



**American
Red Cross**
Lee County Chapter

American Red Cross urges preparation for the upcoming hurricane season *Next week is National Hurricane Preparedness Week*

Fort Myers, FL May 21, 2010 – With the official start to hurricane season 10 days away (June 1), the American Red Cross urges everyone to update their family evacuation plan, emergency preparedness kit and get better prepared for the 2010 season. Preparation is the best protection against the dangers of a hurricane.

“By taking three basic preparedness actions you can become *Red Cross Ready* for hurricanes and other emergencies, the steps are 1) Get a kit, 2) Make a plan and 3) Be informed,” said Lee County Red Cross Disaster Chair Carlene Sharples. “The Lee County Red Cross is here to help you get prepared for specific disasters like hurricanes. Even if you took action to prepare last hurricane season, it’s important that you revisit and update your communication plan and check your emergency preparedness kit for expired items.”

The American Red Cross recommends the following preparedness actions:

Get or assemble an emergency preparedness kit:

A portable kit, stored in a sturdy, easy to carry, water resistant container should have enough supplies for three days. Check your kit and replace perishable stock every six months. Whether you purchase a kit or choose to build your own, your three-day kit should include:

- Water - one gallon per person, per day.
- Food - non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items such as tuna fish, peanut butter, crackers, and canned fruit. Make sure to include a manual can opener.
- A battery-powered or hand-crank radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- A first aid kit.
- Prescription and non-prescription medication items. Include medical supplies like extra hearing aid batteries, syringes, etc.
- Copies of important documents, including birth certificates, insurance policies and social security cards.
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items.
- Extra cash. ATMs and credit cards won’t work if the power is out.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- Pet supplies (collar, leash, ID, food, carrier, bowls).

Prepare a family evacuation plan

The American Red Cross urges each and every household to develop a household disaster plan.

- Meet with your family to create a plan. Discuss the information you have gathered and why it is important to prepare for a disaster.
- Identify two meeting places; One right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire, and one outside your neighborhood in case you can’t return home.

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- Be sure to make advanced preparations for your pets. Be aware that pets may not be allowed in shelters. Contact hotels, motels, family members and animal shelters to see if they would allow pets in a disaster situation. Keep a contact list of “pet friendly” locations. If you are asked to evacuate, take your pets with you.
- Choose an out-of-area emergency contact person. During or after a disaster, it’s often easier to call long distance, especially if local phone lines are overloaded or out of service. Family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your emergency contact person’s phone number and email address.
- Tell your family about the Safe and Well web site accessible at all times via www.redcross.org. The Safe and Well Web site is an Internet-based tool that allows those directly affected by a disaster to let their loved ones know of their well-being. People within a disaster affected area are able to select and post standard “safe and well” messages. Concerned family members who know the person’s phone number (home, cell, or work) or a complete home address can search for the messages posted by those who self-register.
- Show and explain to each family member how and when to turn off the water and electricity at the main switches. Turn gas off only if instructed by local authorities. Remember, if the gas is shut-off, only a professional can turn it back on.
- Plan your evacuation route. Use local maps and identify alternate evacuation routes from home, work and/or school. Know where you are going and how you plan to get there before you leave home.

Be informed

- Find out what types of disaster are likely to occur in your area and how to prepare for each.
- Find out how local authorities will contact you during a disaster. Listen to local media broadcasts or NOAA Weather Radio for the latest storm conditions and follow the advice of local authorities.
- Contact your [CHAPTER NAME] for details about community disaster education presentations that may be arranged or are available in your workplace, school or community organization.
- Get trained in CPR and first aid so you will know how to respond to emergencies in the event that help is delayed.
- If you are told to evacuate, do so immediately. You may choose to evacuate sooner than alerted if you think you may need additional time.

Know what to do if a hurricane WATCH is issued

- Listen to weather updates from your battery-powered or hand-cranked radio.
- Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, hanging plants, bicycles, toys and garden tools, anchor objects that cannot be brought inside.
- Close all windows and doors. Cover windows with storm shutters or plywood.
- If time permits, and you live in an identified surge zone, elevate furniture or move it to a higher floor to protect it from flooding.
- Fill your vehicle’s gas tank.
- Check your disaster supplies kit to make sure items have not expired.

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Know what to do if a hurricane WARNING is issued

- Listen to the advice of local officials, and leave if they tell you to do so.
- If in a manufactured home, check tie-downs and evacuate as told by local authorities.
- Secure your home by unplugging appliances and turning off electricity and the main water valve.
- If you are not advised to evacuate, stay inside, away from windows, skylights and glass doors.
- Do NOT use open flames, such as candles and kerosene lamps, as a source of light.
- If power is lost, turn off appliances to reduce damage from a power surge when electricity is restored.

For more information on building your disaster kit, hurricane prep tips and more, visit **arclcc.org** and **redcross.org**

The Red Cross is dedicated to helping make families and communities safer at home and around the world. It provides training in life-saving skills and mobilizes relief to victims of disasters in addition to assisting members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families. For additional information about the Red Cross and the assistance it provides, making donations, registering for a class or volunteering, call 278-3401, or log on to arclcc.org. The American Red Cross of Lee County is a proud member of the United Way of Lee County.

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