

# CHATHAM COUNTY

CHATHAM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY  
124 Bull Street, Suite 140  
Savannah, GA 31401

## SENIOR CITIZEN HURRICANE ACTIONS

This brochure is designed with the senior and retiree in mind. Generally speaking, seniors and retirees have the advantage of having discretionary time. However, you may have reached a point in life that it takes a little longer to accomplish projects than it used to. You may in fact need more time and assistance to prepare for and recover from a natural or manmade disaster. Take advantage of your time flexibility and plan now before disaster strikes.

Commit to activating your plan early so that you can “beat the rush” of last minute supply shoppers and evacuees.

- In the event that you are advised to evacuate, leave early during the voluntary phase of evacuation to avoid extended periods of time on the road.
- Prepare your home now: locate important papers, identify items that you wish to relocate for safe keeping, or that you will take with you in an evacuation; this will save you time later.
- Contact your doctor to make arrangements for prescription refills, or if possible, take advantage of increased supply during hurricane season.

# SENIOR CITIZEN HURRICANE ACTIONS



- If you have unique lodging requirements identify lodging sources now before a storm threatens our area.
- If you need assistance preparing your home such as relocating outdoor furniture, plants, yard equipment, installing storm shutters, or moving furniture; identify now who will commit to help you. Also identify at least one alternate person to assist you in the event your primary helper is unavailable.

If you find yourself in the position of having little or no discretionary time and in need of assistance, that is all the more reason to plan ahead.

It is our hope that you find the following information useful. We realize that much of what you will read can be found under other headings but we want to recognize a segment of the community, get your attention and have you consider your own unique needs as you prepare for your safety and that of your family.

Phillip M. Webber  
Director

## Before Hurricane Season

Stock your home. It's a good idea to maintain a supply of food, water and supplies for an emergency. Any season can bring disaster and affect your ability to get to the store for food or medication. Even a simple water main break could leave you without water for days.

**Communications:** Establish a communications plan; let someone know your intentions and your whereabouts.

- Post emergency phone numbers near the phone. Include police, fire, emergency medical, doctors, relatives, utility companies, insurance agent and Chatham Emergency Management Agency (912) 201-4500.
- Charge cell phones and extra batteries before a predicted storm hits.
- Consider using a car charger for cell phones.
- Program cell phones with emergency contact numbers.
- Have a central contact outside the forecast storm area so friends and family can check in.

**Documents:** Place the following documents in a waterproof container such as a zip-lock bag and take them with you if you evacuate, or store them in a safe out-of-harm's-way location:

- Wills, insurance policies, contracts, powers of attorney, deeds, appraisals, critical computer files, stocks & bonds.
- Passports, Social Security cards, & medical records.

- Military records.
- Bank account records.
- Credit card names & numbers.
- Inventory & household good photos/video.
- Important phone numbers.

**Food:** Supplies should include enough non-perishable, high-energy foods for up to three days. You may be stranded in your home for several days or local stores may run low on supplies. Also, if you go to a public shelter, it is helpful to take as much non-perishable food as you can carry. A suggested supply of food for emergencies includes:

- Whole dry milk
- Canned fruit juices
- Canned meats & fish like Vienna sausage, meat spread or tuna
- Meat substitutes like beans
- Bread & crackers\*
- Peanut butter
- Dried fruits
- Dry cereals
- Granola bars or cookies
- Manual can opener you are able to operate
- Non-perishable food for pets

**Insurance:** Before the hurricane season, take photographs of your home and its contents. Mail or email these photographs to a friend or loved one who lives outside Chatham County and who will not be impacted by the same event that may threaten you.

**Medicines:** It is very important to keep an adequate supply of any medicines you take. If you are stranded in your home or are asked to go to a public shelter, you may have difficulty getting medications.

- Small first aid kit (available at most drug stores)
- Extra pair of glasses
- Copies of any prescriptions
- Medical insurance and Medicare cards

**Supplies and Equipment:** Keep the following items in one place so you get to them easily:

- Battery operated radio with extra batteries
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Paper plates & utensils including can & bottle openers
- Non-flammable Glo-light sticks
- Toilet articles & sanitary supplies
- Extra set of house and car keys
- Cash, credit cards, change for pay phones
- Phone numbers of local and non-local friends and relatives
- Insurance agent's name and phone number
- Change of clothing, rain gear and sturdy shoes

**Water:** Each person's need for drinking water varies depending on age, physical condition, and time of year; the average person needs at least one gallon of water or other liquid to drink per day, but more would be better. Also keep a couple of gallons on hand for sanitary purposes.

Store water in plastic, airtight containers and either replace or chlorinate it (Four drops plain bleach [unscented, non-detergent] per quart of water or 16 drops per gallon of water). Replace the water every two months to be sure it is pure.

Even though you have emergency supplies, don't make the mistake of trying to "ride out" a hurricane at home. Evacuate if local authorities tell you to do so, especially if you live on an island or can see a marsh. Leave early before the roads become flooded and you cannot get out.

### **Evacuation Options**

When you evacuate, you may wish to take some of the previously listed supplies with you, but don't take more than you can carry. Put your essential emergency supplies in an easy to carry container such as a backpack, a duffle bag, or a rolling suitcase. If you are going to a public shelter, the most important items to take are your medication, a blanket, a portable radio, an extra change of clothing, and perhaps a small supply of packaged quick-energy foods like raisins and granola bars. Make sure the bag has a tag with your name.

You can take certain actions ahead of time to make evacuation easier by deciding which evacuation method you will use and planning for a back-up.

#### **Option 1: Family, friends, and neighbors**

- Talk to family and friends to coordinate evacuation arrangements:
- Who will you go with?

- What can/should you take?
- When and where will you meet?
- How much room will you have for personal items?
- Ensure that you have a means of contacting the people you are evacuating with. Have a communications plan that includes when you should be communicating your intentions and have both primary and alternate telephone numbers such as landline and cell phone numbers.

#### **Option 2: Personal vehicle**

- If using your own vehicle, keep your gas tank as full as possible during hurricane season. In an evacuation, fuel may be difficult to get and gas-station lines will be long.
- See if you can help a neighbor or a friend that may not have transportation. Team up with a "partner" a neighbor or a friend living nearby, to plan your evacuation together. By sharing supplies and a ride, each of you can help the other.
- Plan ahead to ensure that those persons riding with you know what they will be expected to bring and how much room will be available for personal items.

- Ensure that you have a means of contacting the people you plan to evacuate with. Have a communications plan that includes when you should be communicating your intentions and have both primary and alternate telephone numbers such as landline and cell phone numbers.
- Learn the recommended evacuation route from your home to safer, higher ground. Local broadcasts will tell you where to go during an evacuation, but you can learn the safest route ahead of time by watching for the pre-season distribution of Chatham County's evacuation information or by calling the Chatham Emergency Management Agency at (912) 201-4500.

### Option 3: Public Transportation

- When a Mandatory Evacuation Order is issued because a hurricane is threatening Chatham County, the Civic Center will become the assembly area for evacuation.
- To get to the Civic Center, Chatham Area Transit (CAT) will continue to operate its routine bus routes but all busses will go by the Civic Center. Passengers with no other means of transportation that wish to evacuate will be taken to the Civic Center as their initial destination.
- Evacuation busses are for people with no other means of transportation. If you drive to the civic center or ride with a family

member or friend, don't expect to board a bus. No parking will be allowed in the vicinity of the Civic Center.

- Once at the Civic Center, evacuees will be directed to a registration area.
- Evacuees will be seated by bus assignment on Board of Education busses for transport to inland shelters for the duration of the evacuation.
- The earliest busses go to the closest shelters and therefore have the shortest trips.
- The busses will be crowded. Be reasonable with what you take; no more than two hand-carry bags per person.
- School busses aren't air-conditioned, expect some discomfort.
- Several seats may be left empty on each bus to accommodate stranded motorists.

### **Shelter Options**

At the beginning of each hurricane season you should consider your shelter options in the event an evacuation is ordered.

#### Option 1: Family, friends, and neighbors

- Talk to family and friends to explore shelter availability:

- Who will you stay with?
- What can/should you take?
- If traveling separately, when should you arrive at the shelter location?
- Precisely where is the shelter location? Do you have detailed directions and a physical address?
- How much room will you have for personal items?
- Can you bring a pet(s)?
- Ensure that you have a means of contacting the people you plan to shelter with. Have a communications plan that includes when you should be communicating your intentions and have both primary and alternate telephone numbers such as landline and cell phone numbers.

#### Option 2: Commercial dwellings, hotels and motels

In the event of a mandatory evacuation, especially if a storm has affected the coast of Florida warranting evacuation from areas south of Chatham County, commercial accommodations may be difficult to obtain without guaranteed reservations. If you plan to use commercial facilities, it is recommended that you keep a list of facility phone numbers readily available so that you may make reservations as soon as the need to evacuate becomes apparent. If you do not have confirmed reservations, you may be

required to travel well inland in order to find accommodations.

#### Option 3: Public shelters

Shelters will be opened on an as-required basis in the following Primary Shelter Communities:

Augusta	Douglas	Dublin
Macon	Statesboro	Tifton
	Waycross	

Public shelters are operated by the American Red Cross to provide safety and shelter; they are very austere. Bring your own creature comforts. Specific shelter locations will be broadcast on radio and TV. Medical care is generally not available. Shelters will have food and water but it is best to bring your own food. Do not expect a bed; be ready to set up a home away from home on the floor.

If you're using public transportation you should bring:

- Spare eyeglasses, prescription medicine, special diet and baby foods, diapers, blankets, pillows, flashlights with extra batteries, cash or travelers checks.
- Extra clothing, personal care items and toilet paper.
- Quiet games or toys for the children.
- Identification; to prove residency or ownership in order to gain reentry.

- No Weapons, Alcohol or Illegal Drugs

If you have your own transportation you may also want to bring:

- Lightweight folding chairs, cots and bedding.
- Dry milk, fruit juice, canned meat/fish, canned beans, bread, crackers, peanut butter, dried fruit, granola bars, cookies, dry cereals & other non-perishables.

### **Pets**

In the event of a disaster, if you must evacuate, the most important thing you can do to protect your pets is to evacuate them. Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place for them, is likely to result in their being injured, lost, or worse.

Have a safe place to take your pets. Red Cross disaster shelters cannot accept pets because of states' health and safety regulations and other considerations. Service animals that assist people with disabilities are the only animals allowed in Red Cross shelters.

Contact hotels and motels outside your immediate area to check policies on accepting pets and restrictions on number, size, and species.

Ask friends, relatives, or others outside the affected area whether they could shelter your animals.

Prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter animals in an emergency; include 24-hour phone numbers.

Ask local animal shelters if they provide emergency shelter assistance or foster care for pets in a disaster.

### **Assemble a Portable Pet Disaster Supplies Kit**

- Medications and medical records (stored in a waterproof container) and a first aid kit.
- Sturdy leashes, harnesses, and/or carriers to transport pets.
- Current photos of your pets in case they get lost.
- Food, potable water, bowls, cat litter/pan, and can opener.
- Information on feeding schedules, medical conditions, behavior problems, and the name and number of your veterinarian.
- Record of immunizations
- Medications
- Pet beds and toys, if easily transportable.

## Hurricane Watch

Listen to daily weather forecasts during hurricane season. As hurricanes develop, they are monitored closely by the National Weather Service. The Weather Service issues two types of notices about approaching hurricanes: a Hurricane Watch and a Hurricane Warning.

When a Watch is issued for Chatham County, you should:

- Stay tuned to local stations for the latest weather information. Monitor radio, TV, NOAA weather radios for information on storm progression.
- If you're evacuating with a friend, family, or neighbor, contact them to review your plans and re-confirm your arrangements.
- If you're using a privately owned vehicle for evacuation, be sure it is fueled and ready to go.
- Gather your emergency supplies, placing them in your car or near the front door if you are riding with someone else.
- Store all objects on your lawn or patio that could be carried by the wind. Lawn furniture, garbage cans, garden tools, toys, signs, and a number of other harmless items can become deadly missiles in hurricane winds.

- Place important papers in a waterproof container with your non-perishable food supply or in your safe deposit box.
- If you own a computer, download the valuable files onto discs and either put them with your important papers or in a waterproof container in your safe deposit box. Seal the computer hard drive and monitor in plastic yard-leaf bags and place them as high off the floor and in as wind-resistant a space as practical.
- Check supplies of prescription medicine and currency of prescriptions.

## Hurricane Warning

A Hurricane Warning is issued when a hurricane is expected to strike within 24 hours. A hurricane warning will probably also include an assessment of flood dangers in coastal and inland areas, small craft warnings, gale warnings and recommended emergency procedures.

### Evacuation

Closely monitor local and national weather advisories. If you have difficulty driving at night, don't wait until local officials issue evacuation orders. Make your own decision to avoid the crowd and leave before the orders are issued. At the latest, leave when the Voluntary is issued, but take advantage of the daylight conditions and the less crowded roads, highway services and hotels...leave early. But, do have a route and destination planned before you depart and advise friends, neighbors or family of your intentions.

If a hurricane Warning is issued for Chatham County and an evacuation is ordered, local radio and television stations will announce information on where you should go and the best route to take. Call your “partner” and make arrangements to leave.

Don’t panic if you cannot get a ride. In a hurricane evacuation, police usually patrol each street to warn those people who may not have a radio or television. You can stop one of these officers and they will help.

LEAVE EARLY!!! Do not wait. Roads can flood and leave you stranded. You should not use elevators to leave your building; the electricity could cut off and leave you stranded.

Before you leave

- Close and lock your windows and doors, lowering blinds and closing curtains to keep flying rubble out. If possible, you may wish to secure plywood over the windows.
- Fill bathtubs and other clean containers with water for later use should water become unavailable.
- Follow the approved evacuation route from your home to safe, higher ground.

### **After a Hurricane**

The Chatham Emergency Management Agency will announce when it is safe to return to your home. If you have evacuated, Peach State Public Radio (PSPR) is collaborating statewide with emergency management officials to provide up-to-date

information concerning hurricane threats. In Savannah PSPR is: 91.1 FM.

When you return home:

- Look for visible structural damage before you go inside. Notify local officials immediately if you see broken or dangling electric power lines or broken sewer, water or gas lines.
- Ensure all electrical outlets and appliances are dry and free of water before using them.
- Do not drink water from the faucet until officially notified that it is safe from contamination. Use your emergency supply or boil tap water before drinking it.

Without electricity, food in your refrigerator could spoil in a few hours. Don’t eat it. Food in a freezer could partially thaw but would be safe to eat for several days. Food should not be refrozen once it begins to thaw.

- Snakes, animals and insects instinctively travel inland to higher ground to escape approaching floodwaters. Expect them and be prepared to protect yourself.
- Insurance:
  - Take photographs of the damage.
  - Wait for an insurance adjuster before making permanent repairs.
  - Make only temporary emergency repairs.
  - Keep receipts for repair materials.
  - Be there when the insurance adjuster evaluates the damage to your home.

Careful planning and quick response to a hurricane threat will reduce damage to your home and could save your life. Most importantly, you must EVACUATE if you are told to do so by local officials. Material possessions are replaceable, your life is not. Take action now to be better prepared for hurricane season.