

## Hurricane Guidance

### Cleanup Safety

- Always wear sturdy gloves, boots, and protective clothing when handling debris, as it may contain sharp objects or hazardous materials.
- Think about safety first tips in mind when clearing downed trees:
  - If using a chainsaw, cut at waist level or below, cut away from your body, and shut off the saw when refueling or carrying a distance of more than a few feet.
  - Identify which jobs need to be done by professionals, including any jobs that require climbing.
- Stay away from standing water, as it could be contaminated with sewage or chemicals. If you come into contact with floodwater, wash thoroughly with soap and clean water.
- Promptly dry out and clean any water-damaged areas or materials to prevent mold growth. Use proper ventilation and consider seeking professional assistance for extensive mold problems.
- Eliminate all pathways for moisture by fixing where it is entering your home.
- If you identify areas where mold is beginning to grow, take steps to remove mold immediately.
- Wear N95 masks while in the building and cleaning.
- Throw away items that cannot be washed or disinfected.
- Scrub hard surfaces with soap and water and dry completely
- Consider having air ducts cleaned professionally
- Have a heating and air specialist check your HVAC system for mold
- Be cautious of wildlife: Displaced animals may seek shelter in residential areas. Avoid contact with wild animals, and if you encounter injured or distressed wildlife, contact local animal control or wildlife agencies.
- Natural disasters can be overwhelming. Reach out to local resources for emotional support, and take care of your mental well-being during this challenging time.
- Be sure you are up-to-date on your tetanus shot, as getting a tetanus shot before an injury is ideal. For those with an injury or wound that have not had a tetanus shot in more than five years, you should get a tetanus shot within 48 hours of an injury.
- In the case of major traumas, such as deep cuts, puncture wounds, or injuries caused by rusty objects, it is essential to seek immediate medical attention. Your healthcare provider will assess the need for a tetanus shot based on the nature and severity of the injury, as well as your immunization history.

### Mold

- If the moldy area is more than about 10 square feet (more than roughly a 3-foot-by-3-foot patch), consider hiring a mold remediation professional.
- **Protect Yourself:** Always wear rubber gloves, goggles and boots when cleaning areas with mold. If you plan to be inside the building for a while or you plan to clean up mold, you should buy N95 masks (or a respirator with a higher protection level) at your local home supply store and wear one while in the building. Follow the instructions for using the mask. Personal protective equipment can increase your risk of heat-related illness. Stay hydrated and take frequent breaks. People with breathing problems like asthma or who have weakened immune systems should stay away from moldy sites.
- **Household materials:** For areas that have been exposed to water, such as in a flood, it is important to remove and discard items that cannot be washed and disinfected. These include porous or rough surfaces such as carpet, drywall, upholstered furniture, mattresses, books or

other paper products. Discard/remove, bag and throw out porous materials that have visible mold growth (i.e. ceiling tiles, leather, drywall, plaster, paneling, wood products, paper, carpet, padding, etc.).

- **Cleaning hard surfaces:** To remove mold growth from hard surfaces scrub with soap and water, and dry completely.
- **To clean air ducts:** You should consider having the air ducts in your home cleaned professionally if there is substantial visible mold growth inside hard surface (sheet metal) ducts or on other components of your heating and cooling system. If you have insulated air ducts and the insulation gets wet or moldy it cannot be effectively cleaned and should be removed and replaced.
- **HVAC systems:** Many sections of your heating and cooling system may not be accessible for a visible inspection. Check with a heating and air specialist to show you any mold that might exist.
- **Fans and dehumidifiers:** These can be used to remove excess moisture. Fans should be placed at a window or door to blow the air outwards rather than inwards, so not to spread the mold.

### Tetanus

- **Be careful of cuts and wounds during disaster clean-up.** To prevent infection, including tetanus, clean all cuts and wounds with soap and clean water, use antibiotic ointment and cover. If a wound swells or drains, seek medical attention immediately.
- **Get vaccinated.** Your emergency preparedness should include a tetanus shot. Tetanus is a nerve disease caused by bacteria in a contaminated wound. Post-storm clean-up poses added risks of getting a wound from objects such as broken glass, exposed nails and other sharp objects.
- **Tetanus vaccines are recommended for everyone.** Staying up to date with your tetanus vaccine is the best tool to prevent tetanus.
- **Get a booster, if needed.** Adults need a tetanus booster shot every 10 years to maintain protection. Anyone involved in cleaning up after a flood who has not received a tetanus booster in the last 10 years is encouraged to get a booster BEFORE beginning cleanup efforts.
- Visit <https://ldh.la.gov/page/tetanus> for more information.

### Power Outage Safety

**Prioritize safety.** During a power outage, prioritize your safety and the safety of others. Follow this guidance from the Louisiana Department of Health, CDC, FDA, and the American Red Cross to minimize risks and ensure your well-being.

- **Keep food safety in mind.** Food safety helps to prevent foodborne illnesses. Avoid opening the refrigerator and freezer unnecessarily to maintain temperature. If the power outage lasts more than four hours, discard perishable food items that have exceeded a safe temperature (40°F or 4°C). Follow CDC and FDA recommendations for proper food storage and disposal.
- **Stay hydrated.** Drink plenty of clean, safe water during a power outage. Keep a supply of bottled water or have alternative sources of safe drinking water available. Follow water safety guidelines from the CDC and local health authorities to prevent contamination.
- **Use alternative energy sources safely.** If using a generator, remember to keep it outdoors, 20 feet away from living spaces, to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning and other hazards. Avoid using gas-powered generators or grills indoors or in enclosed spaces.
- **Stay informed.** Stay informed about the power outage and emergency response efforts through reliable sources such as the Louisiana Department of Health, local authorities, and news updates. Follow guidance from LDH, the American Red Cross and CDC on staying safe during power outages, including tips for managing heat, keeping devices charged, and maintaining communication.

- **Use caution with candles and lighting.** Exercise caution when using candles or other open flames for lighting during a power outage. Place them in safe locations away from flammable materials and never leave them unattended. Consider using battery-operated flashlights or lanterns as safer alternatives.
- **Protect yourself from extreme temperatures.** During a power outage, extreme temperatures can pose health risks. Stay indoors in the coolest part of your home, use fans, wear lightweight and loose-fitting clothing, and take cool showers or baths to help manage heat. Follow additional guidance from LDH, the CDC and American Red Cross for coping with extreme temperatures.
- **Report emergencies.** In the event of a life-threatening emergency, call 911 immediately. Report power outages, downed power lines, or other electrical hazards to the appropriate utility company or emergency services.
- **Check in with neighbors.** Check on your neighbors, especially those who may be vulnerable, such as the elderly, individuals with disabilities, or those with chronic illnesses. Offer assistance or contact local authorities if someone needs immediate help.
- By following this guidance, you can navigate a power outage with greater safety and minimize potential risks. Stay informed, be prepared, and support one another during these challenging times.

### **Drinking Water Safety**

- If you are unsure about the safety of your tap water, bring it to a rolling boil for at least one minute to kill any harmful bacteria or parasites that may be present. Allow the water to cool before using it for drinking or cooking purposes.
- Keep in mind that ice made from water that has not been boiled is also unsafe.
- It is OK to shower and clean with water that has not been boiled: Boil water advisories are for drinking water only.
- Consider using commercially bottled water as a safe alternative to tap water. Look for bottles that meet state and federal regulations and have not been tampered with.
- Stay informed through official channels and local authorities regarding water advisories and safety guidelines. Follow their instructions and recommendations on when tap water is safe for consumption without boiling.
- If tap water is not safe for drinking, use bottled or boiled water for oral hygiene, such as brushing your teeth, and avoid swallowing water while showering.

### **Food Safety**

Taking precautions and being mindful of food and drinking safety can help protect you and your family from potential health risks during severe weather events.

- **Stay prepared.** Before a storm or hurricane, ensure you have an emergency food and water supply that can last for at least three days. Store non-perishable items such as canned foods, dry goods, and bottled water in a safe and accessible place.
- **Secure your food and water.** During a storm, keep your food and drinking water in sealed containers or plastic bags to prevent contamination from floodwaters. Store them at a higher level to avoid contact with potentially contaminated areas.
- **Avoid consuming flood-damaged food.** Do not consume any food items that have come into contact with floodwaters or have been stored in a flooded area. Discard all perishable items, including fresh produce, meat, dairy products, and eggs, if they have been exposed to floodwaters.

- **Be cautious with refrigerated food.** If you experience a power outage, keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. A refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours if it remains unopened. After that, discard any perishable items that have been above 40°F (4°C) for more than two hours.
- **Use safe water sources.** If the local water supply has been compromised during a storm or hurricane, use bottled water for drinking, cooking, and hygiene purposes. If bottled water is not available, boil tap water for at least one minute before using it for consumption.
- **Avoid using contaminated water.** Do not use floodwaters for any purposes, including drinking, cooking, or washing utensils. Floodwaters may contain harmful contaminants that can cause severe illnesses.
- **Be aware of symptoms.** If you or anyone in your household experiences symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, or fever after consuming food or water during or after a storm, seek medical attention promptly and inform your healthcare provider about the situation.
- **Practice proper hygiene.** Wash your hands with soap and clean water thoroughly before handling any food items, even if you believe your hands are clean. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

### Stay Informed

- **Stay tuned to local news sources.** Trusted local news channels, radio stations and official websites for authorities such as LDH, the Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP) and FEMA will provide essential information regarding evacuation orders, shelter locations and emergency services.
- **Follow official social media accounts.** Relevant organizations, including LDH, GOHSEP and FEMA may share real-time updates, safety tips and important instructions.
- **Utilize weather apps and websites.** Install reliable weather apps on your smartphone or tablet that provide accurate and up-to-date information. Websites like the National Hurricane Center (NHC) and the National Weather Service (NWS) also offer real-time data, storm forecasts and safety recommendations specific to your area.
- **Stay connected.** Maintain communication with neighbors, friends, family members, local community groups and neighborhood associations before, during and after a hurricane. Share information and updates, and offer support to one another.

### Pet Safety

- **Plan ahead.** Include your pets in your emergency preparedness plan. Identify pet-friendly shelters or hotels in case of evacuation, create a pet emergency kit, and ensure your pets are properly identified with collars and microchips.
- **Keep your pets indoors.** During a hurricane, it's essential to keep your pets indoors. Strong winds and flooding can pose serious risks to their safety. Secure all doors and windows to prevent escape or injury.
- **Create a safe space.** Designate a secure area in your home where your pets can seek shelter. Choose an interior room without windows and keep it stocked with food, water, bedding and familiar items to reduce stress.
- **Maintain proper identification.** Ensure your pets have up-to-date ID tags with your contact information. Consider microchipping your pets as a more permanent form of ID. This will increase the chances of a safe reunion if you and your pets become separated.

- **Prepare a pet emergency kit.** Your kit should include essential supplies such as food, water, medications, a leash, a carrier, litter and sanitation items. Keep the kit readily accessible so that you can quickly grab it during an evacuation.
- **Stay informed.** Stay tuned to local weather updates and evacuation orders. Follow the guidance of local authorities regarding evacuation routes and pet-friendly shelters. Keep emergency contact numbers for local animal control and veterinary clinics handy.
- **Keep calm and comfort your pets.** Pets can sense stress and anxiety. During a hurricane, provide reassurance and comfort to your pets. Maintain a calm demeanor to help them feel secure amidst the chaos.
- **Secure your pet during transport.** If evacuation becomes necessary, secure your pets in appropriate carriers or crates. This will ensure their safety during transportation and prevent them from escaping or getting injured.
- **Stay together if possible.** Whenever feasible, keep your pets with you during an evacuation. Animals rely on their human companions for security and reassurance. If you must separate, ensure your pets are in a safe, trusted environment with proper care.
- **After the storm, assess for hazards.** Once the hurricane has passed, carefully inspect your surroundings for potential hazards such as downed power lines, debris or contaminated water. Keep your pets on a leash or in a carrier until the area is deemed safe.

### **Mental Health**

- **Prioritize your mental health.** It's OK to not be OK. Know that you are not alone and help is available. Recognize that emotional stress is a normal response to the challenges posed by hurricane season. Take proactive steps to prioritize your mental well-being and seek support when needed.
- **Be prepared.** Before hurricane season begins, create a comprehensive emergency plan that includes considerations for your mental health. Prepare an emergency kit for your medications and items that help you handle stress, like a journal or headphones. Establish a communication plan with loved ones, and identify strategies for managing stress during and after a hurricane.
- **Monitor your emotions.** Pay close attention to your emotional well-being during hurricane season. Recognize signs of distress such as feelings of fear, anxiety, sadness or irritability. Take time to reflect on your emotions and seek help if they become overwhelming or persistent.
- **Practice self-care.** Engage in self-care activities to support your emotional resilience. Maintain a healthy lifestyle by getting enough sleep, eating nutritious meals and engaging in regular physical exercise. Set aside time for activities that bring you joy and relaxation.
- **Seek support from loved ones.** Stay connected with your support network of friends, family, and neighbors. Share your feelings and concerns with trusted individuals who can offer emotional support. Engaging in open and honest conversations can help alleviate stress and foster a sense of community.
- **Access behavioral health services.** All of us need help sometimes. Being human means helping others — and reaching out for help ourselves. The 988 helpline connects you to help when you are affected by a storm, feel down, depressed, anxious, are having a tough day, or when you or a loved one need help with alcohol or drug issues. You are not alone.
  - When you call, text or chat 988, you get connected to a specialist who will listen, provide support and connect you with local resources. The helpline is free, confidential and available 24/7.
  - You can call, text or chat 988 for help with problems of all types. Whether you or a loved one had a tough day, have an alcohol or drug issue, or are having thoughts of suicide, 988 counselors can connect you to help.

- 📞 Call/text 988
  - 💬 Chat at [Louisiana 988](https://Louisiana988.org) (Louisiana988.org)
- You can also reach compassionate counselors from the LDH Office of Behavioral Health 24/7 to talk about emotionally distressing situations including weather-related and illnesses. They will provide a safe space for you, as well as information and help to link you to additional confidential mental and substance use services, free of charge.
  - 📞 OBH Helpline: 1-877-664-2248 (substance use)
- **Stay informed but limit media exposure.** Stay updated on hurricane-related news and alerts from reputable sources such as LDH, CDC, FEMA and local authorities. However, excessive exposure to media coverage can increase stress and anxiety. Establish a balance by setting limits on media consumption.
- **Take care of your physical safety.** Follow evacuation orders and safety guidelines. Feeling secure in your surroundings can help alleviate emotional stress and allow you to focus on your mental well-being.

### Generator Safety

- **Misuse of a generator can be fatal.** The second most common cause of recent hurricane-related deaths was carbon monoxide poisoning due to generator misuse.
- **Place your generator outdoors.** When using a generator, always place it outdoors in a well-ventilated area, away from doors, windows, and vents. Generators produce carbon monoxide (CO), a colorless and odorless gas that can be deadly if inhaled in high concentrations. Avoid using generators in garages, basements, or enclosed areas.
- **Ventilation is key.** Ensure proper ventilation to prevent the buildup of dangerous levels of carbon monoxide. Keep generators at least 20 feet away from any living spaces, and direct the exhaust away from windows, doors, and other openings. Use battery-operated CO detectors inside your home to provide an extra layer of protection.
- **Safely store and handle fuel.** Store generator fuel in approved containers in a safe and well-ventilated area, away from any heat sources or flammable materials. Turn off the generator and let it cool down before refueling. Avoid spilling fuel and never store excess fuel indoors. Generators run hot, so be careful about touching them until they have been turned off and cooled down.
- **Use the right extension cords.** Always use heavy-duty, grounded extension cords designed for outdoor use when connecting appliances to your generator. Ensure that the cords are in good condition, without any frays or exposed wires. Don't overload the generator by plugging in too many devices.
- **Prevent electrical hazards.** To prevent electrocution, keep the generator dry and operate it on a dry surface. If you need to connect the generator to your home's electrical system, use a transfer switch installed by a qualified electrician to avoid back feeding electricity into the power lines, which can be dangerous for utility workers.
- **Don't forget regular maintenance.** Regularly inspect and maintain your generator to ensure its safe and efficient operation. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for maintenance and service intervals, and never attempt to repair or modify the generator yourself unless you are qualified to do so.
- **Plan ahead.** Include a generator in your emergency preparedness plan. Familiarize yourself with its operation, keep spare parts and fuel on hand, and periodically test the generator to ensure it functions properly when needed.

- **Know the signs of carbon monoxide poisoning.** Learn to recognize the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, such as headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, and fatigue. If you or others experience these symptoms, seek fresh air immediately and call 911 for emergency medical assistance.

Remember, proper generator safety practices can save lives. Follow this guidance to protect yourself, your loved ones, and your community during hurricane season and power outages. Stay safe and be prepared!

### **Floodwater Safety**

- **Stay out of floodwaters.** They can be contaminated with hazardous materials, sewage and harmful bacteria. Even if the water appears calm, it may be deeper or swifter than it seems, posing a serious risk to your safety. Never drive through flooded roadways — you do not know the road conditions beneath the water. Turn around, don't drown.
- **Watch out for fallen power lines.** Call the electric company to report them.
- **Follow evacuation orders promptly.** Evacuating to higher ground reduces the chances of encountering floodwaters and ensures your safety. Monitor news updates and official instructions from local emergency management agencies.
- **Practice personal hygiene.** Wash your hands frequently with soap and clean water, especially before eating or preparing food, and after using the bathroom. If clean water is not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.
- **Prevent waterborne illnesses.** Avoid swallowing or consuming floodwater, and use only clean bottled or boiled water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene. Boiling water for at least one minute or using water purification tablets or filters can help ensure its safety.
- **Protect yourself during cleanup.** Wear rubber gloves, waterproof boots and protective clothing to minimize contact with floodwater. Avoid injuries by using caution around debris, sharp objects and downed power lines.
- **Avoid electrical hazards.** Do not touch electrical equipment or outlets if you are standing in water or on a wet surface. If you suspect damage to electrical systems, contact a qualified electrician for inspection and repairs.
- **Prevent mold growth.** Dry out affected areas as soon as possible and remove any wet materials. Use fans, dehumidifiers and open windows to promote air circulation and aid in drying. If mold growth is extensive, seek professional help for remediation.
- **Seek medical attention for injuries or illness.** If you experience injuries, wounds or signs of illness after exposure to floodwater, seek medical attention promptly. Inform healthcare providers about your exposure to floodwaters to aid in accurate diagnosis and treatment.
- **Take care of mental health.** Flooding and the aftermath of a hurricane can be distressing. It is important to prioritize your mental health and seek support if needed. Connect with family, friends or local support services to talk about your experiences and emotions.
- **Stay updated and informed.** Pay attention to your local news, radio and official sources for updated information on safety instructions, road closures and recovery efforts. Follow guidance from the Louisiana Department of Health, local authorities, CDC and FEMA for the latest recommendations.

### **Heat Safety**

- **Extreme heat is dangerous.** Exposure to excessive heat can lead to heat stress, resulting in heat-related illness. Heat stress and heat-related illness occur when the body cannot cool itself enough to maintain a healthy temperature.

- **Heat stress can be fatal.** In Louisiana, heat was the most common cause of death during hurricanes Delta, Zeta, Laura and Ida.
  - Of the 65 deaths attributed to the four storms collectively, 23 were due to extreme heat.
  - Three of the 21 deaths were additionally attributed to lack of oxygen.
- **Know what to do about heat exhaustion.**
  - Heat exhaustion symptoms can include muscle pain or spasms; cold, pale, clammy skin; tiredness or weakness and dizziness; and headache and fainting.
  - Move to a cool place and loosen your clothes, put a cool, wet cloth on your body or take a cool bath.
  - Sip on water, and seek medical attention if you're throwing up and/or if your symptoms last longer than an hour.
- **Know what to do about heat stroke.**
  - Heat stroke symptoms can include a high body temperature (103F or higher); hot, red, dry or damp skin; fast, strong pulse; headache and dizziness; nausea and confusion; and loss of consciousness (passing out).
  - *Call 911 right away: Heat stroke is a medical emergency.*
  - Move to a cool place and loosen your clothes, put a cool, wet cloth on your body or take a cool bath.
  - Do not drink anything.
- **Be aware of your risk.** Groups at higher risk of heat-related illness include:
  - Outdoor workers
  - Individuals with heart, lung and/or kidney disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity
  - Pregnant women
  - Older adults
  - Athletes
  - Young children
- **Air conditioning** is the strongest protection against heat-related illness. Exposure to air conditioning even for a few hours a day will reduce the risk of health-related illness. If your air conditioning is not working, go to a public place with electricity, like a library or mall, or local heat-relief shelters, for locations.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** Don't wait until you're thirsty. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and sugary drinks.
- **Stay in the shade.**
- **Limit outdoor activity** to morning and evening hours.
- **Check on people who live alone**, especially the elderly.
- **Check with local officials for cooling sites**

### Oxygen Needs

The Louisiana Department of Health opens special needs shelters designed for individuals who are homebound and chronically ill. Electrical power is available in medical special needs shelters for those who need it. Information about Medical Special Needs Placement, including phone numbers, are released publicly once areas of mandatory evacuation are decided by officials.

- **Plan ahead for oxygen needs.** If you or someone in your household relies on oxygen therapy, make sure to have a sufficient supply of oxygen on hand in case of a storm or hurricane. Contact your oxygen supplier well in advance to arrange for extra cylinders or backup power sources.
- **Follow healthcare provider instructions.** Follow the instructions and recommendations provided by your healthcare provider regarding oxygen usage, maintenance, and safety during



storms or hurricanes. They can provide personalized guidance based on your specific medical condition and needs.

- **Have a communication plan.** Establish a communication plan with your healthcare provider and support network, including family, friends, or neighbors, during severe weather events. Inform them about your oxygen needs, emergency contact information, and your location. Stay in regular contact to ensure everyone is aware of your well-being and any potential challenges you may face.
- **Prepare medical documentation.** Keep copies of your medical records, prescriptions, and oxygen equipment specifications in a waterproof and easily accessible container. These documents can be crucial for medical personnel or emergency responders to provide appropriate care and support during and after a storm.
- **Ensure power backup.** During a storm or hurricane, power outages are common. If you use an electric-powered oxygen concentrator, have a backup power source, such as a generator or battery backup, to keep the device running. Consider using a surge protector if the generator is of a smaller type. At a minimum, the generator running the oxygen concentrator should be large enough to power a refrigerator. Coordinate with your healthcare provider to determine the appropriate backup power solution for your specific oxygen equipment.
- **Keep oxygen cylinders secure.** If you use portable oxygen cylinders, ensure they are securely fastened and stored in an upright position during the storm. Protect them from potential damage or exposure to extreme weather conditions, such as high winds or flooding.
- **Create an evacuation plan.** If you are advised to evacuate, make sure to bring your oxygen equipment, extra oxygen cylinders, and any necessary accessories or supplies with you. Coordinate with local authorities or the Red Cross for assistance and guidance on transportation options and accessible shelters that can accommodate your oxygen needs.
- **Stay informed.** Regularly check updates from the Louisiana Department of Health, CDC, and local emergency management agencies for the latest guidance on managing oxygen needs during severe weather events. They provide valuable information and resources to help you stay safe and well-prepared.

### **Private Water Wells**

- Private wells are not regulated in Louisiana, leaving well owners responsible for all facets of disaster preparedness, protection and maintenance of their well. Left unchecked, wells are vulnerable to damage and contamination possibly leading to negative health effects.
- Before a storm hits, cover the wellhead and pump to protect the equipment from flying debris. If a well is located in a flood-prone area, it should be fitted with a flood-proof well cap.
- Because hurricanes often cause power outages, the pump should be turned off at the circuit breaker just before the storm hits. Power outages can cause spikes and surges through the electrical lines, and this can damage the electrical components of the pump. Power should not be turned back on until any floodwaters recede.
- The Louisiana Department of Natural Resources maintains a listing of [licensed well professionals](#) to assist well owners with any maintenance needs.
- Residents should also prepare an alternate source of water to sustain them through a storm event. Purchase enough water in advance for cooking, bathing and drinking for all household members and pets.
- Owners whose wells flood, sustain damage or experience prolonged power loss should assume their well water is contaminated until screened. Affected water wells must be first [disinfected](#) then thoroughly flushed before a sample of water is collected for analysis by the laboratory.

- OPH laboratories offer bacteriological testing (total coliforms and E. coli) to private drinking water well owners. Testing kits are available at [public health units](#) across the state or can be ordered [online](#).
- Until the water is confirmed to be negative for coliform bacteria, it should not be used for drinking purposes. Before receiving results from the laboratory, use bottled water or some other safe supply of water.
- LDH's Private Well Owner Network (LA PWON) provides guidance on locating licensed well professionals, well maintenance, testing, video tutorials, recovery and much more. For more information, visit [ldh.la.gov/pwi](http://ldh.la.gov/pwi) or call 1-888-293-7020.

## Tornadoes

- **Stay informed.** Tornadoes can develop quickly and pose a significant threat to life and property. Regularly monitor local weather forecasts from trusted sources like the National Weather Service (NWS) and local news outlets, as well as updates from LDH, GOHSEP and FEMA.
- **Know the watch/warning difference.** A *tornado watch* means that conditions are favorable for tornadoes to form in the area, so stay alert and be prepared to take action if a warning is issued. A *tornado warning* means a tornado has been sighted or detected by radar, and immediate action should be taken to protect yourself.
- **Have a tornado safety plan.** Create and practice a tornado safety plan with your family or household members. Identify a safe shelter location in your home, such as a basement, storm cellar or an interior room on the lowest floor without windows. Have mattresses, pillows or heavy blankets easily accessible to protect yourself from flying debris.
- **Take shelter immediately.** When a tornado warning is issued or you observe signs of a tornado, take immediate action to seek shelter in a sturdy, secure location..
- **Stay away from windows.** During a tornado, avoid windows, glass and exterior walls. Seek shelter in an interior room or hallway on the lowest level of your home.
- **Leave your vehicle.** Do not try to outrun a tornado in your vehicle. Instead, seek shelter in a sturdy building or lie flat in a low-lying area away from your vehicle, covering your head and neck with your hands.
- **Have an emergency supply kit ready.** Include essential items such as a battery-powered weather radio, flashlight, extra batteries, first aid supplies, water, non-perishable food, bug and/or mosquito spray, and important documents.

## VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

### Older adults

Older adults are one of the **most vulnerable groups of people** during hurricane season. They might face challenges with isolation, limited mobility, and medical needs. The well-being and safety of older adults during a storm or hurricane require careful planning, communication and coordination with relevant organizations.

- **Stay informed.** Stay updated with the latest weather forecasts and emergency information provided by the National Weather Service, local authorities and the Louisiana Department of Health. Being aware of the situation will help you make informed decisions to protect yourself during a storm or hurricane. Helpful resources could include:
  - Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness: [www.gohsep.la.gov](http://www.gohsep.la.gov) and [www.getagameplane.org](http://www.getagameplane.org)

- Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development's Evacuation Route Maps: [www.dotd.louisiana.gov/maps](http://www.dotd.louisiana.gov/maps)
- **Create an emergency plan.** Develop a comprehensive emergency plan tailored to the specific needs of older adults. Include important contact numbers, evacuation routes, medical information and a list of essential medications. Share this plan with family members, caregivers, and trusted neighbors.
- **Have a communication plan.** Maintain open lines of communication with family, friends, and caregivers during a storm or hurricane. Keep cell phones and backup batteries charged. Also, consider having a landline phone that works during power outages and a medical alert device or wearable for immediate assistance.
- **Build a support network.** Connect with family, friends, neighbors, or community organizations who can assist you during emergencies. Inform them about your needs and ensure they are aware of any medical conditions or specific requirements you may have.
- **Mobility and accessibility are key.** If you have mobility challenges, ensure you have access to necessary mobility aids such as canes, walkers, or wheelchairs. Keep pathways clear of obstacles and have a plan for assistance if evacuation becomes necessary.
- **Label special equipment.** Label all equipment such as wheelchairs, canes or walkers that you would need with your name, address, and phone numbers.
- **Pack an emergency kit.** Prepare an emergency kit with essential supplies such as non-perishable food, bottled water, medications, flashlights, batteries, a battery-powered radio, extra clothing, personal hygiene items, and important documents. Ensure you have enough supplies and cash to last at least three days. Visit [ready.gov](http://ready.gov) for more information.
- **Manage medication.** Keep a sufficient supply of prescription medications on hand, ensuring they are properly stored and not expired. Create a medication schedule and set reminders to take your medications as prescribed, even during a storm. Pack a copy of your prescription in your emergency kit and consider wearing a medical alert bracelet or pendant. If you require power to operate medical devices or keep medicines cold, make a back-up plan.
- **Plan to evacuate if advised.** If you are advised to evacuate, follow the instructions of local authorities and have a plan in place. Identify accessible shelters or accommodations that can cater to the needs of older adults. Arrange transportation assistance if needed and inform authorities of any mobility or medical assistance requirements.
- **Take precautions against extreme heat.** During power outages, extreme heat can pose a significant risk to older adults. Stay hydrated, wear lightweight and loose-fitting clothing, and find cool places to rest. Seek assistance or relocate to a cooling center if necessary.

### **Infants and moms/caregivers**

- **Determine a safe location to evacuate to.** Make sure it can accommodate infants and breastfeeding moms.
- **Stock up on essential supplies well in advance.** This includes an ample supply of diapers, formula (if applicable), baby food, water, medications, and any necessary breastfeeding supplies such as breast pumps, storage bags and nursing pads.
- **Stay updated.** Follow the latest information and warnings from local authorities. Have a battery-powered or hand-cranked radio to receive emergency updates if power goes out.
- **Create a baby emergency kit.** Include essential items such as a safe sleeping surface (such as pack and play), baby wipes, blankets, spare clothes, hand sanitizer, baby-safe insect repellent and any comforting items (pacifiers, toys, etc.) to help soothe infants during stressful situations.
  - **Note: Infants should *not* sleep in an adult bed**

- **Establish a communication plan.** Designate emergency contacts so that loved ones know your whereabouts and can provide assistance if needed. Make sure to have spare batteries or portable chargers for communication devices.
- **Have a plan for safe feeding during power outages.** Have non-perishable breastfeeding-friendly snacks available and prioritize breastfeeding directly when possible. If using stored breast milk, use safe handling practices and alternative methods for warming.
- **Maintain good sanitation and hygiene practices.** This is especially important when water supplies may be compromised. Have an adequate supply of clean water for drinking, washing hands and cleaning baby equipment.
- **Prioritize emotional support.** Stress and anxiety may arise before, during or after a hurricane. Support each other emotionally and provide reassurance to infants and breastfeeding moms. Discuss coping strategies and stress-relief techniques that can help during challenging times.
- **Seek medical attention if needed.**
- **Assess safety before returning home.** This includes potential hazards that may have been caused by the hurricane. Take extra precautions in the days following the storm.

#### **Those with special medical/health needs**

- **Plan ahead for special medical needs.** Individuals with special medical or health needs, including those dependent upon electricity or oxygen, should develop a comprehensive emergency plan. This plan should address specific requirements for medical equipment, medications and any assistive devices.
- **Communicate with your healthcare provider.** Keep in touch with your healthcare provider or medical team regarding your specific medical needs during a storm or hurricane. Seek guidance on managing your condition, potential adjustments to your treatment plan, and any necessary precautions.
- **Notify caregivers and support network.** Inform your caregivers, family members or trusted friends about your special medical needs and emergency plan. Share important information regarding your condition, medical equipment usage, and any specific actions they may need to take in an emergency.
- **Maintain a sufficient supply of medications.** Ensure you have an ample supply of prescription medications to last at least a week. Keep medications properly stored, regularly check expiration dates and pack them securely in your emergency kit.
- **Arrange for backup power.** If you rely on electric-powered medical equipment, such as ventilators, home dialysis machines or other assistive devices, make arrangements for backup power sources. Contact your healthcare provider or medical equipment supplier for information on battery backups or generators.
- **Plan to evacuate if advised.** If evacuation is recommended, make sure to include your special medical needs in your evacuation plan. Coordinate with local authorities for assistance and information on accessible shelters or medical facilities that can support your requirements.
- **Pack essential supplies.** Prepare an emergency kit with essential supplies tailored to your special medical needs. Include extra batteries, chargers, oxygen tanks, medical equipment manuals, a list of emergency contacts, medical records and any necessary documentation.
- **Protect medical equipment.** Keep devices dry and protected from water damage, and ensure proper ventilation and air circulation for equipment like oxygen concentrators.

**Keep sufficient documentation.** Document the name and contact information of all pharmacies, medical supply vendors, home health/hospice agencies and dialysis centers.