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HURRICANE GUIDE

FOR RESIDENTS & VISITORS

PREPAREDNESS | RECOVERY | RESILIENCY

Table of Contents

Prepare Ahead 1

Disaster Supply Kit Checklist

The Basics

Make a Plan

Protect Your Pets

Disability Planning

Before Landfall 4

What to Do As a Storm Approaches

Evacuation Tips

Hurricane Hazards

After the Storm 5

Don't Become the Victim of an Unlicensed Activity Scam

Storm-Related Services Requiring Florida Licensure

Where to Begin with Storm Damage

Common Post-Storm Scams

Watch for These Red Flags

HireSmartFL.com

Tips for Hiring a State-Licensed Contractor

The Florida Disaster Contractors Network

Resources 9

Websites

Hurricane Hotlines

ABOUT THIS HURRICANE GUIDE

The information contained in this guide is for general information purposes only. The information is attributable to the cited source. Responsibility for the information provided is borne by the cited source. Florida's Department of Business and Professional Regulation assumes no responsibility or liability for errors or omissions in the content provided in this guide.

About DBPR

A major source of our strength is Florida's businesses and professionals who are licensed by the Department of Business and Professional Regulation. Housed in offices throughout the state and anchored in Tallahassee, our team is committed to serving nearly 1.7 million licensees and the public they serve by licensing efficiently and regulating fairly.

We support the businesses that drive Florida's economy, and we are proud to license these professionals and businesses:

- Architecture
- Asbestos Consultants
- Athlete Agents
- Auctioneers
- Barbers
- Boxing
- Building Officials
- Building Code Inspectors
- Certified Public Accountants
- Community Association Managers
- Construction
- Cosmetologists
- Electrical Contractors
- Employee Leasing
- Harbor Pilots
- Home Inspectors
- Interior Designers
- Landscape Architects
- Mold-related Services
- Professional Geologists
- Real Estate
- Talent Agents
- Veterinarians

DBPR Protects Florida Residents & Visitors

DBPR oversees certain regulated industries in Florida:

- Alcoholic Beverages
- Condominiums, Timeshares and Mobile Homes
- Hotels and Restaurants
- Tobacco Sales
- Yacht & Ship Brokers

The Department also protects some of Florida's most vulnerable residents by enforcing laws governing:

- Child Labor
- Farm Labor
- Unlicensed Activity

Disaster Supply Kit Checklist

Creating a disaster supply kit is an essential part of your family's preparedness plan.

Home Essentials

- ☐ Flashlights (one per person)
- ☐ Batteries for electronics and flashlights
- ☐ Ice chest with ice for food storage
- ☐ Battery-powered NOAA weather radio
- ☐ Grill with propane or fuel
- ☐ Car charger for mobile phones
- ☐ Toilet paper
- ☐ Waterproof matches and a lighter
- ☐ Sealed waterproof container
- ☐ Manual can opener and bottle opener
- ☐ Fire extinguisher
- ☐ Paper plates, bowls, cups, utensils, and paper towels
- ☐ Clothing (include pants and a long-sleeved shirt)
- ☐ Duct tape, tarp, and rope
- ☐ Garbage bags and zip-top bags
- ☐ Basic tool kit
- ☐ Blankets and a sleeping bag (one per person)
- ☐ Soap, shampoo, and hygiene products
- ☐ Candles
- ☐ Local maps
- ☐ Cash or checks
- ☐ Important documents (insurance, medical, social security cards, ID cards, emergency numbers)

Water

- ☐ One gallon per person per day for at least four days
- ☐ One gallon for cooking per day for at least four days

Food

- ☐ Non-perishable packaged or canned food to last up to 14 days
- ☐ Ready-to-eat canned meats
- ☐ Canned fruits and vegetables
- ☐ Canned or powdered milk
- ☐ Cereal or oatmeal
- ☐ Canned soup
- ☐ Peanut butter and jelly
- ☐ Bread and crackers
- ☐ Baby formula/specialty food
- ☐ Instant coffee or tea
- ☐ Trail mix and granola bars
- ☐ Instant noodles
- ☐ Snack food

First Aid

- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Two-week supply of prescription medications
- ☐ Two-week supply of vitamins/over the counter medications
- ☐ Antibacterial hand soap
- ☐ Large pair of metal scissors
- ☐ Mosquito repellent
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Whistle
- ☐ Dust mask (one per person)
- ☐ Sanitary wipes

Source: Interstate Batteries

Make a Plan

The Basics

- List each person your plan will cover and each person's full contact information.
- List all supplies and equipment needed for each person in your plan. It may be 72 hours or more before help can arrive.
- Identify any health conditions or disability-related needs of your group and include instructions.
- Decide where you will go if evacuation becomes necessary.
- Plan your route and include alternate options.
- Make copies of financial, insurance and medical records and keep them with your emergency plan.
- Be sure children know and understand the emergency plan.
- Each person will need identification and contact information to carry with them in an evacuation, especially children and older adults.
- Include service animals and family pets in your plan.

Evacuation Tips

- Be clear about where you will go in an evacuation. Decide if you will stay with friends or relatives in a safe location, stay in a hotel or motel, or go to a county-approved public shelter.
- If someone in your evacuation group needs basic medical care on a daily basis, a special needs shelter may be an option.
- Contact your county emergency-management office for more information.

Source: Florida Department of Health

Protect Your Pets

As members of your family, your pets should have an emergency supply kit as well.

Food At least a three-day supply in an airtight, waterproof container.

Water At least three days of water specifically for your pets.

Medicines & Medical Records

Important Documents Registration information, adoption papers and vaccination documents. Talk to your veterinarian about microchipping and enrolling your pet in a recovery database.

First Aid Kit Cotton bandage rolls, bandage tape and scissors; antibiotic ointment; flea and tick prevention; latex gloves, isopropyl alcohol and saline solution. Including a pet first aid reference book is a good idea, too.

Collar or Harness with ID Tag, Rabies Tag and a Leash

Crate or Pet Carrier Have a sturdy, safe crate or carrier in case you need to evacuate. The carrier should be large enough for your pet to stand, turn around and lie down.

Sanitation Pet litter and litter box if appropriate, newspapers, paper towels, plastic trash bags and household chlorine bleach.

A Picture of You and Your Pet Together If you become separated, a picture of you and your pet together will help you document ownership and allow others to assist you. Add species, breed, age, sex, color and distinguishing characteristics.

Familiar Items Familiar items such as treats, toys and bedding can help reduce stress for your pet.

Source: FEMA

Disability Planning

If you or someone you care for has a disability or special need, you may have to take additional steps to prepare yourself and your family.

What's Needed to Prepare for an Emergency or Disaster

Form a Personal Support Network

These are the people you should involve in your emergency planning and who can help in an emergency. They may include family, friends, caregivers, neighbors, and coworkers. Be sure to give at least one trusted member of your support network a key to your house or apartment and let them know where you store your emergency kit. Most importantly, don't rely on just one person—have at least three people you can call on for help.

Complete a Personal Assessment

Make a list of your personal needs and your resources for meeting them in a disaster environment. Take into account what you will be able to do for yourself and what assistance you may need before, during and after a disaster. This should include daily living needs (personal care/personal care equipment, adaptive feeding devices, and electricity-dependent equipment), your ability to get around before, during and after a disaster and evacuating if necessary.

Become Informed

Know about the specific hazards that threaten your community (hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires, etc.), learn about community disaster plans and community warning systems and find out more about special-assistance programs. Florida citizens with disabilities and special needs should register with their local emergency-management office.

Write It Down

Keep a copy of important phone numbers and other contact information for loved ones, medical providers and emergency services as part of your emergency communications plan.

Create an Emergency Kit

Your emergency kit should have supplies specific to your special needs.

Other Helpful Tips

Wear medical alert tags/bracelets to help identify your disability/special need.

Practice how to quickly explain your condition and your adaptive equipment to someone who is helping you.

Wheelchair-accessible users need to have more than one exit from their residence. Practice how to escape from your home.

Know the size and weight of your wheelchair, and whether or not it is collapsible, in case it has to be transported.

If you depend on dialysis or other life-sustaining treatment or equipment, know the locations and availability of more than one facility in your area.

What to Do as a Storm Approaches

- ☐ Download a smartphone app that can notify people where you are, and if you need help or are safe. The Red Cross has a Hurricane App available in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store, as well as a shelter-finder app. A first-aid app is also available.
- ☐ Use hurricane shutters or board up windows and doors with 5/8-inch plywood.
- ☐ Bring outside items in if they could be picked up by the wind.
- ☐ Clear gutters of debris.
- ☐ Reinforce the garage door.
- ☐ Turn the refrigerator to its coldest setting in case power goes off. Use a cooler instead of opening freezer or refrigerator doors.
- ☐ Fill a bathtub with water.
- ☐ Get a full tank of gas in one car.
- ☐ Go over your evacuation plan with your family, and learn alternate routes to safety.
- ☐ Learn the location of the nearest shelter or nearest pet-friendly shelter.
- ☐ Put an ax in your attic in case of severe flooding.
- ☐ Evacuate if ordered and stick to marked evacuation routes, if possible.
- ☐ Store important documents — passports, Social Security cards, birth certificates, deeds — in a watertight container.
- ☐ Have a current inventory of household property.
- ☐ Leave a note to say where you are going.
- ☐ Unplug small appliances and electronics before you leave.
- ☐ If possible, turn off the electricity, gas and water for the residence.

Evacuation Tips

Leave Early

If ordered to evacuate, do not wait. Leaving early can help you avoid heavy traffic and limited sheltering options.

Stay Close to Home

Choose an evacuation destination as close to home as possible, preferably within your county. Longer-distance evacuations often involve heavier traffic and longer travel times.

Make a Plan

If possible, arrange to stay with friends or family outside the evacuation zone. Discuss your plans before hurricane season begins so everyone knows what to expect.

Reserve Lodging Early

If you plan to stay in a hotel or motel, make reservations before you leave. Rooms can fill quickly once evacuations are announced.

Know Your Shelter Options

If you are unable to stay with friends, family, or in a hotel, go to a public shelter. Bring your disaster supply kit and remember that most shelters do not accept pets.

Fuel Up

Keep your vehicle's gas tank full during hurricane season and fill up before evacuating. Fuel may become difficult to find as a storm approaches.

Source: Florida Division of Emergency Management

Don't Become the Victim of Unlicensed Activity

When a storm damages your home, it can be overwhelming to know where to begin and who you can trust. Unfortunately, disasters often attract unlicensed individuals looking to take advantage of residents during their time of need.

Protect your home and your wallet by working with qualified professionals and understanding which services require a state license. Florida licenses contractors to help ensure they have the education, experience, and competency needed to perform work safely and properly. Taking a few moments to verify credentials before hiring can help protect your property, your finances, and your recovery.

Learn Which Services Require a Florida License

Online: MyFloridaLicense.com/DBPR/Services-Requiring-a-DBPR-License

Verify Licenses or Report Unlicensed Activity

Online: MyFloridaLicense.com
Mobile App: DBPR Mobile App
Email Us: ULA@MyFloridaLicense.com
Call the Hotline: (866) 532-1440

Storm-Related Services that Require a Florida License

Below are some examples of common storm-related services that may or may not require a DBPR license.

Services that Require a DBPR License

- Roof repairs
- New or replacement roof
- Installing new windows
- Plumbing repairs
- Electrical repairs or rewiring

Services that Do Not Require a DBPR License

- Trimming or removing a fallen tree
- Removing debris
- Placing a tarp on a roof

This list is not intended to be comprehensive, and any additional or detailed questions should be directed to DBPR by calling (850) 487-1395. Consumers should check with their local building departments to determine if there are additional permitting and/or licensing requirements for their area.

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Where to Begin with Storm Damage

Follow these steps when making repair preparations.

Contact Your Insurance Agent

Contact your insurance agent first to verify that your insurance covers the repairs before you sign a contract.

Document the Damage

Take photos and videos of all damage before beginning cleanup or repairs. Keep receipts and records related to storm recovery expenses.

Be Cautious of Quick Repairs

Avoid making rushed decisions immediately after a storm. Take time to research contractors and understand your options before signing agreements.

Common Post-Storm Scams

Disaster Recovery Scams

After hurricanes and severe weather, individuals may go door-to-door offering quick repairs and urging you to act immediately. These situations often involve pressure to make fast decisions, requests for large upfront payments, and little or no proof of proper licensing or insurance.

Insurance / Assignment of Benefits (AOB) Scams

After property damage, a contractor may ask you to sign documents that give them control over your insurance claim. While it may seem convenient, this can lead to inflated costs, reduced oversight, and unexpected financial responsibility.

Large Payments / Disappearing Contractor

After a storm, some contractors may pressure homeowners to pay large upfront deposits before work begins. In some cases, the contractor may leave the area, delay repairs, or fail to complete the work — leaving homeowners with unfinished projects and costly setbacks.

Quick Sign Contracts

Some contractors may pressure consumers to quickly check boxes or sign documents on a phone or tablet without fully reviewing the terms. The agreements may include expensive financing terms, large payment obligations, or authorizations the consumer did not intend to approve.

Watch for These Red Flags

High-Pressure Sales Tactics
Scammers may show up unannounced, push you to "act now," or claim they're working in the neighborhood. Legitimate professionals don't pressure you into quick decisions.

Cash-Only Payments
While cash may seem convenient, scammers prefer it because it leaves no trail. Reputable contractors accept multiple forms of payment and provide receipts.

No Written Contract
Unlicensed providers often avoid written contracts to dodge accountability. A professional will document the scope of work, materials, timelines, and costs.

Suspiciously Low Bids
Extremely low prices often signal someone cutting corners—or who never intends to finish the job. Licensed professionals price work based on materials, experience, and safety requirements.

Solicit Door-to-Door
Be cautious of individuals who arrive uninvited and claim they noticed damage to your home. Always verify a contractor's license and reputation before agreeing to any work.

Large Upfront Payments
Requests for big deposits—or payment in full before work begins—are major red flags. Licensed contractors typically follow standard payment schedules and provide written agreements.

No License Number on Ads or Business Cards
Florida law requires licensed contractors to display their license number on advertisements, websites, and business materials. If you can't find it, verify it—or walk away.

Storm recovery can be stressful, but hiring the right professional doesn't have to be.

DBPR's Hire Smart website provides tools and resources to help you spot red flags, confidently hire qualified contractors, learn which services require a license and how to verify a contractor's license before you hire.

LEARN MORE: **HireSmartFL.com**

dbpr | unlicensed activity PROGRAM

Choose a Qualified Contractor

Why It Matters

Licensed contractors have met Florida's requirements for education, experience, and competency in their trade. Hiring a state-licensed contractor can help protect your investment and provide greater confidence that the work will be performed by a qualified professional.

How to Verify a License

Verify a contractor's state-issued license with DBPR before hiring and review any disciplinary actions or complaints.

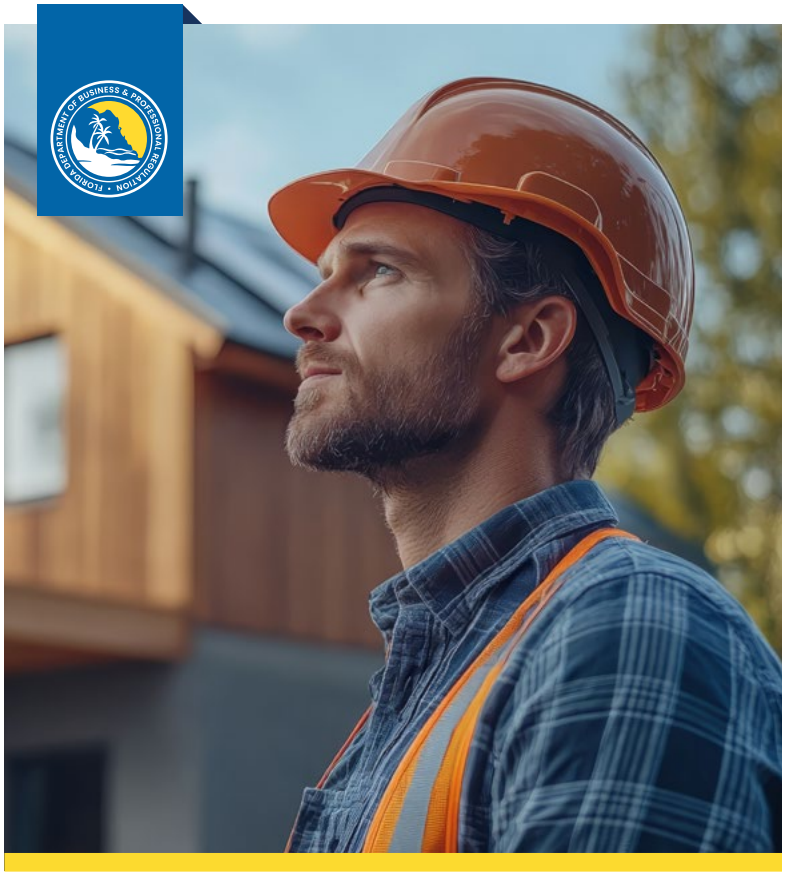
Know the Difference

Not all businesses that provide home improvement services are licensed contractors.

- An occupational license does not qualify an individual to act as a contractor.
- Being registered with the Division of Corporations as an Inc. or LLC does not qualify an individual or company to act as a contractor.
- Always verify a contractor's state-issued license before work begins.

Need More Information?

Check with your local building department for additional information about permit and licensing requirements for your project.



The Florida Disaster Contractors Network (DCN)

To help Floridians recover and rebuild after a storm, the State of Florida created the Florida Disaster Contractors Network (DCN). DBPR is a founding partner of this contractor-verified clearinghouse, which connects homeowners with Florida-licensed contractors who specialize in storm-related repairs and reconstruction.

Once it is safe to assess property damage, visit DCNOnline.org and search by county to find qualified professionals in your area. The DCN website provides a list of contractors with the following specialties:

- General contracting*
- Roofing*
- Plumbing repairs*
- Electrical work*
- Flooring and interior repairs
- Air conditioning and heating*
- Mold-related services*
- Debris removal and more

*These construction trades require a state license.

Find a Qualified Contractor Today:
DCNOnline.org

Resources

Websites

- Florida Division of Emergency Management | FloridaDisaster.org | @FLSERT
- Ready.gov | Ready.gov
- Federal Emergency Management Agency | FEMA.gov
- Florida Special Needs Registry | SNR.FLHealthResponse.com
- Better Business Bureau, Florida Hurricane Guide | BBB.org/All/Natural-Disasters/Hurricanes

Hurricane Hotlines

Disaster and Emergency Information

- If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency , call 911.
- State Assistance Information Line (SAIL) | *(800) 342-3557
- For Shelter Information | Text SHELTER and your zip code to 43362
- Florida Division of Emergency Management Updates | Text FLPREPARES to 888777
- American Red Cross | (800) 733-2767
- Florida Attorney General's Price Gouging Hotline | (866) 966-7226
- Florida Department of Financial Services Insurance Complaint Hotline | (877) 693-5236
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services | (800) 435-7352
- DBPR's Unlicensed Activity Program Hotline | (866) 532-1440
- Florida Department of Elder Affairs | (800) 963-5337
- Federal Emergency Management Agency Disaster Assistance Registration | (800) 621-3362 TTY | (800) 462-7585
- Florida Volunteer and Donations Hotline | (800) 354-3571
- Salvation Army Donations: clothing, furniture and household items | (800) 728-7825

*This number is only operational during an emergency event.

2601 Blair Stone Road
Tallahassee, FL 32399
(850) 487-1395

MyFloridaLicense.com

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