



Preparing Your Home for Hurricanes

As we approach the peak months for hurricane activity, now is the time prepare your home for any extreme weather that may come. When you and your house are prepared, you're more likely to weather the toughest storm. Taking time now to prepare your home for storm season could save you a lot of money later.

The following is a list of things to remember when preparing your home for hurricane season:

- 1. Review Your Insurance Policies** - Before you do anything else, look over your insurance policies to make sure you're covered for losses incurred as the result of a natural disaster or brutal storm. Damage caused by flooding, earthquakes and hurricanes is generally not covered by your regular homeowner's policy, but can be purchased separately. Make lists or videotapes of your belongings as documentation for the insurance company, and keep that documentation in a safe location away from your house.
- 2. Seal Windows and Doors**- Try to prevent wind and water from entering through windows, cracks, entry doors and garage doors. Wind funneling through your house pushes upward, and could lift the roof, allowing heavy rains to damage the interior of your home. Especially in hurricane-prone areas it is important to seal your windows and doors as tightly as possible. You can purchase and install special storm shutters to cover your windows.
- 3. DIY Storm Shutters**- You can also make your own set of shutters out of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch marine plywood or metal storm panels. Make sure they overlap the windows on all sides by four inches. Then mark them so you know which window they fit. Don't forget to make shutters for your skylight windows. Once made, the shutter panels can be stored and used when necessary. These shutters can help protect homes from all rainstorms accompanied by high winds, not just hurricanes.
- 4. Consider Steel Doors** - After you've made shutters for all your windows, start working on your doors. If you live in an area that frequently gets heavy storms, consider installing steel entry doors. High winds can easily tear through double doors, French doors and sliding patio doors that have no structural support between the two sides. You may need to purchase and install special hardware to more adequately secure the doors where they meet. Try bolts that fasten the door into the framing at the top and the bottom.



Preparing Your Home for Hurricanes

- 5. Remember Your Roof-** A roof in good condition can shield your home's interior from the storm outside. Roof work is another essential step in preparing your house to withstand a severe storm. Apply sealing around your home's chimney or vent pipes. This will help prevent water from seeping into your home. Hire a contractor to check the structural integrity of the roof system. Clean out clogged gutters and downspouts. If the rain that accompanies a heavy storm can't run through the gutters and downspouts, it will spill over the sides, landing in areas where it can soak through to your home's foundation, causing flooding and structural damage.
- 6. Clear Your Yard-** Next, take steps to protect your home from objects that take flight during a storm. Do a little yard work. Remove all dead and dying limbs from your trees, and secure lawn furniture, trashcans, flowerpots and other yard ornaments. Disconnect and remove exterior television antennas from the roof. Then take all lawn furniture, grills, potted plants and other lawn accessories inside your house. If you can't secure lawn furniture or other outdoor items, bring them inside as well. High-speed winds could transform any of these objects into flying missiles. Tie down the larger items such as sheds, doghouses, playhouses, swing sets and boats.
- 7. Prepare to Shelter-in-Place-** Finally, stock your cupboards and closets with anything you might need if you have to take shelter inside your house during a summer storm. Keep a battery-operated radio, several flashlights in case you lose electricity, and plastic sheeting to cover exposed areas. Fill your drawers with brand new packages of live batteries for the flashlights. Stash canned foods and other non-perishable food items in your cupboards in case you can't get out to the supermarket for a while. And pile blankets into your closets in case you lose electricity and your house becomes cold.

Visit the Southeastern Louisiana Home Builders Association website, www.selhba.org for more information and for a complete listing of builders and subcontractors. The office can also be reached at (985) 868-4725.

