

Houston Hurricane Preparedness Guide for Homes



Houston's hurricane season (June 1–November 30) brings risks of high winds, flooding, storm surges, and power outages. Preparing your home in advance can protect your property and ensure your family's safety. This guide focuses on specific steps Houston homeowners can take to safeguard their homes.

Assess Your Home's Vulnerabilities



Flood Risk:

Houston's flat terrain and heavy rainfall make flooding a major concern. Check if your home is in a flood zone using FEMA's Flood Map Service Center (msc.fema.gov) or Harris County Flood Warning System (harriscountyfws.org).



Structural Weaknesses:

Inspect your roof, windows, doors, and garage for potential weak points.



Trees and Landscaping:

Overhanging branches or unsecured outdoor items can become hazards in high winds.



Action:

Walk your property to identify risks. Prioritize fixes before hurricane season starts.

Reinforce Your Home



Windows and Doors:

- Install storm shutters or pre-cut 5/8-inch exterior-grade plywood to board up windows.
- Reinforce glass doors with impact-resistant film or shutters.
- Ensure all entry doors have at least three hinges and a deadbolt lock with a 1-inch throw.



Roof:

- Inspect for loose or damaged shingles and repair them.
- Secure roof-to-wall connections with hurricane straps or clips (consult a contractor for installation).
- Consider a wind-resistant roof covering if replacing your roof.



Garage Doors:

- Reinforce with a bracing kit to withstand high winds.
- Replace old or single-panel garage doors with hurricane-rated models.



Outdoor Items:

- Secure or store patio furniture, grills, planters, and decorations.
- Trim trees and remove dead branches to prevent them from falling on your home.
- Anchor sheds, playsets, or other structures to the ground.

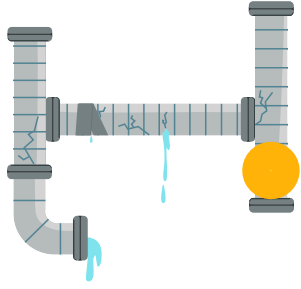


Action:

Complete structural reinforcements by early May. Hire licensed contractors for major work like roof or garage door upgrades.



Mitigate Flood Damage



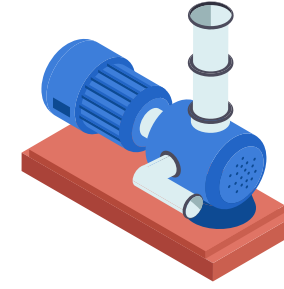
Exterior:

- Clear gutters, downspouts, and storm drains to ensure proper drainage.
- Grade your yard to slope away from the foundation, directing water away.
- Purchase sandbags (available at hardware stores or local government sites) to divert water from entry points.
- Install check valves in sewer lines to prevent backflow.



Interior:

- Elevate appliances (water heater, HVAC, washer/dryer) above flood levels (e.g., on concrete blocks).
- Store valuable items (documents, electronics, heirlooms) on upper floors or in waterproof containers.
- Consider flood barriers or temporary seals for doors and low windows.



Sump Pumps:

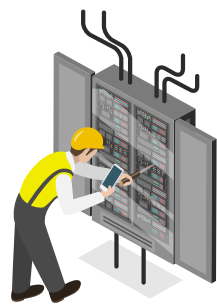
- Install a battery-powered sump pump to remove water from basements or crawl spaces.
- Test existing pumps annually and ensure backup batteries are charged.



Action:

Implement flood protections before June 1. Check drainage systems after heavy rain to ensure they're working.

Secure Utilities and Power



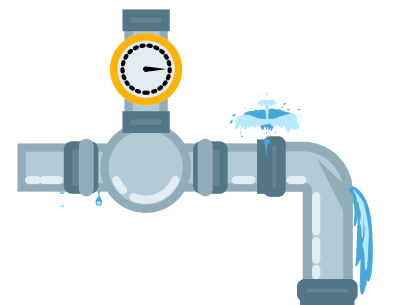
Electrical Systems:

- Elevate electrical panels, outlets, and wiring above flood levels (consult an electrician).
- Turn off electricity at the main breaker if flooding is imminent or evacuation is ordered.



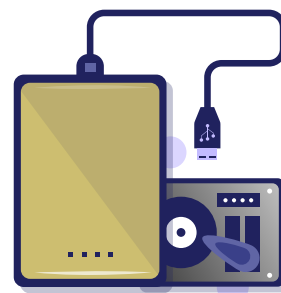
Gas:

- Know how to shut off your gas line (use a wrench to turn the valve).
- Turn off gas if you evacuate or smell a leak (hiss or rotten egg odor).



Water:

- Shut off the main water valve if flooding is expected to prevent contamination.
- Fill bathtubs and containers with clean water for emergency use (1 gallon per person per day).



Backup Power:

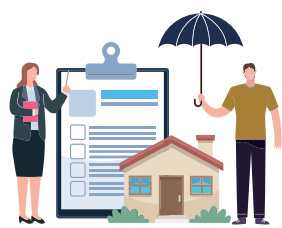
- Consider a portable generator for power outages. Use it outdoors only, at least 20 feet from windows, to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Stock extra fuel in approved containers, stored safely away from your home.
- Install a whole-home generator for critical systems (consult a professional for installation).



Action:

Learn how to safely shut off utilities. Purchase and test a generator before hurricane season.

Review Insurance Coverage



Homeowner's Insurance:

- Confirm your policy covers wind and hail damage. Note that standard policies do not cover flooding.
- Review deductibles, especially hurricane-specific ones (often 1–5% of home value).



Flood Insurance:

- Purchase flood insurance through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) or private insurers ([floodsmart.gov](https://www.floodsmart.gov)).
- Policies take 30 days to take effect, so buy early.
- Consider coverage for contents, not just the structure.



Document Your Property:

- Take photos or videos of your home's interior and exterior, including furniture, appliances, and valuables.
- Store digital copies in the cloud or a waterproof container off-site.



Action:

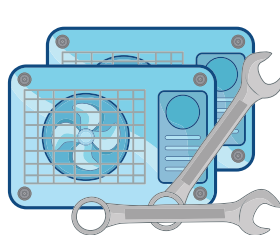
Contact your insurance agent by May to verify coverage and add flood insurance if needed. Update your home inventory annually.

Prepare for Power Outages



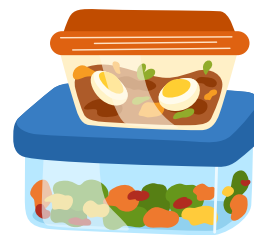
Lighting:

Stock flashlights, headlamps, and extra batteries. Avoid candles due to fire risk.



Cooling:

- Have battery-powered fans or portable cooling units for hot weather.
- Seal windows and doors to retain cool air during outages.



Food Preservation:

- Keep a cooler and ice packs to store perishable food.
- Freeze water bottles to maintain refrigerator temperature during outages.



Communication:

- Charge phones and portable chargers in advance.
- Have a battery-powered or hand-crank NOAA Weather Radio for updates.



Action:

Store outage supplies in an accessible, waterproof container. Check batteries and chargers before June.

Plan for Post-Storm Recovery



Cleanup Supplies:

- Stock gloves, trash bags, tarps, duct tape, and tools for minor repairs.
- Have bleach and cleaning supplies for mold prevention if flooding occurs.



Repairs:

- Identify licensed contractors in advance for post-storm repairs (avoid scams by checking credentials).
- Keep receipts for repairs and temporary living expenses for insurance claims.



Mold Prevention:

- Dry out your home within 24–48 hours after flooding (use fans, dehumidifiers).
- Remove wet carpets, drywall, or insulation to prevent mold growth.



Action:

Create a list of trusted contractors and store cleanup supplies in a dry location.

Stay Informed



Monitor Conditions:

- Follow the National Weather Service ([weather.gov](https://www.weather.gov)) or Houston OEM (houstonoem.org) for updates.
- Download apps like FEMA or AccuWeather for real-time alerts.



Local Alerts:

- Sign up for Harris County emergency alerts (alert.harriscountytexas.gov).
- Enable Wireless Emergency Alerts on your phone.



Evacuation Orders:

- Know your evacuation zone (houstonoem.org).
- Follow orders if authorities recommend leaving, especially in flood-prone areas.



Action:

Test your alert systems and ensure all household members know where to find updates

Key Tips



Start preparations in May to avoid last-minute rushes.



Check all systems and supplies annually before hurricane season.



Coordinate with neighbors to share resources or assist vulnerable residents.



If you evacuate, turn off utilities, secure your home, and take your emergency kit.

By taking these steps, you can protect your Houston home from hurricane damage and ensure your family's safety during a storm. For more resources, [visit houstonoem.org](https://houstonoem.org) or ready.gov/hurricanes.

If you need help with specific home preparations (e.g., flood-proofing techniques or contractor recommendations), let me know!