

HURRICANE PROOFING YOUR HOME

Florida, while known for its beautiful beaches, is also known for its hurricanes.

With Hurricane Season underway, it's important that you and your family are properly prepared for the effects of severe weather and possible emergencies.

One way to keep your family safe is to properly prepare your home.

The Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) has several tips to help you hurricane proof your home.

For more do-it-yourself home protection projects as well as step-by-step guidance, visit the FLASH website at <http://www.flash.org/>.

[Click here to visit the PSC Hurricane House](#)

- 1** *Water supply is very important during a disaster. A main water valve, usually located near your meter or utility area, will allow you to shut off the water to your home in case of emergency. To ensure that your home's water supply is not polluted or contaminated, make sure you can easily locate and operate the main house valve, so you can turn it off if necessary. You may need to replace the knob if it doesn't turn easily or is rusty.*
- 2** *Also learn how to shut off the electricity to your home. This prevents against electrical sparks that can cause fires or gas ignition if leaks are present. During an outage, turn off all electricity in the home, so it is safe for power restoration. Locate your electrical circuit box and always shut off all the individual circuits before shutting off the main circuit. Turn off and unplug as many appliances as possible that require electricity. If you are anticipating a power outage, turn your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings ahead of time to keep food fresh and do not open them during the outage. Circuit breakers can trip during a major storm or short-circuit your electrical system. If you are evacuating, turn power off from the main breaker.*
- 3** *Fully charge all cellular phones and laptops and turn off any electrical devices such as printers, monitors, or scanners that aren't in use. Have extra batteries and car chargers available. Back up computer files regularly.*
- 4** *When using portable generators, Florida's utilities recommend that you DO NOT connect a portable generator directly to a home circuit but instead, plug appliances directly to the generator. Keep your portable generators properly ventilated and DO NOT use a generator inside a residence or any enclosed space, such as a garage, where deadly carbon monoxide gasses could build up.*
- 5** *Check your windows to make sure they aren't cracked or broken and check your door to make sure it is in good condition. Protecting the windows and doors also helps keep your roof intact. A good way to protect your home's windows and glass doors from damage is to cover them with tested storm shutters or plywood.*
- 6** *The Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH) recommends cleaning debris out of your gutters. Clogged gutters can cause water and structural damage to your home. It's also a good idea to check your roof and make sure it can withstand hail and wind by repairing or replacing loose or old shingles. Also, trim trees before a storm to reduce the chance of debris and limbs falling on your home.*
- 7** *Reinforce your garage doors. Reinforcing garage doors helps protect not only your garage, but also your home and contents, and reduces possible structural damage. If you have an electric garage door opener, FLASH also recommends learning where the manual release lever is located and how it's operated in case power goes out and the door is too heavy to lift. Bring in all outdoor furniture, door decorations, garbage cans, garden tools, and everything else that is not tied down. Anchor deck items and other objects that cannot be brought inside.*
- 8** *Every family should have an emergency plan and learn the community's hurricane evacuation routes and how to find higher ground. Fuel your vehicle and recheck your emergency supplies. If you have pets, make sure that you pack pet food and supplies as well, or make sure that you check with your local animal shelter or animal hospital for boarding options. If you require special assistance, alert your county or local emergency management office.*