

With global warming, major storms are becoming more frequent and more violent, including in Virginia. The hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30, with the Richmond Metro Area in most danger during August and September. The Defenders have prepared this guide to help folks prepare for these storms. For more information, in Spanish and English, see:

<https://richmondvacitynews.blogspot.com/2019/06/preparing-for-richmonds-hurricane-season.html>

---

## **Thunderstorms, Hurricanes & Tornadoes:**

### **A working-class guide for preparing for big storms**

With climate change speeding up, major storms are coming more often and with greater destruction, making all of us think about how best to prepare. High winds over water-saturated ground can result in trees being blown over. If they hit a power line, you could be without electricity for days, maybe longer. That means no lights, no stove, no recharging your cell phone. Also, no hot water. Maybe no water at all. And, unless your toilet system is gravity-based, no flushing. Grocery stores may be closed, along with gas stations, banks and ATM machines. Streets may be flooded. One good storm and we're back to 18th-century living.

These are some of the best tips we've gathered from a lot of different sources. The emphasis here is on preparations that don't cost a lot of money. Please think about sharing them with your neighbors and your social media networks. And above all, look out for each other. The government may or may not be able to help.

#### **FOOD**

- Try and have at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food for everyone in your household. This means things like canned soup, stews, vegetables, fruits, meats, salmon, tuna and juices.
- Choose foods that don't need refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water.
- If you must heat food, keep a few cans of sterno. (That's a fuel made from denatured and jellied alcohol, designed to be burned directly from its can. Carried at Target, Walmart and most sporting goods stores.)
- Also fruit: apples, oranges, bananas, avocados (very high in nutrients). We should all eat more fruit.
- Peanut butter and crackers are always a good staple. (Unless, of course, you're allergic to peanuts.)
- Also high-energy foods, like protein bars. (The Kind brand is one of the best.)
- Fight the blues with a little comfort food: cookies, chocolate, candy. But stay away from salt, like in potato chips. It'll make you thirsty, and water may be in short supply.
- Cook any meats and other perishable foods in advance. You can freeze cooked food. Refrigerated hard-boiled eggs make good snacks.
- Fill up some Tupperware or zip-lock bags with water and put them in your freezer. If you lose power, they'll keep the frozen food cold longer. They'll also serve as a backup water supply.
- Toss out any food that's past its expiration date.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you should discard any perishable foods, including hard-boiled eggs, that have been left at room temperature for longer than two hours.
- Don't forget about your pets. Stock up on their food and fill their water bowls.

#### **WATER**

- The rule of thumb is one gallon per person per day: half for drinking, half for washing and preparing food. You should generally prepare to go at least 3-4 days without city or county water.
- For drinking, brushing your teeth, washing yourself and cleaning your hands: buy bottled water. But you can also fill your cups and glasses with tap water and cover them with plastic wrap. Wash out plastic bottles with caps and glass jars with lids and fill them with tap water. Store as many as possible in the freezer or fridge to help keep the food cold. Store the rest on the counter and use first before any store-bought water bottles.
- Water for flushing: This doesn't have to be as clean as drinking water. Fill up your tub and sinks. Put your trash in plastic garbage bags and fill up your trash containers with water. Save the water from washing hands or rinsing foods for flushing. Use baby wipes to clean your hands, but don't flush them. ANYTHING other than pooping, peeing and toilet paper can clog the toilet. This includes tissue paper, which is made differently than toilet paper.

#### **LIGHT**

- Charge any device that provides light: laptops, tablets, cameras, video cameras and old phones.
- Gather all candles, flashlights, lighters, matches, batteries, and other items and keep them together where they are easy to find, not spread all over.
- Make sure you have candle holders. Glass soda, beer and wine bottles work fine. Just be careful, especially around children.

#### **HEALTH**

- If you haven't already, clean your home. A dirty house can be unhealthy. Without power, you won't be able to vacuum rugs or floors. And with water at a premium, you won't want to mop floors or clean the kitchen or bathroom. And if your power is out for days, things will start to smell, especially in the summer.

With global warming, major storms are becoming more frequent and more violent, including in Virginia. The hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30, with the Richmond Metro Area in most danger during August and September. The Defenders have prepared this guide to help folks prepare for these storms. For more information, in Spanish and English, see:

<https://richmondvacitynews.blogspot.com/2019/06/preparing-for-richmonds-hurricane-season.html>

---

- Before the storm, wash all your dishes, clothes and bed sheets. It might be a while before you can do this again.
- Just before the storm, take a shower. It might be your last one for a while. Then fill the bathtub for flushing water.
- Drink extra water before the storm hits.
- Refill any medications. Some insurance plans allow emergency refills.
- Have some non-prescription medicines: aspirin or nonaspirin pain reliever; anti-diarrhea medication; antacid (for stomach upsets); laxatives.
- Clean your cat's litter box
- Empty all trash cans, including bathrooms.
- Remove anything that will cause an odor when the A/C is off.
- **See SUPPLIES below.**

## TOOLS

- Non-electric can opener
- Box cutter
- Pliers
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
- Duct tape (always duct tape)

## SUPPLIES

- A radio, for emergency broadcasts. Preferably one with a hand crank for recharging, or at least batteries.
- Toothpaste, mouthwash, deodorant, floss, etc.
- Toilet paper
- Feminine hygiene supplies
- Denture needs supplies
- Senior needs supplies
- Paper towels
- Contact lenses and supplies
- Soap, liquid detergent, antibacterial lotion, sanitary wipes
- Plastic garbage bags
- Tarps or plastic sheeting and duct tape (to cover broken windows)
- Paper cups, plates and plastic utensils
- Fire extinguisher: a small canister ABC type (for fires caused by trash, wood and paper; flammable liquids like cooking oil or kerosene; and electrical equipment)
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Paper, pencils, pens
- Needles and thread
- A whistle (to call for help, if necessary)
- Plastic garbage bags with ties
- Plastic bucket with tight lid (for smelly stuff)
- Disinfectant and household chlorine bleach
- Rain gear: raincoats, hats, umbrellas
- Board games and other games that don't require batteries or electricity; books for adult readers and for children

## SUPPLIES FOR BABIES

- Formula & bottles
- Powdered milk
- Diapers & baby powder
- Baby wipes
- Cotton balls
- Medications

## COMMUNICATION

- Charge up all your electrical devices, especially cell phones
- Old cell phones can still be used for dialing 911
- Keep extra cell phone batteries
- Have a car cigarette lighter charger so you can recharge your cell phone from your vehicle
- Put your cellphone on power-saver mode

With global warming, major storms are becoming more frequent and more violent, including in Virginia. The hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30, with the Richmond Metro Area in most danger during August and September. The Defenders have prepared this guide to help folks prepare for these storms. For more information, in Spanish and English, see:

<https://richmondvacitynews.blogspot.com/2019/06/preparing-for-richmonds-hurricane-season.html>

---

## **SAFETY**

- Storm or no storm, always keep a good first aid kit. Available in most supermarkets, or online from the Red Cross.
- For a very basic first aid kit, include adhesive bandages (Band-Aids) of different sizes; an antibacterial ointment, like Neosporin, for treating small cuts and bruises; a hand sanitizer; antiseptic wipes; sterile gauzes for larger wounds; adhesive tape; small scissors; tweezers; aspirin; oral thermometer; a first aid manual (available from the Red Cross and at: [https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PHSS\\_UX\\_Content/FA-CPR-AED-Part-Manual.pdf](https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PHSS_UX_Content/FA-CPR-AED-Part-Manual.pdf)).
- Take in anything outside that could fly around: patio or lawn furniture, grills, potted plants, etc.
- During the storm, stay away from windows and glass doors.
- In the event of a tornado, which can come with hurricanes (it'll sound like a freight train), the major danger is from flying glass. So stay in a bathroom or hallway that doesn't have any windows. If all your rooms have windows, get behind and under mattresses. Take clothes with you that you would wear if you have to leave your home after the tornado passes.
- If you lose power during a really cold winter and have to stay in your home, make a tent out of your mattresses and get everyone inside. The mattresses will hold in your body heat and help prevent hypothermia or freezing.

## **GENERAL**

- If your power goes out, turn off the AC and unplug the fridge and all other appliances and electronic devices. There may be power surges during and after the storm, and these can destroy your devices.
- Check in regularly with the National Weather Service on your laptop, tablet or cell phone. (<https://www.weather.gov>) It has your latest local information, by zip code.
- Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh. Replace your stored food every six months. Replace batteries.
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers (hospitals, fire department, your vet, local animal control, animal shelters, Red Cross, etc.)

## **SECURITY**

- Try and have some cash on hand. If the power is out, ATM machines won't be working.
- You should always have a special place for important personal papers, like an ID, your Social Security and voter registration cards, medical records, your wills, immunization records, insurance policies, passports, bank account numbers, credit card account numbers, family records (birth, marriage and death certificates) and important personal phone numbers (in case you lose your cell phone.)
- Before a storm, wrap the documents in plastic and put them in a box or bag that you can grab quickly if you have to evacuate.
- If you have home insurance, and there is damage to your possessions, you'll want proof of ownership to file a claim. Take photos or, better yet, video, of everything you own. Go from room to room, opening cabinets, drawers and closets.

## **EVACUATION**

- At some point you may need to leave the area. Make a plan. Where would you go? How would you get there? What would you take?
- Gas up your vehicle. If the roads are out, gas stations won't be able get more gas.
- Think about that older person who lives alone and doesn't have a car.
- Keep a suitcase or bag ready with a few changes of clothes.
- Keep your meds and toiletries somewhere where you can get them in a hurry.
- Put some bottled drinking water in your car.
- Remember to also pack for pets.
- Don't drive through flooded streets. You can't tell how deep the water is just by looking at it, and even six or seven inches of water can stall many vehicles. Plus, the pavement itself may be washed away.
- For anything you want to keep dry but can't take with you, put it in your dishwasher and lock the washer door. Really.

## **EVACUATION FOR PETS**

- Pack a week's supply of pet food, water and other provisions, such as medication or cat litter.
- Securely fasten a current identification tag to your pet's collar. Include the phone number of a friend or family member so anyone who finds your pet is able to reach someone.
- Carry a photograph of your pet.
- Transport pets in secure carriers and keep pets on leashes or harnesses.
- Call hotels in a safe location and ask if you can bring your pets. Ask if a no-pet policy can be lifted during the disaster.
- Most emergency shelters do not admit pets.
- Call friends, family members, veterinarians or boarding kennels in a safe/host location to arrange care if you and your pets cannot stay together.

With global warming, major storms are becoming more frequent and more violent, including in Virginia. The hurricane season runs from June 1 through Nov. 30, with the Richmond Metro Area in most danger during August and September. The Defenders have prepared this guide to help folks prepare for these storms. For more information, in Spanish and English, see:

<https://richmondvacitynews.blogspot.com/2019/06/preparing-for-richmonds-hurricane-season.html>

---

## COMMUNITY

- Check on your elderly or physically or mentally challenged neighbors and single moms with small children.
- Share this information sheet on social media.
- Print it out and share it with your neighbors.
- Send us suggestions for more tips!

## EMERGENCY HELP

- Before the storm, look up the website for your city or county for information about emergency help.

## CHECKLISTS

- First Aid & Non-Prescription Drugs: <http://hurricanesafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/firstaid.pdf>
- Sanitation, Clothing & Bedding: <http://hurricanesafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/sanitation.pdf>
- Tools & Supplies: <http://hurricanesafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/toolsandsupplies.pdf>
- Special Items for Infants, Adults, Pets: <http://hurricanesafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/specialitems.pdf>
- Possessions and Documents: <http://hurricanesafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/possessions.pdf>

*This emergency tip sheet was compiled by the staff of*

## **The Virginia Defender**

A statewide, quarterly, community newspaper published by the  
**Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice & Equality.**

Founded in 2002, we are an all-volunteer organization of Virginia residents working for the survival of our communities through education and social action projects.

*Contact us at:*

**PO Box 23202, Richmond, VA 23223 -- Ph: 804-644-5834**

**Email: [DefendersFJE@hotmail.com](mailto:DefendersFJE@hotmail.com) -- Web: [www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com](http://www.DefendersFJE.blogspot.com)**