure you have business interruption insurance as well as standard property damage coverage. Also, find insurance for wind and flood damage. Seek riders for additional coverage in particularly high-risk areas.

Getting Back to Business

In the event of a catastrophic event, you will want to get back in business as quickly as possible, not just for your business, but for your employees. People devastated by a disaster want to resume their routines: there's psychological damage as well as physical damage after a disaster. Plan now for emergency payroll, expedited financial decision-making, and accounting systems to track and document costs. Establish procedures for succession management, even if it's only temporary. If possible, include someone who is not at your location.

File insurance claims as soon as you know the extent of the damage.

Also think how you'll get back into business. How will you communicate with customers that you're still there? Do you have relationships with other suppliers in the event yours are not able to meet your needs? Have you discussed emergency procedures with other ACCA member contractors in your area? After Hurricane Katrina, member contractors around Gulfport, MS, coordinated with each other to help with jobs, parts, supplies, and the like.

Remember, you can't expect the federal or state governments to help you much, even though they learned a lot about emergency response from the 2005 hurricanes. You need to take steps to

ensure the safety of your family and employees. Have a plan at work and a plan at home. Share them with your employees and encourage them to make plans for themselves. Print out this page and give every employee a copy as well.

Then, practice, practice, practice the plans until they're second nature.

The ACCA Disaster Relief Committee is available year-round in case of extraordinary natural disasters that affect member contractors. For more information, contact relief@acca.org.