

August 16, 2026

Dear Meridian Residents:

Unlike most natural disasters, with hurricanes we often have at least some early warning – sometimes a few hours and, if we're lucky, a few days – so it is important to take advantage of that time to consider your options, review your safety plans, and make final preparations.

Following are some suggestions that experts believe will help you to prepare to survive and recover from a major storm.

The information has been condensed from several publications as well as the advice of experts. Hotels, phone numbers and shelters are current as of this publication, however, it is best to always call to confirm any information.

You can begin now to prepare for an emergency by adopting your plan.

Thank you,

Jennifer Giustozzi

Resource Property Management

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## HOW BAD CAN IT REALLY BE AND DO I REALLY HAVE TO LEAVE?

A hurricane is an intense low-pressure system which rotates counterclockwise, in the northern Hemisphere, and generates wind speed in excess of 74 miles per hour.

| Category | Sustained Winds | Storm Surge   | Damage       |
|----------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1        | 74-95 mph       | 4 to 5 feet   | Minor        |
| 2        | 95-110 mph      | 6 to 8 feet   | Moderate     |
| 3        | 111-130 mph     | 8 to 12 feet  | Major        |
| 4        | 131-155 mph     | 13 to 18 feet | Severe       |
| 5        | Over 155 mph    | Over 18 feet  | Catastrophic |

The storm surge that accompanies a hurricane is a huge wall of water pushed inland by the hurricane causing major destruction. The storm surge is blamed for an average of nine out of every 10 hurricane related fatalities. The ocean surface, under the storm's center, is drawn upward like water in a giant straw forming a mound higher than the ocean. As the mound nears the coast, it can grow to become a storm surge 50 miles wide and 20 feet high.

Six inches of storm surge can knock people off their feet. One foot can float your vehicle, and two feet can sweep it off the road.

Ten-foot hurricane generated waves on top of the storm surge can crash into coastal areas, which are less than 10 feet above sea level along most of the Gulf and Atlantic States. Water weighs about 1,700 pounds per cubic yard. So, the storm surge and waves can demolish a building designed to withstand wind but not water. Do not make the mistake of thinking the upper floor of a high rise is a safe place to stay in a powerful storm.

Hurricane evacuation orders are issued when a hurricane storm surge is a threat to humans in an evacuation zone. It is possible to live in a non-flood zone and still be in an evacuation zone. Know your zone and have an evacuation plan.

The ideal plan would be to stay with a friend or relative in an area outside the evacuation zones. If that is not an option, consider a hotel or as a last resort, a public shelter. Pet friendly hotels are listed separately. Whichever plan you choose, you need to execute your plan as early as possible. Hotel reservations should be made as soon as you know evacuation is likely. You may also want to reserve a day or two extra in the event The Meridian is not accessible after the storm or if your unit is without power.

PLEASE REMEMBER that zones under mandatory evacuation orders do not receive emergency services. You will be on your own if you have an emergency.

The Florida hurricane season is from June 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>. Confirm your evacuation zone (The Meridian is zone "A"). Go to the county website to find your zone.

[http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/evac\\_faq.htm](http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/evac_faq.htm)

## SHOULD I STAY OR GO?

It is important to take advantage of any time available to consider the options of staying or evacuating prior to a storm. As warnings are issued, you will need to prepare your personal property to ensure the least amount of damage to people and property. Regardless of your decision to remain in place or to evacuate, the following precautions should be followed to hurricane ready your home.

- Bring all outdoor furniture and potted plants inside. During a storm with high winds, these items become dangerous objects. Remember, securing personal items around your unit is YOUR responsibility.
- Remember to close curtains.
- Ensure all important documents are in a safe and easily accessible place. You may want to place them in waterproof bags or take photos on your phone of the most important documents.
- Fill your gas tank.
- Review your “Stay” or “Go” emergency kit and replenish as necessary (suggested items to follow).
- Read your homeowners insurance policy and be sure you understand what is covered and how to file a claim.
- Identify an out-of-area contact. Designate a friend or family member in another area who can act as a communication traffic manager and make sure that they have updated contact information for children’s schools, physician offices, employer, etc.
- Protect documentation. Make copies of all-important documents, passport, driver’s license, birth certificate, financial documents, wills, health related papers, etc. Provide copies to out of state contacts. Be sure to have your insurance policies and contact numbers in your possession.
- Create a home inventory. Create an organized photo catalog of your belongings on your smartphone with available insurance apps.

Management will do its best to communicate imminent danger to our property. It is, however, your responsibility to be informed and prepared to stay in place or evacuate should that be warranted.

## IF YOU GO:

If you make the decision to evacuate the community or you are mandated to leave, there are some additional precautions you may want to take upon your departure.

- Be sure that your door is locked when you leave, and you have all you need while you are away. You may not be back for some time.
- Clean your refrigerator and remove perishable items
- Shut off water.
- Lower hurricane shutters, if you have them.
- Close all interior doors – this can protect against minor damage if your windows are shattered.

- Close your curtains – This will help to protect against shattered glass.
- Send management an email that you will be leaving your unit with permission to enter your unit to assess damage in your absence should we need to. Provide emergency contact information should we need to reach you. Email at [manager@meridianonsandkey.com](mailto:manager@meridianonsandkey.com).
- Check and pack your hurricane survival kit.

## IF YOU STAY

If you are not mandated to evacuate and decide to remain on property, you will want to ensure you are ready to weather the storm. Be prepared to remain in your home for several days. You will most likely not be able to leave due to debris and emergency crews will not be able to get to you. In addition to those general precautions previously mentioned, you will also want to:

- Check with your neighbors to determine who will also be in the building. You will also want to ensure you are able to reach them after the storm.
- Prepare for the power to be out for several days. If you have a battery-operated devices, ensure you have sufficient batteries.
- Charge your phone. If possible, have an alternate charger.
- Ensure you have enough water for 7 days. A suggested amount is two gallons per person per day. Don't forget water for pets. Hint: freeze water in gallon containers. You will have fresh water and will be able to keep food items cold without electricity. Consider filling your tub. This water can be used for hygiene purposes and clean up.
- Be sure to have enough medications for at least 7 days.
- Be sure to have your homeowner's insurance and inventory available for after the storm.
- If you lose electricity, unplug items and turn off electronics to prevent a power surge.

**Elevators will not be operable during a storm**

During a Mandatory Evacuation:

- Emergency back-up generator power provides limited duration of power to life safety systems and elevators. Even though generators are inspected and tested frequently, they stop working for many reasons: tripped electrical breakers, mechanical failures, limited fuel supply.
- If someone becomes stuck in an elevator when Fire and Rescue services are suspended (as in the case of a Mandatory Evacuation), they would remain trapped until Fire and Rescue services resume, which could be days. Imagine someone on life critical medication trapped in an elevator for days. Imagine your child being stuck in an elevator. This is an unacceptable risk to owners and guests.
- In order to protect the elevator assets, the car and counterweight system are raised to a level above which storm surge damage could occur and are locked off during the storm.
- Before restarting elevators, a physical inspection must be made to ensure there is no visible water intrusion of the electrical system or other elevator damage and that the elevator pits are clear/clean and sump pumps are operational

## HURRICANE EMERGENCY KIT

Everyone living in a hurricane prone region should have a hurricane safety kit ready. Pre-packaged hurricane preparation kits may be purchased, or you can easily assemble a kit yourself. A safety kit is one of the most essential elements of preparing yourself, your family, and your property for a hurricane.

Hurricane emergency kits should be prepared at least at the beginning of season and remain ready until the end of the season. Hurricane season is June 1 – November 30 each year. All of the listed items should be packed in portable containers that are easy for you to lift and transport.

Here is a list of some essential items:

- Include at least two gallons per day per person as well as clean water for pets
- Prepackaged, dried or canned food is should be available. Energy bars and snacks should be available. You may not have electricity for your stove. Ensure enough for each person to eat for three days. Attached is a more complete list of food suggestions.
- Create a first aid kit. Include prescription medications, over-the-counter painkillers, rubbing alcohol, eye wash kit and vomit-inducing medication in case of accidental poisoning.
- Have several flashlights on hand with batteries. They are a safer alternative to candles if power is down.
- Whistles can be used to signal and direct attention during and after the storm passes.
- A battery or crank powered radio will allow you to listen to weather alerts and directives from authorities that may save your life.
- Have enough to power flashlights and battery-operated radios for three days.
- Make sure you have CASH. Do not rely on ATMs after a hurricane, as power may be down.
- Ensure you have cleaning supplies. Include disinfectant and garbage bags to manage waste and germs.
- Create a small toolbox with the essentials and a pair of work gloves. You will also need tape, rope, close-toed shoes or work boots.
- Two forms of identification may be required to prove residency if Sand Key re-entry is restricted by law enforcement. At least one photo ID should be available.

Make sure you have registered with the City of Clearwater and obtained the proper re-entry pass.

<https://www.clearwaterpolice.org/community/barrier-island-re-entry-pass>

If you have questions, email them at [ReEntryHangtag@myclearwater.com](mailto:ReEntryHangtag@myclearwater.com) or call them at 727-562-4420

- A two-week supply of prescription medication and a written list of what you are prescribed. Be sure to have your pharmacy information in case of an emergency refill. Don't forget hearing aid batteries.

- Copies of insurance policies and contact information for your physicians and family members. These should be stored in a waterproof bag. If you are taking your pet, you will need a written record of their vaccinations as well as supplies and medications.
- Bug spray
- Rain gear and waterproof footwear.
- Sunscreen
- A paper map of the area.
- Notepad and pen or pencil.
- Paper towels, toilet paper, sanitizing wipes or liquid, feminine products
- Cell phone and chargers. (Car chargers are essential when we have extended power outages.)
- Manual can opener
- Disposable flatware, plates and cups
- Several changes of undergarments, clothing, and footwear
- Extra oxygen tank for those dependent on them
- Books, cards, or other forms of non-electrical entertainment
- Pillows, blankets, air mattresses for public shelters accommodations
- Pet food, medication and supplies such as toys and cat litter.

All contents of a hurricane survival kit should be packed neatly into easily accessible plastic storage bins and should be easily transportable.

## EVACUATION SHELTER INFORMATION

Evacuations are ordered when the storm surge is a threat to human safety and survival. Recommended and mandatory evacuations are issued in zones A through D. You can find your zone by calling Pinellas County Evacuation Inquiry Line at 727-453-3150. Key in your phone number without the area code. You can also find the information at [www.pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone](http://www.pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone).

If you will require a special need shelter, you must register in advance by calling 727-464-3800 or going to <https://pinellas.gov/special-needs/>.

Public shelters should be a last resort. They are not hotels. They provide basic shelter space, some toilet facilities, some food and very few amenities. You must bring your own bedding. If you are going to a pet friendly shelter, you will need to bring a crate and vaccinations records.

## PUBLIC SHELTERS

Largo High School, 410 Missouri Ave. N., Largo (Pet Friendly)

Gibbs High School, 850 34<sup>th</sup> St. N., St. Petersburg (Pet Friendly)

John Hopkins Middle School, 701 16<sup>th</sup> St. N., St. Petersburg (Special Needs)

Oak Grove Middle School, 1370 Belcher Rd., Clearwater (Special Needs)

Dunedin Highland Middle School, 70 Patricia Ave., Clearwater (Special Needs)

Belleair Elementary School, 1156 Lakeview Road, Clearwater

Not all shelters are open during an emergency. Check your local TV station or go to [www.pinellascounty.org](http://www.pinellascounty.org) for an updated list of open shelters.

## PET FRIENDLY HOTELS NEAR U.S. 19

In the event of a mandatory evacuation order being issued for Meridian residents, this list may be useful as an alternative to public shelters. You are advised to book early as they may fill rapidly once a hurricane is forecasted to impact the area. All are pet friendly and may or may not charge extra fees for pets. The phone numbers are for making reservations directly through the hotel. Expedia and other booking companies may offer lower room rates, but often their booking fees are non-refundable if canceled before arrival. No specific recommendations are made or implied.

Hampton Inn and Suites East Bay Drive, Largo, 727-585-3333 (non-evacuation zone)

Holiday Inn Express, Seminole Blvd, Largo, 727-581-3900 (non-evacuation zone)

Tampa Bay Extended Stay, 6500 Ulmerton Road, Largo, 1-800-804-3724 (evacuation zone D)

## HURRICANE EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 800-621-3362 (TTY users, 1-800-621-7585)

Pinellas County Evacuation Inquiry Line 727-453-3150

Pinellas county web site is [www.pinellascounty.org](http://www.pinellascounty.org)

Key in your home phone number to get your evacuation zone; or go to [www.pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone](http://www.pinellascounty.org/knowyourzone). The Meridian is in zone "A".

Pinellas County Emergency Management, 727-464-4333. OPEN ONLY DURING EMERGENCIES.

Transportation to special needs shelters: 727-464-3800. You do need to register first at [www.pinellascounty.org/specialneeds](http://www.pinellascounty.org/specialneeds).

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