



# 10 TIPS FOR KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN A HURRICANE



Hurricanes and tropical storms are strong wind storms (known as cyclones) that form over the ocean. Tropical storms have winds of 39 to 73 miles per hour and when these winds reach 74 miles per hour or more, the storm is called a hurricane. Each year, on average, 10 tropical storms (of which six become hurricanes) develop over the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, or Gulf of Mexico. While the effects of hurricanes, which may include heavy rains, large waves, hail and wind, can be devastating to neighborhoods and homes, there are simple steps families can take protect children during hurricanes.

## PREPARE

- 1 Talk about hurricanes.** Spend time with your family discussing why hurricanes occur. Explain that a hurricane is a natural event and not anyone's fault. Use simple words that even young children can understand.
- 2 Know your risk.** Find out if you live in a hurricane evacuation area. Assess your risks from a storm surge, flooding or wind damage that may accompany a hurricane.
- 3 Practice evacuation drills.** Practice your family evacuation plan so that, during an emergency, you can evacuate quickly and safely.
- 4 Learn your caregivers' disaster plans.** If your child's school or child care center is in an area at risk from hurricanes, find out how its emergency plans address hurricanes. Ask about evacuation plans and if you would be required to pick up your children from the site or from another location.
- 5 Stay informed.** Use a NOAA Weather Radio or listen to a local station on a portable, battery-powered radio or television. Be ready to act if a Hurricane Warning is issued.



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## DURING A HURRICANE

- 6 Evacuate if instructed to do so.** Evacuate if told to do so by local authorities or if you feel unsafe. If advised to evacuate, avoid flooded roads and watch for washed-out bridges. Local officials may close certain roads, especially near the coast, when effects of the hurricane reach the coast.
- 7 Stay indoors, if not evacuated.** If you are not advised to evacuate, or are unable to do so safely, stay indoors, away from windows, skylights and doors. Continue to monitor weather reports and do not go outside until the storm has passed.

## AFTER A HURRICANE

- 8 Limit media exposure.** Protect children from seeing too many sights and images of the hurricane, including those on the internet, television or newspapers.
- 9 Ensure utilities are available.** Before children are returned to areas impacted by a hurricane, make sure utilities, such as electricity and plumbing, are restored and living and learning spaces (e.g., homes, schools, child care facilities) are free from physical and environmental hazards.
- 10 Involve children in recovery.** After a hurricane, let children help in clean-up and recovery efforts in age-appropriate ways as this participation may increase their sense of control over the situation.

## HURRICANE/TROPICAL STORM WEATHER TERMS

- **Hurricane/Tropical Storm WATCH** means there is a threat of hurricane/tropical storm conditions within 48 hours.
- **Hurricane/Tropical Storm WARNING** means hurricane/tropical storm conditions are expected in 36 hours or less.
- **Hurricane/tropical storm local statement**, issued every two to three hours by local National Weather Service (NWS) offices, summarizes all of the watches and warnings, evacuation information, and most immediate threats to an area.

Watches and warnings for hurricanes and tropical storms are issued by the NWS and broadcast on NOAA Weather Radio and on local radio and television stations.



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## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The tips above are just the start of knowing how to prepare for and respond to hurricanes. Use the following resources to help ensure your family is ready for the next hurricane.

### For adults:

- American Red Cross: Hurricane Preparedness. <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster/hurricane>
- National Hurricane Center: Hurricane Preparedness—Be Ready <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare/ready.php>
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Parent Guidelines for Helping Children after a Hurricane. [http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/parents\\_guidelines\\_talk\\_children\\_hurricanes.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/parents_guidelines_talk_children_hurricanes.pdf)

### For children

- Department of Homeland Security. Ready Kids: Hurricanes. <http://www.ready.gov/kids/know-the-facts/hurricanes> <http://www.sparky.org/>