



TOWN OF HIGHLAND BEACH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

A Continued Culture of Preparedness

Hurricane season is here and the predictions have been made –“16 named storms predicted.” Whether or not such predictions are reliable, only time will tell. When mentioning names such as Frances, Jeanne and Wilma, we have personally experienced nature’s fury; it should now be a routine this time of year to **prepare, prepare, prepare**. Government agencies at the local, federal and state level provide assistance, but such assistance should never be a substitute for our individual safety, planning and preparedness. Each and every one of us should take personal responsibility for ourselves and that of our families.

Emergencies can and do happen, and we must make every effort to plan ahead making as many preparations as possible, well in advance. People who take personal responsibility for themselves and their families, and who are prepared in advance with a plan in place, will be in a much better position to deal with an emergency than those who do not plan ahead.

A New Emergency Notification System is on the way



Communication is Critically Important in Times of Emergency

The Town is currently under contract review for a new emergency notification system-**CodeRed™**. This new emergency notification system is expected to be brought online in early fall of this year. Emergency notifications may be sent to land line and cellular telephones; residents may even sign up to receive text or e-mail notifications. Utilizing this system will allow the Town to have a more advanced and efficient system to get the word out in the event of an emergency.

CodeRed™ combines its calling data and utilizes GIS mapping technology to geographically target and notify affected individuals. The Town simply outlines the targeted area on the online map, records a voice message, and then launches the call. Simultaneously, **CodeRed™** dials all phone numbers in the designated calling zone. Alternatively, the Town can launch calls from lists of numbers that can be pre-built.

Nevertheless, in order to reach out to as many residents as possible, the Town must begin collecting their contact information. As with the old notification system, the database only contains telephone numbers that are listed phone numbers from various commercial data. Using such data will leave out a significant number of residents that may have unlisted numbers or may use mobile devices as their main point of contact. Therefore, if you have an unlisted telephone number or if you would like to add a mobile telephone number to be included in the database, please visit or call Town Hall to add your information, or visit the Town’s website to register. Having such a system will enable the Town to initiate a mass calling with a single recorded message informing residents of emergency information in a timely manner.

CodeRed™ will prove to be an invaluable tool to the Town of Highland Beach.

CERT



Following a disaster, community members may be on their own for a period of time because of the size of the area affected, lost communications, and impassable roads.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program supports local response capabilities by training volunteers to organize themselves and spontaneous volunteers at the disaster site. They provide immediate assistance to victims and collect disaster intelligence to support responders’ efforts when they arrive.

In the classroom, participants learn about the hazards they face and ways to prepare for them. CERT members are taught basic organizational skills that they can use to help themselves, their loved ones, and their neighbors until help arrives.

The Town sponsors CERT training in the community which consists of 20 hours of instruction on topics that include disaster preparedness, fire safety, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster psychology. Upon completion of the training, participants are encouraged to continue their involvement by participating in training activities and volunteering for projects that support their community’s disaster preparedness efforts.

For additional information on CERT please visit, www.citizencorps.gov/cert or contact Delray Beach Fire Rescue CERT at 561-243-7456.



Plan Ahead

You should plan in advance what you will do in an emergency. Emergency events can occur quickly and without any warning. Planning for any emergency requires considering all likely scenarios. Remember, you may not have time to shop or search for the supplies you need. Be prepared to assess the situation, use common sense, and make a mental inventory of whatever you have on hand to take care of yourself and your loved ones.



Always...

- Keep a full tank of gas in your car if an evacuation seems likely
 - Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.
- Make transportation arrangements with family and/or friends if you do not own a car.
- Listen to battery-powered radio and follow local evacuation instructions.
- Gather your family and go if you are instructed to evacuate immediately.
- Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.
- Be alert for washed –out roads and bridges. Do not drive into flooded areas.
- Stay away from downed power lines

If time permits...

- Gather disaster supplies kit.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long sleeved shirts, and a cap.
- Secure your home:
 - Close and lock doors and windows.
 - Unplug electrical equipment, such as radios and televisions, and small appliances, such as toasters and microwaves. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding
- Let others know where you are going.

Should you have questions about emergency evacuation routes, please contact Town Hall.

Evacuating to a public shelter should be your absolute last resort. Shelters will be crowded and uncomfortable; with no privacy. Should you need to go to a public shelter, be sure to take with you: pillows, blankets, supplies of food, water, prescription medications, games and toys for small children. Do not go to a shelter until you hear official word that it has been opened. Stay tuned to local news stations or call the Town’s emergency information number for possible locations of shelters.

If You Choose to Ignore an Evacuation Order

The Town of Highland Beach expects its residents to heed evacuation orders. If you choose to ignore an evacuation order and stay in your home, you must understand that there will come a point in time when you are **on your own**. Police and fire-rescue personnel will not be available or able to assist you if you have chosen to ignore the evacuation order. Consider the fact that if there is no electricity to run elevators in high-rise buildings following a storm, residents of upper floors may find themselves trapped in their apartments with no way up or down but the stairs. If you refuse to leave, you may be asked by the police department or your building manager to sign an affidavit to that effect.

Step 3 Inventory your valuables

Make a list and also videotape/photograph items of value. Insurance policies should be reviewed well in advance of a storm. Note: Once a hurricane watch has been issued, most insurers will not issue new or additional coverage (this includes flood insurance).

Step 4 Check your home for vulnerable areas

Walk around your home and evaluate the roof, windows, garage doors, patio doors, screen enclosed rooms, landscaping, etc., to see what protective measures you need to take if a storm is approaching.

Step 1

Discuss disasters as a family

Have a family meeting to talk about disasters. Children should be encouraged to talk about their fears, and parents should convey the steps they take to keep everyone safe. Together, develop a list of things to take care of in preparing.

Step 2

Make evacuation plans

Since the Town of Highland Beach is located on a barrier island, it lies in a **MANDATORY EVACUATION ZONE FOR ALL CATEGORIES OF HURRICANES**. Evacuation orders are issued by the Palm Beach County Division of Emergency Management, and will be enforced by the Town. The Town will provide evacuation notification by all means necessary for the welfare of its residents. The Town of Highland Beach strongly advises all residents to heed mandatory evacuation orders and respond responsibly and quickly. The amount of time you have to evacuate may be limited and major delays may be encountered. You are encouraged to plan your route and have an alternate – you and everyone else may be on the road at the same time. Leaving as early as possible is the key. Make your plans for your own evacuation well in advance of the storm season.



Step 5 Protect your vehicles

Identify where you would store or park your vehicle, boat or RV. Double-check your vehicle insurance policy and keep it in a safe place with your homeowner's policy.

Step 6 Reduce damage to your home and property

Roof

- Hire a licensed professional to check your roof. Checking the roof yourself is dangerous and can cause damage, or injury.
- Shingles, tiles and panels should be fastened tightly and loose ones replaced.
- Asphalt shingles should be attached using hot-dipped, galvanized nails.
- Roof trusses should have braces and hurricane straps installed. If you temporarily repair a roof leak with tarps, check to ensure tarps are secured to the roof with wood strips that are two inch by one inch, placed at 48 inches on center, especially to the edges.

Landscape

Trim trees and shrubs regularly. Remove weak branches, especially those resting on your roof, and thin the upper canopy. Do not trim trees once a storm warning has been issued.

Shutters

Consider installing window shutters. If you have shutters, now is the time to make sure they are in good working condition. For accordion or roll-down shutters, test to ensure they open and close easily and lubricate and clear the track of obstructions. For panel shutters, check for excessive wear or rust on the connectors.

Pool

- Shingles, tiles and panels should be fastened tightly and loose ones replaced.
- Keep water in the pool as it will protect the pool's finish from sand and flying debris. You can lower the water level, but no more than one to two feet; otherwise, hydrostatic pressure could cause the pool to pop out of the ground.
- Add chlorine to the water to prevent contamination.
- Turn off the power to the pool equipment.
- Remove the pool pump motor and store it indoors in a dry place, or wrap the motor in plastic material, such as a garment bag, and secure it tightly with tape or rope.
- Remove all loose items from the pool area (furniture, pool cleaning equipment, filter house tops, deck lids, etc.).
- After the storm: reinstall the pump, return water to a normal level, clean pool thoroughly, balance the chemicals, super-chlorinate, and run the filter until the water is clean.



Step 7 Identify special needs

Make arrangements well in advance of a storm to take care of infants, the elderly and those with special needs. Persons with special needs should register with Palm Beach County Emergency Management.

Palm Beach County has a Special Needs Program in place to assist those residents with certain serious medical problems during a major emergency. The Special Needs Shelter is a facility that has auxiliary electrical power, is wind resistant, is not flood prone, and has medical supervision. To be eligible for the Special Needs Program, you must **pre-register** with the County Division of Emergency Management, and meet one of several established criteria. Residents who are interested in applying for the Special Needs Program may pick up an application at the Highland Beach Police Department, download it from the Town's Website at www.ci.highland-beach.fl.us, or call the Palm Beach County Division of Emergency Management directly at 561-712-6400. Any information provided will be used only to properly provide for your care during a serious hurricane and Florida law protects your confidentiality.

Step 8

Have a plan for your pets

Make sure you have a plan to address your pet's needs whether you evacuate or stay in your home.

Palm Beach County has provided a Pet Friendly Shelter for individuals living in mandatory evacuation zones with pets. Residents that need to utilize this shelter must register in advance either online or by mail. Registration forms may be found at: <http://www.pbcgov.com/publicsafety/animal-care/petshelter.htm>

Veterinary clinics and boarding facilities are other possibilities, but arrangements will need to be made well in advance. A list of boarding facilities may be found on the Town's website.

Additional information regarding the pet friendly shelter may be found on the Town's website or by calling Animal Care & Control at (561) 233-1266.

Step 9

Have a disaster supply kit



If you remain at home, electricity, water, heat, air conditioning, telephone service, and transportation could be cut off for a considerable amount of time or first responders may not be able to reach you right away.

Consequently, you should plan on having non perishable food, water, medications, and other essentials to get you through the emergency.

Step 10

Share your plan

Let your family and friends know of your disaster plan. Make sure they know how to reach you to check on you. Have an out-of-town family member or friend as a point of contact.





After the Storm

Town officials and emergency personnel will work as quickly as possible to conduct preliminary impact assessments, clear debris from the streets, and be sure the Town is safe for residents to return. Those who chose to ignore the evacuation order and stayed in their homes during the storm are asked to remain in their homes, and at least stay off the roads, until an official all clear has been given. We understand that residents will be anxious to get back to their homes, however, no residents will be allowed entry into the Town until the all clear has been given.

Information

The Town will make every effort to keep residents informed before, during and after an emergency event. The Town has a special telephone hotline – **561-330-RAIN (7246)** providing pre-recorded information specific to Highland Beach which will be updated at least once per day during an emergency event. Residents should also stay tuned to the Town’s own Channel 95 as well as area television and radio stations for current information.

Re-Entry

The police department will establish checkpoints at the northern and southern borders to the Town, so please be sure to have appropriate identification such as a driver’s license, property deed or utility bill to show as proof of residency. A part-time resident (a property owner or tenant) residing in Town who possesses an out-of-state driver license as a form of identification may apply for a “Florida Only” driver license without having to surrender their primary license from another state. Also, a resident can apply for a Florida Identification Card. In either case, a local address will allow a resident to proceed past an established check point during the re-entry period. For more information regarding these forms of identification, call the Florida Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles at (561) 681-6333, or visit their website at www.hsmv.state.fl.us

In lieu of one of these forms of identification, a part time resident (or a non-resident) who is a property owner can keep with them a copy of their current property tax statement which should identify them by name. This can be used as proof of residency (or ownership) in conjunction with another form of valid identification with photograph, such as an out-of-area driver license.

Curfews

Curfews may be imposed for a period of time after the storm, and will be strictly enforced by the police department. While curfews may be unpopular, they are necessary to help protect residents and their property, especially when there are widespread electrical outages. Your patience and cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Traffic Signals/Road Debris

Use extreme caution when driving after a storm has passed. There may be debris in roadways that reduces visibility or inhibits safe passage. If you approach an intersection that has a missing or non-functioning traffic signal, the law requires that motorists treat such intersections as a four-way stop.

Household Waste and Recycling Collection

Collection of household waste and recycling may be suspended immediately before or after a storm, but will return to normal as soon as possible. Residents should call the Town’s emergency information hotline, 561-330-RAIN (7246) for information on post-storm household waste and recycling pick-up.

Storm Damage and Debris Removal

If your home has suffered damage, be sure to check with the Town’s building department before hiring a contractor to be certain that the contractor has the appropriate licenses and is registered with the Town. A listing of currently registered contractors can be found on the Town’s Website. Go to www.ci.highland-beach.fl.us to access this list. This will serve to protect you, the homeowner, from getting stuck with shoddy repairs by a “fly by night” unlicensed contractor. The Town has contracted with an outside vendor to remove storm debris. This process will begin as soon as possible after the storm passes. All storm debris must be brought to the public right-of-way for removal. Neither the debris removal contractor, nor Town staff, will go on private property, including the beach, to remove debris.

Important Telephone Numbers and Websites

Police/Fire/Medical Emergencies.....	911
Police – non-emergency	266-5800
Fire Rescue – non-emergency	243-7400
Town Hall	278-4548
	www.ci.highland-beach.fl.us
Highland Beach Emergency Information Hotline	330-RAIN (7246)
Palm Beach County Emergency Management.....	561-712-6400
	www.pbcgov.com/pubsafety/eoc
Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA).....	800-621-3362
American Red Cross.....	994-2060
	www.redcross-pbc.org
Florida Power & Light	800-468-8243
Comcast Cable.....	800-COMCAST (266-2278)
Florida Dept. Financial Services (Dept. of Insurance).....	800-342-2762
The Weather Channel	www.weather.com
Florida State Emergency Response Team	www.floridadisaster.org