

# PINELLAS COUNTY HURRICANE GUIDE

- Three hurricanes impacted Pinellas County in 2024: Debby, Helene and Milton.
- The county was damaged by historic storm surge, flooding and wind. Fourteen people lost their lives.
- The county was devastated. And yet ...

**NONE OF THE HURRICANES MADE A DIRECT HIT ON PINELLAS COUNTY**



# READY 6 SET 6 PROTECT

For more information, visit [disaster.pinellas.gov](https://disaster.pinellas.gov)

# The time is now to learn about your risks, make a plan, and be ready to take action in time to be safe

This Hurricane Guide will help you prepare and know what to expect before, during and after a hurricane.



## READY: WE ARE AT RISK

Storm impacts can extend far outside of the forecast cone. Know what actions to take based on your risks.

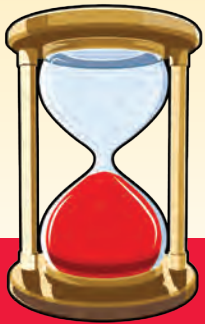
Page 3 ..... Impacts  
Page 4 ..... Storm surge  
Page 5 ..... Flood  
Page 6 ..... Wind  
Page 7 ..... High-risk locations  
Page 8 ..... People and pets



## SET: ACTIONS TO TAKE

As the storm moves closer and Pinellas County is forecast to have impacts, it is time to get set. This is the time to make critical decisions and act.

Page 9 ..... Shelter options  
Page 10 ..... Picture the threat  
Page 11 ..... Get out of the zone  
Page 12 ..... Know when to go  
Page 13 ..... Secure your home  
Page 14 ..... Take action



## PROTECT: CONDITIONS ARE UNSAFE

It is not safe to move around during or immediately after a storm.

Page 15 ..... During the storm  
Page 16 ..... After the hurricane  
Page 17 ..... Stay safe  
Page 18 ..... Cleanup and repairs  
Page 19 ..... Basic emergency supplies  
Page 20 ..... Stay informed

Visit [disaster.pinellas.gov](https://disaster.pinellas.gov) for more information on how to prepare.

### Newspaper in Education

The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education program (NIE) is a cooperative effort between schools and the Times Publishing Co. to encourage the use of newspapers in print and electronic form as educational resources — a “living textbook.”

Our educational resources fall into the category of informational text, a type of nonfiction text. The primary purpose of informational text is to convey information about the natural or social world. NIE serves educators, students and families by providing schools with class sets of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Tampa Bay Times plus award-winning original educational publications, teacher guides, lesson plans, educator workshops and many more resources — all at no cost to schools, teachers or families.

In 2023-2024, NIE provided almost 10 million e-Newspaper



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NIE is a member of Florida Press Educational Services (FPES), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization of Florida newspaper professionals whose mission is to promote reading and critical thinking, particularly for young people.

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### Florida Standards

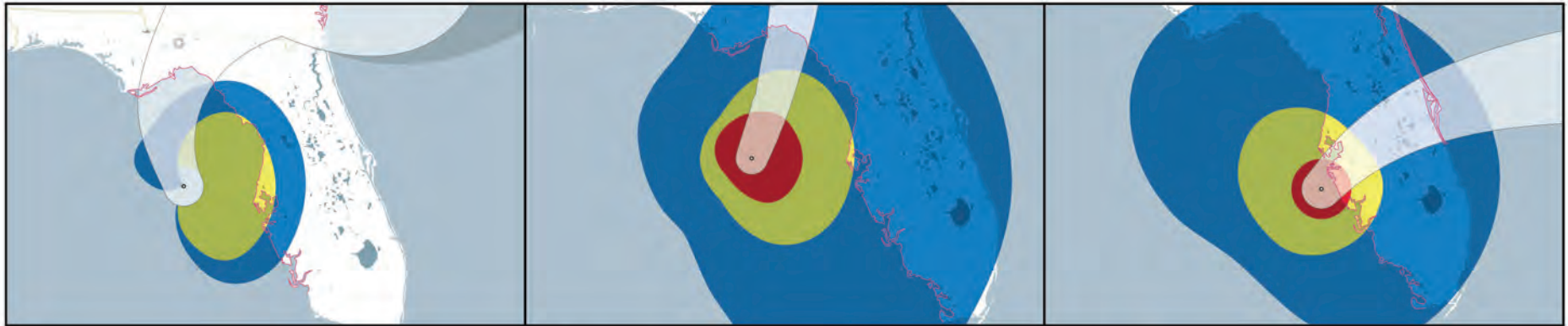
This publication and the activities focus on the following Florida Standards for middle school students: **BEST:** ELA.68.EE.1.1; ELA.68.EE.2.1; ELA.68.EE.3.1; ELA.68.EE.4.1; ELA.68.EE.5.1; ELA.68.EE.6.1; ELA.68.F.2.1; ELA.68.F.2.2; ELA.68.F.2.4; ELA.6.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.1.5; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.C.5.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; ELA.68.R.2.4; ELA.68.R.3.2; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3 **Science:** SC.68.N.1.1; SC.68.N.1.3; SC.68.N.1.6; SC.68.N.3.2; SC.68.P.10.1; SC.68.P.10.2; SC.68.E.6.2; SC.68.E.7.1; SC.68.E.7.3; SC.68.E.7.5; SC.68.E.7.7; SC.68.E.7.8; SC.68.P.11.2; SC.68.P.9.1; SC.68.P.10.1; SC.5.68.10.3; SC.5.68.10.4; SC.68.CS-PC.2.1 **Social Studies:** SS.7.CG.2.10; SS.7.CG.3.13; SS.8.E.2.2

Tell us what you think about the Hurricane Guide! Go to [pinellas.gov/GuideSurvey](https://pinellas.gov/GuideSurvey) or use the QR code to take a quick survey.








# LESSONS LEARNED from Hurricane Season 2024



Surge Warning: 

Sustained Wind Speed:  39+ mph  58+ mph  74+ mph

## HURRICANE DEBBY

- Strong tropical storm as it passed 77 miles offshore.
- Winds of 45 mph; gusts up to 60 mph.
- Rainfall 8-10 inches in areas of the county.
- 2 - 3 feet of storm surge.
- 49 businesses impacted.
- 330 homes damaged.

### LESSON LEARNED

No matter the location or size of the storm, high winds, flooding, surge and rainfall can cause impacts.

## HURRICANE HELENE

- Category 3 as it passed 105 miles offshore.
- Winds of over 80 mph.
- 5 - 7 feet of storm surge.
- Over 50% of Pinellas County lost power.
- Hundreds of water rescues in evacuation zones.
- 12 deaths.
- 689 businesses impacted.
- 33,566 homes damaged.

### LESSON LEARNED

Evacuations need to be completed before storm impacts begin. Surge rises fast and people who should have evacuated put themselves in a life-threatening situation when they did not follow an evacuation order.

## HURRICANE MILTON

- Category 3 as it made landfall 28 miles to the south of Pinellas County.
- Rainfall over 18 inches.
- Wind gusts of over 100 mph toppled many trees that brought down power lines and broke underground water, cable and fiber optic lines.
- Over 80% of Pinellas County lost power.
- 2 deaths.
- 430 businesses impacted.
- 12,832 homes damaged.

### LESSON LEARNED

Hurricane impacts are not just coastal. Know your risk for surge, wind and flooding from heavy rains.

**Everyone needs to be prepared to survive a hurricane, no matter where they live.**

**Listen carefully to the forecast: No two storms are the same.**

**Storms that move north, parallel to the coast, like hurricanes Debby and Helene, can place Pinellas on the “dirty” side of the storms, causing storm surge, rain and wind, even if it doesn’t make landfall here.**

**Milton made landfall only 28 miles to the south. This short distance caused 10 feet of storm surge in Sarasota while Pinellas was spared.**

### KIDS ACTIVITY

#### DODGING DISASTERS

Check out the Disaster Dodgers videos to learn how to be prepared. This video – <https://youtu.be/TbzvomQYJpE> – teaches young people the difference between a disaster, emergency and

hazard. Kids will also learn what types of emergencies to prepare for and what to do to prepare for them. Watch the video series and then write down the main points the Dodgers share. Using the cartoons in the Tampa Bay Times as models, create a cartoon based on the information you have learned in the video.

**Florida Standards:** ELA.68.EE.1; ELA.68.EE.2; ELA.68.EE.3; ELA.68.EE.4; ELA.68.R.2.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; ELA.68.R.2.4; ELA.68.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.C.5.1; ELA.68.F.1.3; ELA.68.F.1.4; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3; SC.6.E.7.8



# Storm Surge

- Storm surge is when water is rapidly pushed onto land.
- It can range from a few feet to over 20 feet.
- It impacts coastal areas first, then moves farther inland.
- It is fast-moving and fast-rising.
- It can destroy homes and wash out roads.
- Surge is life-threatening.
- The only way to protect yourself from storm surge is to evacuate.

Evacuation zones are based on storm surge risk. This map shows the areas where storm surge could occur. **See more about storm surge, page 10.**

## KNOW YOUR ZONE

There are several ways to find out if you live in an evacuation zone:

- [disaster.pinellas.gov](https://disaster.pinellas.gov)
- Ready Pinellas mobile app (Android, iOS)
- 727-464-3800

## ✓ REALITY CHECK

**MYTH:** "I can wait until I see how bad the weather gets before deciding if I will evacuate."

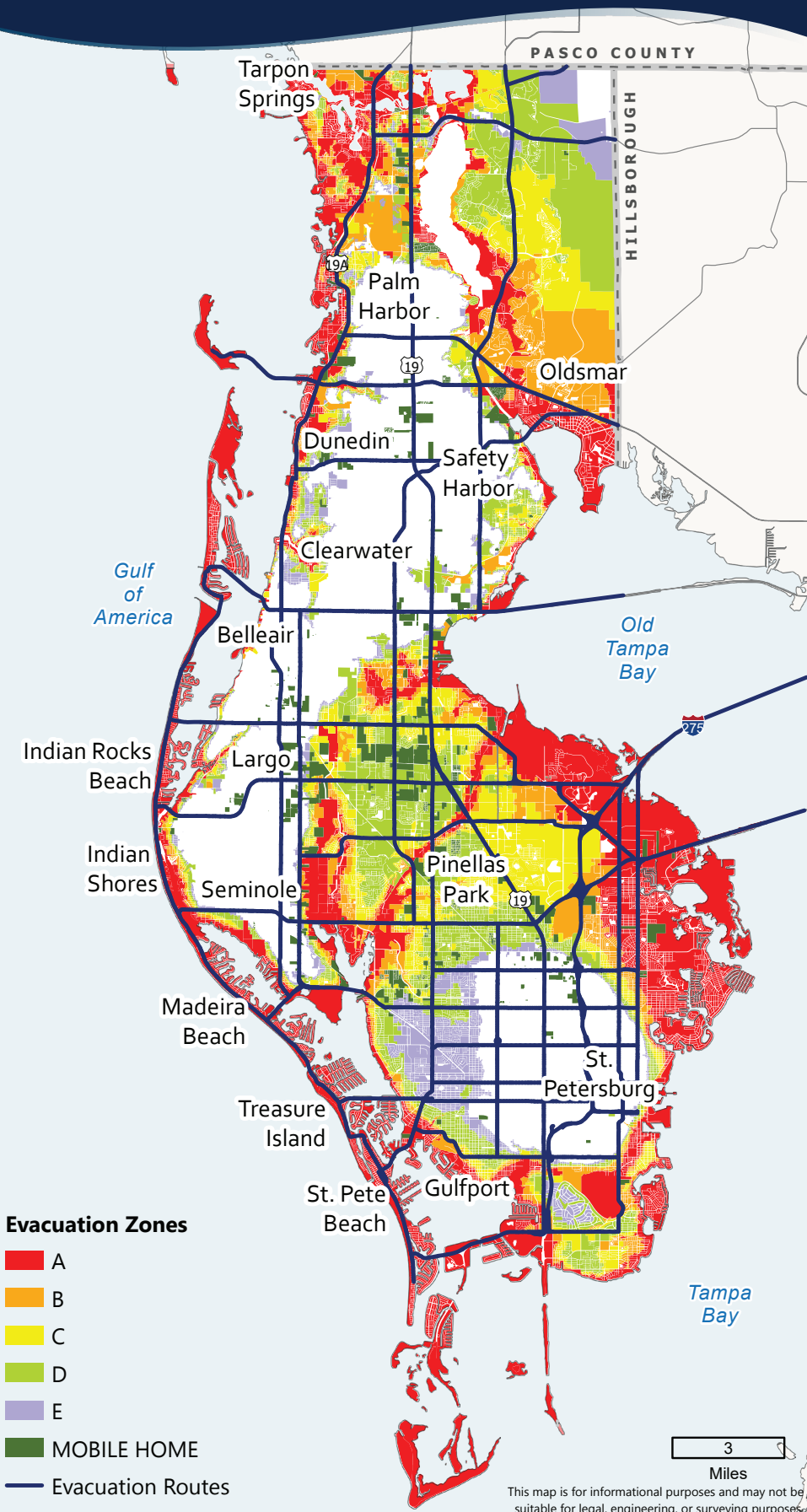
**REALITY:** Weather conditions will rapidly deteriorate as the storm approaches. Roads could be flooded; winds could be high and unsafe to travel in. Buses will no longer be running and first responders may need to cease operations. You will be on your own. Don't wait; it will be too late.

## TIMING

You need to be out of the evacuation areas before winds and/or storm surge arrive.



## Evacuation Zones



This map is for informational purposes and may not be suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes.





Floodwaters surround an apartment complex during Hurricane Milton, which caused flooding well inland from coastal areas.

## Flood

Flooding can happen anywhere in Pinellas County. A lot of rain can fall in a short amount of time, causing localized flooding, sometimes outside of areas people expect:

### Who could be at risk of flooding?

- **People living near water:** Homes closer to lakes, rivers or bays are more likely to flood.
- **People living in areas with low elevation:** Homes on lower-

elevation properties are more likely to flood than homes on higher ground.

- **People living in areas with poor drainage:** Drains that have not been cleared of debris can cause flooding.
- To determine your risk of flooding, visit [floodmaps.pinellas.gov](https://floodmaps.pinellas.gov). Click on My Flood Risk, enter address, and click on pin to see information about your property, including your flood risk.



A flood barrier could not protect this home from surge. Times photo

## ACTIONS

### Have a plan to protect the items in your home

- Elevate valuables and furniture in your home.
- Place important documents in waterproof containers.
- Move your car to higher ground.
- Before a storm, check storm drains near your home and remove any loose leaves or items that may block drainage.
- Sandbags or other flood barriers may help keep some water out of your home, but not large amounts of rain and storm surge.
- If flooding is expected, sandbags may be offered. Check with your city. If you live in an unincorporated area of Pinellas County, check the website [pinellas.gov/sandbags](https://pinellas.gov/sandbags).

### ✓ REALITY CHECK

**MYTH:** My property has a low risk of flooding, so I don't need flood insurance.

### REALITY:

- 25% of all flood insurance claims come from moderate- to low-risk areas. You don't have to live in a high-risk zone to be affected by flooding.
- Just 1 inch of water can cause more than \$25,000 in damage to a home.
- No matter what your risk is, it's a wise decision to buy flood insurance.
- Consult an insurance professional to discuss the options for your property.





# Wind



- Winds from a hurricane can extend out for hundreds of miles beyond the center.
- Winds can range from gusts to continuous hurricane-force speeds.
- Winds can last from a few hours to more than 24 hours.

## In Pinellas County in 2024:

- Winds reached **101 mph during Hurricane Milton**, causing roof damage, downed trees and widespread power, cable, internet and water outages.

## Pruning trees can reduce wind damage and help protect you and your home

### ACTIONS

- Remove branches that can fall on people, cars or houses.
- If you can't see through the tree, remove some interior branches to allow wind to go through.
- Shorten branches that are too long, and remove or shorten branches with cracks.
- For palms, remove brown, broken or dead fronds, but leave green fronds intact.
- See [bit.ly/tree-prep](https://bit.ly/tree-prep)

# Tornadoes

- It is common for tornadoes to form during hurricanes.
- Tornadoes can impact areas that are far from the the eye of the hurricane.
- The potential for damage and loss of life grows stronger as the wind increases.
- 94% of all Florida tornado fatalities are associated with tornadoes that have a wind speed of 111 mph or more.

## Prepare a safe place in your home in case of tornadoes

Choose an interior room without windows and have a helmet, mattress or other object to protect your head.

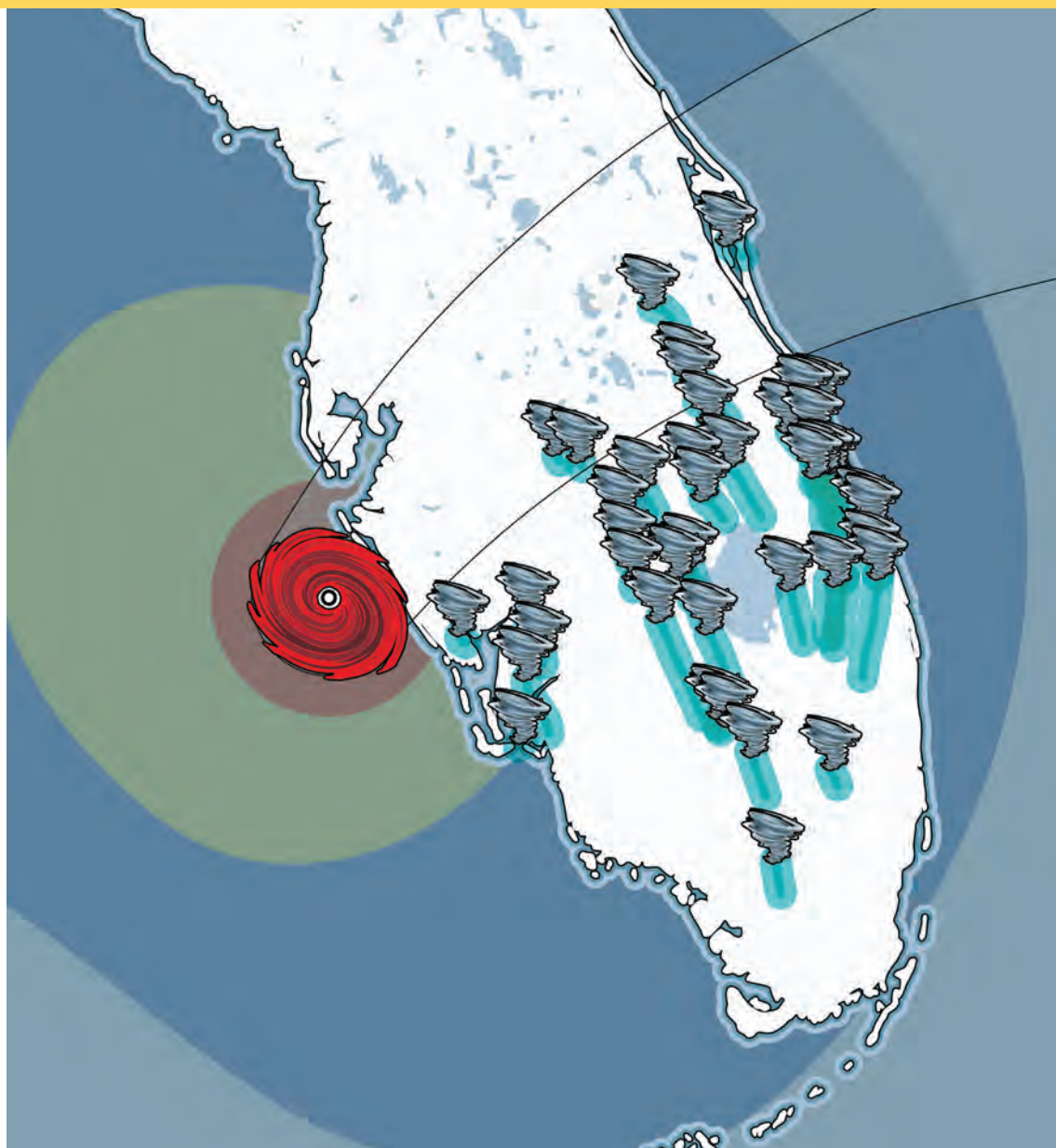
Know if your home is strong enough to stay in.

### Consider:

- The year it was built.
- The materials it was built with.
- The year the roof was replaced.
- Whether you have hurricane-impact windows and/or coverings for windows and doors.

See details about your property on the Pinellas County Property Appraiser website at [pcpao.gov](https://pcpao.gov).

Watch videos on how you can protect your home at [flash.org/peril/hurricane](https://flash.org/peril/hurricane).

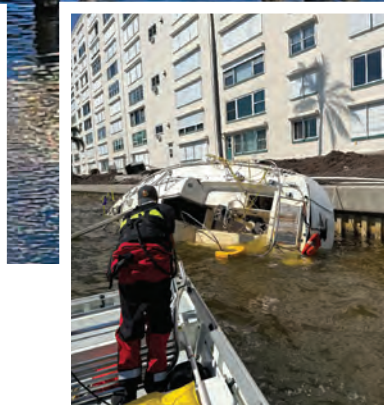
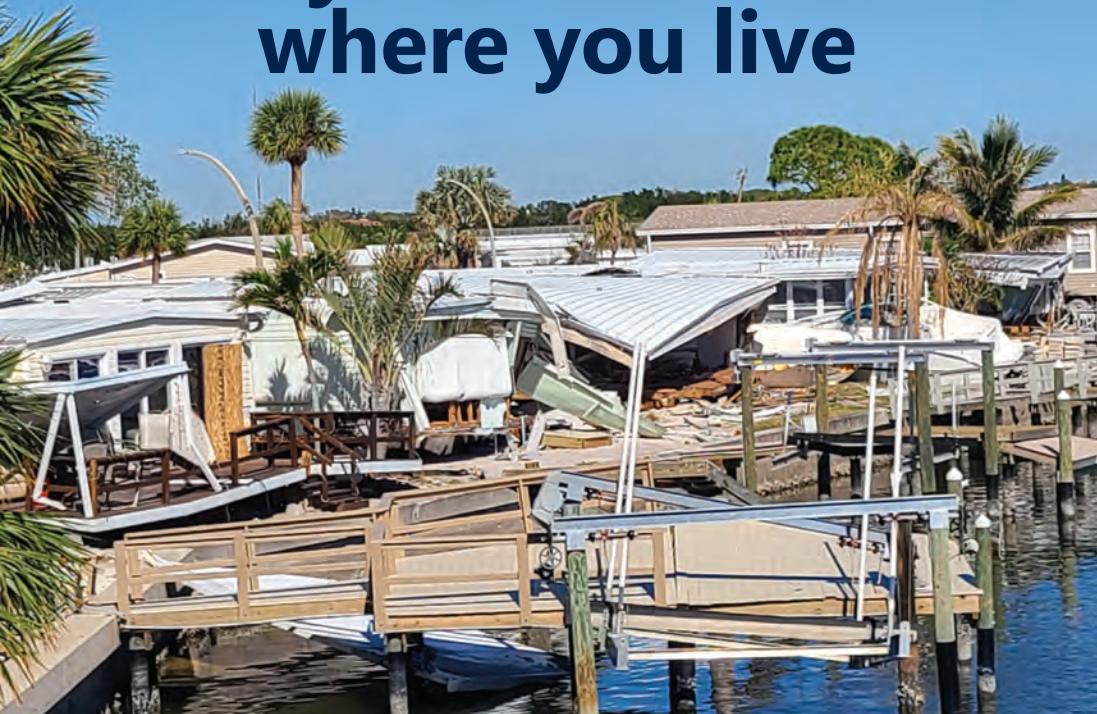


During Hurricane Milton, 27 of the 46 tornadoes that touched down in Florida had winds of 111 mph or greater.





# Know your risk based on where you live



Above: A mobile home community in the Bay Pines area is hard hit by storm surge.  
Left: A beachfront condominium sustains damages from the storm surge of Hurricane Helene. Right: A boat in Gulfport is overturned during Hurricane Debby.

## ✓ REALITY CHECK

**MYTH:** "I live in a condo on the barrier islands and live above the third floor; I don't need to evacuate."

**REALITY:** Condos in evacuation zones are at risk for storm surge flooding and high winds that can cause damage

to the structure and compromise the overall structural integrity of the building. Elevators, water pressure and fire suppression systems may be affected. Electric vehicles in parking garages under buildings can catch fire if they are exposed to salt water.

When conditions worsen, first responders may not be able to get to you if you call 911.

## Mobile home communities and travel trailers

- Extremely vulnerable to high winds.
- You are in Evacuation Zone A and must always evacuate when an evacuation order is given, no matter where in Pinellas County you are located.
- This includes recreational vehicles (RVs), manufactured homes and state or federal travel trailers.
- Clubhouses may not be safe from hurricanes or tornadoes.

## Barrier islands

- You are in Evacuation Zone A and must always evacuate when an evacuation order is given.
- You bear the brunt of the powerful life-threatening storm surge that rushes onshore.
- Once conditions become dangerous, access to the barrier islands will be cut off.
- Your vehicle may be flooded. Electric vehicles, electric tools, e-bikes and golf carts can catch fire after being exposed to salt water.
- Emergency Access Permits will be required to re-enter the evacuated area. Apply online at [pinellassheriff.gov/EmergencyAccessPermit](https://pinellassheriff.gov/EmergencyAccessPermit) or ask your city hall.

## Close to water and low-lying areas

- If you are near a lake, bay, creek, canal or other body of water, you have a greater chance of flooding.
- If your area quickly floods in a heavy rain, you may flood during a hurricane.

## Boats

- Never try to ride out a hurricane on your boat.
- Docks, lifts, moorings and anchors can fail.
- Boats can get tossed into bridges, seawalls or yards, and be damaged or completely destroyed.
- The boat can overturn while you are on it.



READY: HIGH-RISK LOCATIONS







# Plan Ahead For Everyone

## Special needs/electric dependent

- If you are dependent on electricity for life-sustaining medical equipment, such as a CPAP or oxygen machine, you will need a generator for when you lose power.
- Pinellas County offers special needs shelters that have generators to support power-dependent medical equipment.

## Eligibility for special needs shelters

Residents of all ages who have minimal medical needs or who require transportation assistance may be eligible for the program. Some examples include:

- Requiring assistance with routine care and medications.
- Dependent on oxygen or electricity for medical equipment.
- Requiring assistance with walking or getting out of bed.
- Requiring transportation assistance.

## Ways to register

- Ask your home health care provider.
- Register online at [pinellas.gov/SpecialNeeds](http://pinellas.gov/SpecialNeeds).
- Request a form. Call Pinellas County Emergency Management at **727-464-3800**.

## Pets

If you are ordered to evacuate, never stay at your home because of your pets.

- Evacuate and take them with you.
- If you stay, you will be putting yourself and your pets in a potentially life-threatening situation. Note: You need a crate for each pet.
- Pinellas County has multiple pet-friendly shelters. To find a list of open shelters before a storm, visit [disaster.pinellas.gov](http://disaster.pinellas.gov).
- Reach out to friends who live in a non-evacuation area to see if they can take your pets during the storm.
- Look for pet-friendly accommodations.

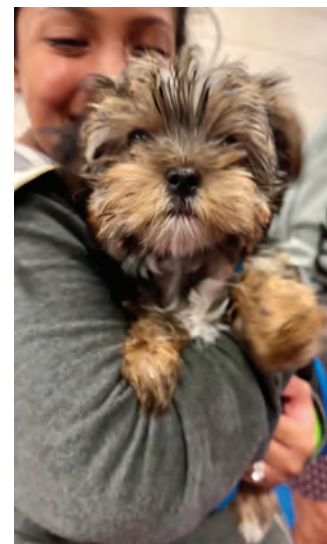
## If you are going to a special needs shelter

- Pets are not allowed at special needs shelters.
- Service animals are allowed.
- Make a plan for the care of your pet.
- Specify if you have a pet when you register.
- As a last resort, Pinellas County Animal Services will care for your cat or dog at a separate animal shelter during the storm.
- Pets with chronic medical conditions cannot be cared for at the animal shelter.

Do not wait until an emergency to register for the program. You may not be picked up if you register too late.

- Build an emergency kit. **See basic emergency supplies, page 19.**

## ACTIONS



*This guest of a pet-friendly shelter at Palm Harbor University High School gets comfortable during evacuation.*



*Special needs shelters are available during evacuations.*

## Check on neighbors to offer your help with planning, preparations and evacuations.

### KIDS ACTIVITY

## SAFEGUARDING YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS

This publication and the Tampa Bay Times are good sources of information about hurricane safety and preparedness. The Pinellas County Emergency Management team reminds you that, if you are ordered to evacuate, never stay at home because of your pets. People should evacuate and take their

pets with them to avoid putting themselves and their pets in a potentially life-threatening situation. With your class, brainstorm a list of items people will need if evacuation becomes necessary. Using this publication and the Tampa Bay Times, look for items to add to your list. Print or cut out any articles and advertisements you find and paste them on a piece of paper to be handy with other checklists you have created. Checklists are a good way to make sure you and your family have everything you need to be prepared. Be as specific as possible. For example, how many people live in your home?

How many flashlights do you need? What size batteries and how many batteries do you need? How many pet carriers, leashes and food bowls do you need?

**Florida Standards:** SC.6.E.7.8; SC.68.N.1.1; ELA.68.EE.1; ELA.68.EE.2; ELA.68.EE.3; ELA.68.EE.4; ELA.68.R.2.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; ELA.68.R.2.4; ELA.68.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.C.5.1; ELA.68.F.1.3; ELA.68.F.1.4; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3; SC.6.E.7.8





# Public Shelters

If you need somewhere safe to stay during a hurricane, you can go to one of Pinellas County's public shelters. When an evacuation is called, officials will announce which shelters are opening, and they will be posted on **disaster.pinellas.gov**.

## What to expect at public shelters

- Shelters are outside of the evacuation zones. They are safe from storm surge and meet Florida building codes.
- They provide basic food and water.
- Special dietary foods are not provided. You can bring your own food.

## How to get there

- Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) provides free transportation to public shelters.
- Regular routes will be affected. Monitor updates at **psta.net** or the Transit app.
- Pets are allowed on the bus: cats and small dogs in a crate; large dogs on a muzzle leash.
- Service will stop several hours before conditions become dangerous.
- If you plan on using a service like a taxi, Uber or Lyft, make arrangements early.

## TIMING

Stay informed and know when dangerous winds are expected to arrive.



- Evacuation might take more time than you expect.
- Buses used for evacuations will stop running several hours before dangerous winds start.
- Emergency response vehicles will stop running when conditions are no longer safe due to wind.



# SET: SHELTER OPTIONS

## Pinellas County has three types of shelters



### General population shelters

- Open to all individuals in Pinellas. Identification or other type of documentation is not required.
- There are no generators. Power may go out.
- There are no cots, chairs or bedding provided.
- Service animals are welcome at all public shelters.

#### What to bring

- Air mattress, cot, padding and blankets/pillow.
- Clothing for a few days.
- Medical items (medication, adult diapers, bandages, etc.).
- Specialty food items (for dietary issues or to supplement limited shelter food).
- Refillable water bottle.
- **See basic emergency supplies, page 19.**



### Special needs shelters

- For those who are dependent on oxygen or electricity for medical equipment or who need minimal medical assistance.
- Cots are not available for everyone. There are no chairs, air mattresses or bedding provided.
- Pets are not permitted. Pinellas County Animal Services will care for them.
- Service animals are welcome at all public shelters.

#### What to bring

- Everything that is needed in a general population shelter.
- Any medical items you need for day-to-day living.
- Wheelchair, walker, cane, etc.
- Oxygen supplies.
- Written medical orders, doctors' contact information.
- Caretaker and supplies for them.
- **See basic emergency supplies, page 19.**



### Pet-friendly shelters

- Dogs and cats are kept in a separate location from owners, in a crate or carrier.
- Crates and carriers must be provided by the owner.
- The owner must be staying in the shelter to feed and walk their pet.
- Pre-registration is not required.

#### What to bring

- Everything that is needed in a general population shelter.
- A crate for each pet.
- Enough food for two weeks.
- Vaccine records.
- **See basic emergency supplies list, page 19.**

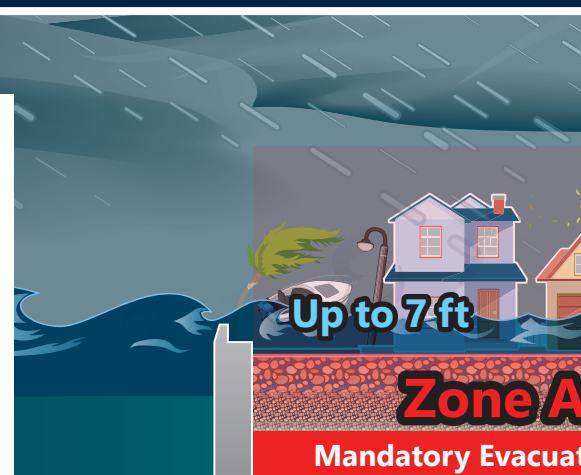




# If the weather forecast says surge height could be...

## 5-7 feet

- Roads are flooded; cars are flooded in coastal and low-lying areas.
- Fast-moving storm surge may enter homes, with water above electrical outlets. This can cause fires.
- Life-threatening conditions from storm surge.
- **Mandatory evacuation zone: Zone A**



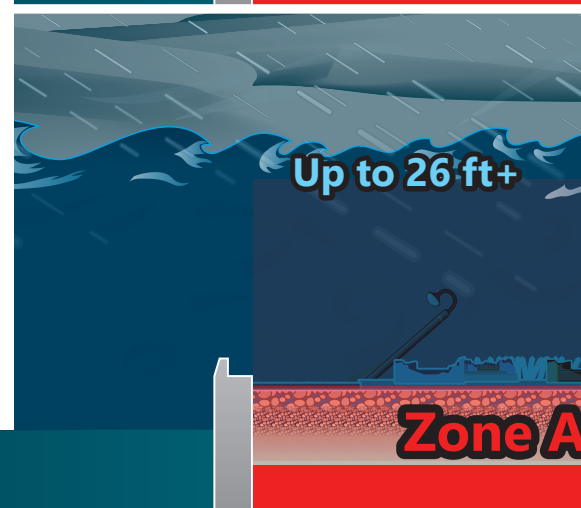
## 12-15 feet

- Storm surge is up to house rooflines in Evacuation Zones A and B.
- Homes can be moved from their foundations.
- You are not likely to survive this.
- **Mandatory evacuation zone: Zones A, B and C**



## 26+ feet

- Homes in Zones A and B may be swept off their foundations.
- Catastrophic damage along the coast.
- Extensive flooding in all zones: inside homes, cars, on roads.
- You are not likely to survive this.
- **Mandatory evacuation zone: Zones A, B, C, D and E**



SET: PICTURE THE THREAT



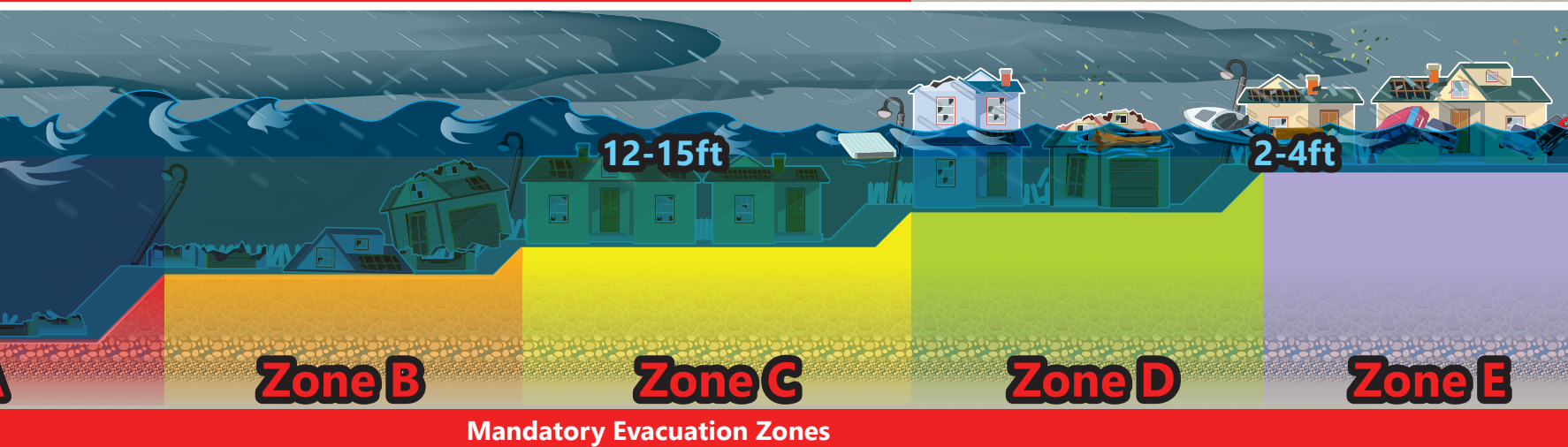


## Wind will affect the entire county.

- Mobile home residents must evacuate due to winds for all categories of hurricanes.
- Residents who rely on electricity for life-sustaining medical equipment must have a plan for backup power.



SET: GET OUT OF THE ZONE





# SHOULD I **STAY** or SHOULD I **GO**?

Use this tool to see if and when you would have to evacuate.

SET: KNOW WHEN TO GO





# Secure your home



## SET: SECURE YOUR HOME

### House

- Shut all doors.
- Shutter windows/doors.
- Lower/remove awnings.
- Elevate belongings.
- Place flood barriers/sandbags for minimal flooding from rain.
- Before you leave, shut off power and/or breakers.

### Garage

- Reinforce doors with brace kit or use long steel or aluminum bars.
- Place flood barriers against the bottom of the door(s) to seal the gap.
- Lock the door.
- Elevate battery-powered tools in the garage/shed.

### Boat

- Store your boat on land and secure to trailer.
- Secure loose items.
- Disconnect electric, water, fuel, other dock connections.
- See boat preparedness guidelines, [pinellas.gov/boatprep](http://pinellas.gov/boatprep).

### Yard

- Take all yard items inside.
- Clear balconies, steps and porches.
- Pick up/secure loose debris.
- Super-chlorinate your pool.
- Remove debris from your gutters and nearby storm drains if possible.

### Vehicles

- Place emergency supplies in the trunk.
- Move to a higher location if you expect flooding, especially for electric vehicles.

### If you don't have to evacuate

- Invite others who have to evacuate to stay with you.
- Prepare a safe room to stay in.



### ACTIONS

- Take photos of home.
- Get your supplies ready.
- Get your plans set to secure your home and protect your family.
- Monitor the news for evacuation orders.
- Charge all devices.
- Get set for the hurricane by sheltering outside of the evacuation zone.

### KIDS ACTIVITY

### CHALLENGING YOUR CLASSMATES

Pinellas County Emergency Management partners with the whole community to prepare for disasters, plan emergency response and work toward recovery for all of Pinellas County. Learn more about what the Emergency Management team does by researching them on their website, [pinellas.gov/departments/emergency-management](http://pinellas.gov/departments/emergency-management). In a small group, brainstorm the main points you and your classmates find

about the Emergency Management department. What are the department's main goals for preparing individuals for storms? Next, read through the classified ads in the Tampa Bay Times and compete with classmates to see who can identify the most businesses and services that might be of use to a community that has experienced any of the following disasters: tornadoes, hurricanes or floods. For example, you might select a business that sells items that would be important to residents to prepare for a hurricane. Or, you may find an ad for a disc jockey (DJ) who could entertain the volunteer workers and residents of a tent city set up to house those who lost their

homes as a result of a major hurricane. Think outside the box, be creative, and be prepared to explain your selections. Create a poster letting everyone know what services are available. Share what you have learned with your other classmates.

**Florida Standards:** SC.6.E.7.8; ELA.68.EE.1.1; ELA.68.EE.2.1; ELA.68.EE.3.1; ELA.68.EE.4.1; ELA.68.EE.5.1; ELA.68.EE.6.1; ELA.68.F.2.1; ELA.68.F.2.2; ELA.68.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.1.5; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.C.5.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3; SC.6.E.7.8





# Time is the one resource you cannot get more of.

Evacuations are ordered to protect people from storm surge flooding. Pinellas County ordered a mandatory Zone A and mobile home evacuation during Hurricane Helene in September 2024. Nearly 7 feet of storm surge impacted Pinellas County during Hurricane Helene and more than 29,700 homes in the county were flooded.

- **Within two days during Hurricane Helene, there were 13,000 calls to 911.**
- **Hundreds of people were rescued.**
- **There were 1,391 calls from residents with flood water coming into their homes.**
- **Tragically, 12 people drowned.**



## When a storm is threatening the area

- Connect with your host home or anyone who will be evacuating to your home.
- Identify where you will move your vehicle before the storm.
- Get cash and gather important documents and valuables.
- Once a State of Emergency is declared, residents can refill prescriptions early for up to a 30-day supply of medicine.
- **See how to secure your home, page 13.**
- Get your emergency kit ready. **See basic emergency supplies, page 19.**
- If you are registered for special needs transportation, expect a call from Pinellas County about assistance.
- Visit St. Pete-Clearwater posts information about available lodgings at **visitstpeteclearwater.com**.
- Know your evacuation zone and be prepared for an evacuation order to be issued at any time. **See evacuation zone map, page 4.**

## When an evacuation order is issued

- Complete final preparations to secure your home.
- Evacuate if ordered to do so.
- Monitor for shelter openings.
- Be ready to leave if you are registered for special needs transportation. You will be picked up during this time.
- If your plan is to travel out of the area, leave as early as possible.
- Use the 511 app or **fl511.com** for traffic updates.
- Turn off your utilities if you are leaving your home.
- Get updated emergency information at **disaster.pinellas.gov**. **See stay informed, page 20.**



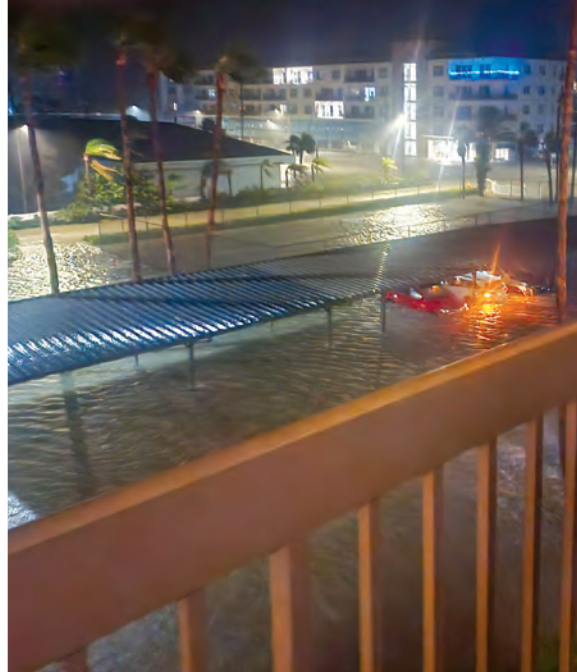
SET: TAKE ACTION







Water rises in a home on the barrier islands.



Storm surge floods a condominium parking lot.



A fire breaks out in a home during Hurricane Helene.

## When time has run out

It's no longer safe to leave; it's time to shelter in place.

### If your home is being damaged by strong winds/tornadoes:

- Close interior door(s) to reduce pressure in your home.
- Go to a safe room: an interior room, closet or hallway away from windows on the lowest level of your home.
- Lie on the floor under a table or other sturdy object, or in a bathtub, if you cannot make it to a safe room.
- Curl up and cover your head with a mattress, helmet or other protective item.
- Do not leave your safe room until you are sure the storm has completely passed.
- It will seem calm as the center, or eye, of the storm passes. Be ready for severe weather to return once the eye passes.

### If flood water is rising in your home:

- Stay inside.
- Before you lose power, report your location to an emergency contact who is out of the area so they can help first responders locate you after the storm.
- Shut off water, gas service and electricity if possible.
- Move to the second floor or higher if needed.
- Stand on top of a counter or substantial piece of furniture to stay above the rising water.
- As a last resort, break a hole in your roof with an axe and climb onto the roof.

**Wait until the storm has passed to tend to any damage.**

### KIDS ACTIVITY

#### TAKING ACTION FOLLOWING A HURRICANE

In the days that follow a hurricane, expect normal services to be disrupted. What type of services do you think would be affected after a major storm? Using this publication and the Tampa Bay Times as resources, make a list of all the services that could be

affected after a hurricane. Using your list as a resource and the letters to the editor in the Times as models, write a letter to the editor of the Times or your school newspaper letting people in your community know how they can be prepared after a storm if these services are unavailable. In your letter, encourage people to sign up to receive text messages from Alert Pinellas so that they can be notified of resources that become available. Share your letter with your class.

**Florida Standards:** SC.6.E.7.8; ELA.68.EE.1.1; ELA.68.EE.2.1; ELA.68.EE.3.1; ELA.68.EE.4.1; ELA.68.EE.5.1; ELA.68.EE.6.1; ELA.68.F.2.1; ELA.68.F.2.2; ELA.68.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.1.5; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.C.5.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3





# The days that follow a hurricane

In the days that follow a hurricane, expect normal services to be disrupted. Make sure you are signed up to receive text messages from Alert Pinellas so that you can be notified of resources that become available.

## Safety

- Keep kids and pets with you.
- Water-damaged power outlets can cause fires. Keep your power off after home flooding until an electrician can take a look.
- Avoid downed power lines. Report them to the power company if you are able.

- Anything powered by a rechargeable lithium-ion battery can explode if it was exposed to salt water. Move items to a safe, open area away from people and other flammable materials, and do not attempt to charge or operate them.

- Avoid flooded areas and standing water. Do not wade through flood water, which could harbor live power lines, sewage, wildlife and dangerous objects.
- Dump standing water to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. Protect yourself from bug bites.

## You will be on your own for the first few days

- No matter where in the county you live, emergency responders may be delayed until roads are cleared.
- All bridges will remain closed until inspections are done and it is deemed safe to allow traffic back.
- Comfort stations and meal/grocery distribution sites won't be available until roads are cleared. This could take days or longer.
- Stay home.
- Check on neighbors.

## Expect normal services to be disrupted

- No matter where in the county you sheltered, be prepared for loss of water, sewer, power, cell service and cable.
- Check for any boil water notices for your area from city or county officials. Follow instructions for safely disinfecting tap water if necessary. Use bottled water, or water you put in containers prior to the hurricane.
- Perishable foods that are not kept cool can spoil. You should now use nonperishable food.
- To prevent sewage backups, do not flush your toilet. You can shut off your water, flush once, and line the toilet with a plastic bag. Or use a bucket with a garbage bag, portable toilet or other option. Use household bleach as a disinfectant.
- To continue using your mobile device, use a solar charger or car charger. Texting may work when other services do not. Pinellas County will send texts through Alert Pinellas to relay important information. Some AM radio stations will continue to transmit if other communications are down. **See stay informed, page 20.**



## Generator safety

- Keep generators in well-ventilated locations outside, away from all doors, windows and vent openings.
- Never use a generator in a garage, even with the door open.
- Place generators so the exhaust fumes can't enter the home through windows, doors or other openings in the building.
- Install carbon monoxide alarms in your home.
- Turn off generators and let them cool down before refueling.
- Store fuel for the generator in a container that is intended for that purpose and is correctly labeled as such. Store the containers outside of living areas.







A beachfront home is left destroyed by a fire during a storm.



Debris lines both sides of Gulf Boulevard following Hurricane Helene.

## Damages

- Do not enter a home that has major damage to the roof and/or walls.
- Photograph and list all damaged or lost items, including their age and value. Take photos of how high the water was in the house.
- Contact your insurance agent and file your insurance claim as soon as possible.
- Record your damage on the Resident Reporting tool at **[disaster.pinellas.gov](https://disaster.pinellas.gov)** if you are able, or do it on the Ready Pinellas app.
- Do not do work on your home that is beyond your limitations.
- Make sure contractors you hire are licensed.

## Prevent and clean mold

- Use personal protective equipment (gloves, mask, goggles) to protect your eyes, nose, mouth and skin.
- Anything that was wet with flood water and can't be cleaned and dried out completely within 24 to 48 hours should be taken outside. Take photos of discarded items for filing insurance claims.
- Open all doors and windows when you are working and leave as many open as you safely can when you leave.
- When electricity is safe to use, use fans and dehumidifiers to remove moisture.
- Clean with water and a detergent. Do not mix cleaning products together.
- Remove all mold you can see. Dry right away.
- Painting or caulking over mold will not prevent mold from growing. Fix the water problem completely and clean up all the mold before you paint or caulk.

## Driving

Try to stay off the roads. If you must drive:

- Treat an intersection as a four-way stop sign if traffic lights are not working.
- Do not drive through standing water.
- Adjust your speed to road conditions.
- Maintain a safe distance from the car in front of you.
- Use caution around emergency and utility crews.
- Obey all "road closed" signs.
- Bridges could be damaged and rendered impassable for a long time.
- Have spare tires or repair kits.
- The driving app Waze includes information about road closures, provided by Pinellas County Public Works. It is helpful when determining a safe route and finding roads that are open.
- Gasoline may be hard to come by for days or weeks following the storm.

## KIDS ACTIVITY

### BECOMING A REPORTER

Monitor the Tampa Bay Times and the hurricane page on its website, **[tampabay.com/hurricane/](https://tampabay.com/hurricane/)**, to see stories about how people in the area cope with severe weather. Select several of the stories to read. Next, pretend you are a reporter and

take notes as you interview someone in your class, family or community who has survived a close encounter with wild weather or water. You can specifically concentrate on the 2024 storms or any storms that have affected that person. Using the notes you take, create a news story. Remember to include facts that answer the questions: who, what, when, where, why and how.

**Florida Standards:** ELA.68.EE.1.1; ELA.68.EE.2.1; ELA.68.EE.4.1; ELA.68.EE.5.1; ELA.68.EE.6.1; ELA.68.F.2.1; ELA.68.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.1.5; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; SS.68.A.1.1







# Disaster recovery takes time

Expect conditions to improve very slowly during the next few weeks. Services such as power, drinking water, sewer, cell service and cable could be down.



## What to do

As soon as you can get back to your home:

- Take photos of the damage.
- Contact your insurance agent.
- See what local assistance is available at **disaster.pinellas.gov**.

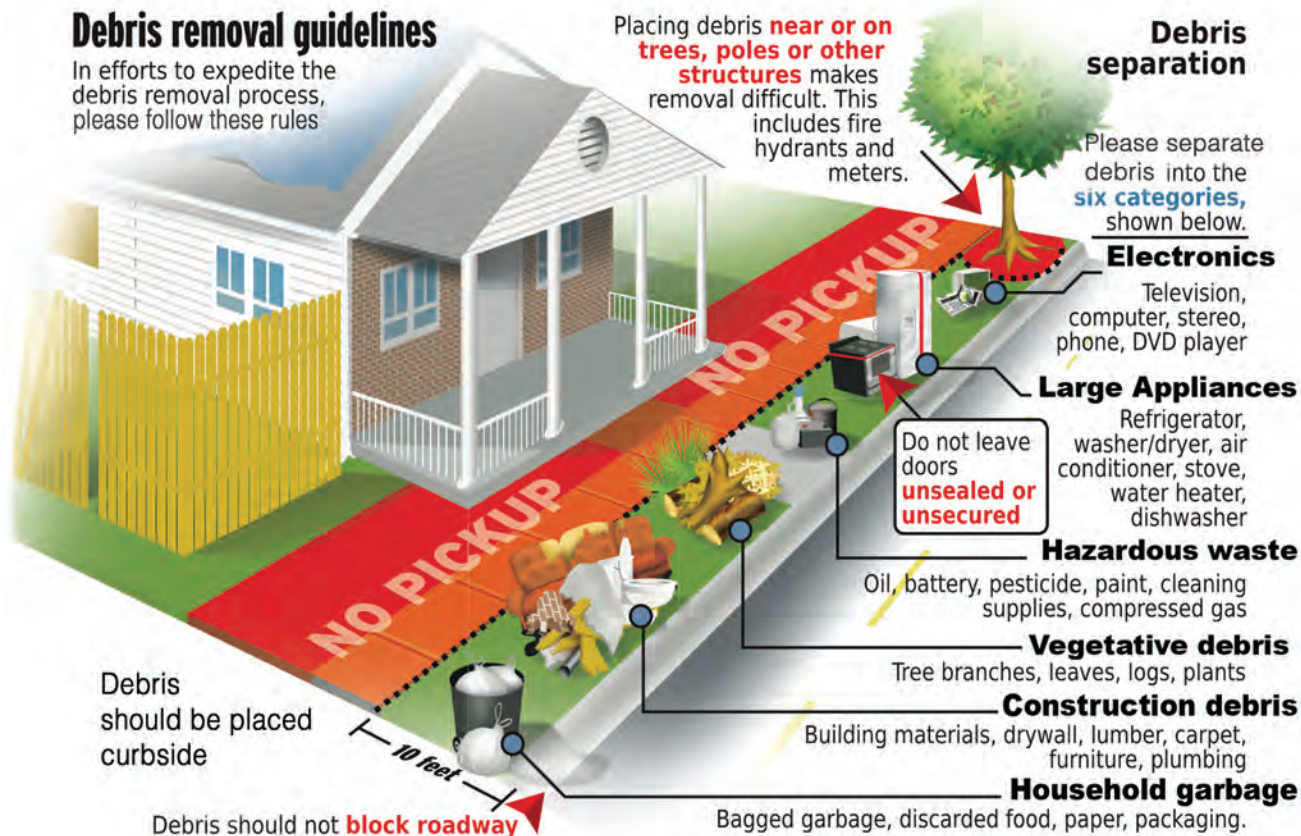
If there is a Federal Emergency Declaration, additional resources may be available. In this case, register as soon as possible:

- **DisasterAssistance.gov**.
- FEMA mobile app.
- 800-621-3362. If you use 711 or Video Relay Service (VRS), call 800-462-7585.

Stay updated. **See staying informed, page 20.**

## Debris removal guidelines

In efforts to expedite the debris removal process, please follow these rules



To check which types of debris will be picked up, check with your city or visit **disaster.pinellas.gov** after the storm.

## Home cleanup

Make sure wet items have been removed from your home, including rugs and drywall. Take photos of the damaged items removed. If you need help, there may be teams of disaster response volunteers

that come into an area impacted by a disaster to help homeowners with cleaning out their homes, getting them dried up, repairing roofs and removing yard debris. Visit **disaster.pinellas.gov** to find out how to request assistance.

## Permitting

The process of getting permits to do work on your house is a long process. It could take months. Stay in touch with your municipality for guidance. Those who live in an unincorporated area of the county can get updates on **disaster.pinellas.gov**.

## KIDS ACTIVITY

### BEING PREPARED

No one is completely safe from a hurricane. Flooding from rainfall affects areas of the county that aren't impacted by storm surge, and wind affects the entire county. Everyone needs to be prepared to survive a hurricane, no matter where they live. Listen carefully to the forecast: No two storms are

the same. As we learned from the storms in 2024, when a hurricane slams our coast, it's important to be aware of all the dangers. Emergency managers want us to run from the water and hide from the wind. What does this phrase mean? What are the risks from water? What are the risks from wind? Research these two phenomena and create a Venn diagram, chart or infographic comparing the risks: differences and similarities. Next, look for photos in the Tampa Bay Times

and in this publication to create an infographic depicting this comparison. Share what you have learned with your class.

**Florida Standards:** ELA.68.EE.1; ELA.68.EE.2; ELA.68.EE.3; ELA.68.EE.4; ELA.68.R.2.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; ELA.68.R.2.4; ELA.68.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.C.5.1; ELA.68.F.1.3; ELA.68.F.1.4; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3; SC.6.E.7.2; SC.6.E.7.8





# Basic Emergency Supplies

## GENERAL

- ☐ Water: One gallon per person per day, for at least seven days.
- ☐ Nonperishable food: at least a one-week supply.
- ☐ Non-electric can opener.
- ☐ Paper plates, plastic cups and utensils.
- ☐ Medications.
- ☐ Extra bottled oxygen if needed.
- ☐ First aid supplies.
- ☐ Wipes, hand sanitizer, soap, toilet paper, feminine supplies, diapers.
- ☐ Eyeglasses and extra contact lenses.
- ☐ Flashlight or lantern.
- ☐ Battery-operated or hand-crank radio.
- ☐ Extra batteries.
- ☐ Cellphone with charger, extra battery backup, solar charger.
- ☐ Cash, preferably small bills.
- ☐ Books, cards, board games.
- ☐ Paper and pencil.
- ☐ Whistle.
- ☐ Rain gear.
- ☐ Insect repellent.
- ☐ Sunscreen.
- ☐ Full tank of gas in vehicle.
- ☐ Repair kit for car tires.
- ☐ Extra gas cans.
- ☐ Refillable water bottle.

## DOCUMENTS

- ☐ Driver's license, passport, other ID cards.
- ☐ Proof of residency (a bill sent to your address).
- ☐ Social Security card.
- ☐ Birth certificate.
- ☐ Marriage license, wills, death certificates, military records and other hard-to-replace documents - not copies.
- ☐ Insurance policies for home, health, flood, auto, renters.
- ☐ Titles to house, vehicles, boats.
- ☐ Account numbers for bank, credit cards, savings and investments.

- ☐ Important numbers and emergency contacts.
- ☐ Medical records from pharmacy, doctors, blood type, vaccinations.
- ☐ Household inventory.
- ☐ Emergency access permit for barrier island residents and businesses.

## BABIES

- ☐ Baby food.
- ☐ Formula.
- ☐ Sterilized bottles.
- ☐ Bottled water.
- ☐ Medications.
- ☐ Diapers.
- ☐ Wipes.
- ☐ Clothing.
- ☐ Thermometer.
- ☐ Pacifier.
- ☐ Blanket.
- ☐ Comfort items.
- ☐ Plastic trash bags for diapers.



## SERVICE ANIMALS AND PETS

- ☐ Pet food/water for two weeks.
- ☐ Collar and leash.
- ☐ **Size-appropriate crate for each pet.**
- ☐ Newspaper or other lining.
- ☐ Identification/updated microchip.
- ☐ County license.
- ☐ Immunization records.
- ☐ Photo.
- ☐ Medications.
- ☐ Toys/blanket.
- ☐ Cat litter, pan, scoop.
- ☐ Plastic waste bags.
- ☐ Disinfectant.
- ☐ Paper towels.

## HOST HOME OR HOTEL

### In addition to general supplies:

- ☐ Pillow and blankets.
- ☐ Air mattress, sleeping bag, floor mat.
- ☐ Change of clothing for several days.
- ☐ Other supplies needed by host home.

## PUBLIC SHELTER – GENERAL

### In addition to general supplies:

- ☐ Blanket, pillow, cot, folding chair or twin-size air mattress.
- ☐ Change of clothing for several days.
- ☐ Special dietary items (sugar-free, low sodium, gluten-free, vegetarian/vegan, etc.) with can opener, if required. Basic food/water is provided.
- ☐ Wearable medical alert tag.
- ☐ Ear plugs.
- ☐ Eye mask/covering.

## PUBLIC SHELTER – SPECIAL NEEDS

### In addition to general supplies:

- ☐ Wheelchair, walker, cane, other medical equipment.
- ☐ Oxygen concentrator.
- ☐ Nebulizer.
- ☐ Written instructions or orders regarding your care.
- ☐ Caretaker's supplies.

## HOME

### In addition to general supplies (if you shelter in place or for when you return home):

- ☐ Ice, coolers.
- ☐ Tarps with rope or elastic cord, sheets of plastic.
- ☐ Wrench, utility knife, hammer, nails.
- ☐ Duct tape.
- ☐ Dust mask.
- ☐ Portable toilet or large bucket with lid.
- ☐ Large garbage bags.
- ☐ Disinfectant.
- ☐ Unscented bleach with medicine dropper.
- ☐ Matches or lighter.
- ☐ Outdoor grill and extra propane or charcoal.

# Staying informed will help you stay safe during a disaster.

## Where to get information

### Alert Pinellas

Free emergency notification system. Get alerts via email, phone, and/or texts. Make sure you choose "texts" before a hurricane as texts often work when other communications do not.



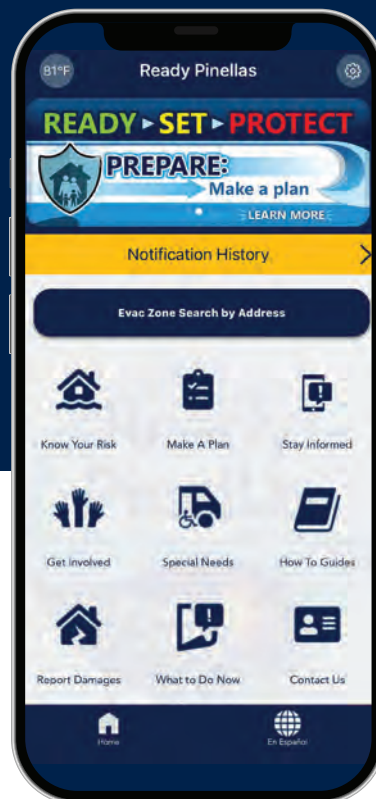
### Ready Pinellas mobile app

Personalize emergency plans, use checklists, save insurance information, contacts, inventory and more. Emergency notifications will be sent to your phone when possible. This app has a Spanish option.



### Disaster.pinellas.gov

Up-to-the-minute updates before, during and after a hurricane. Get general preparedness information throughout the year.



### Social media

- **Facebook:** facebook.com/PinellasGov
- **X:** @PinellasGov and @PinellasEM
- **YouTube:** @PinellasGov

### Emergency weather radios

- Get automatic alerts from the National Weather Service (NWS).
- Configure alerts only by using the Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME). The SAME code for Pinellas County is 012103.
- If the radio does not require a SAME, then tune the frequency to 162.450.

### Tune into an available radio station

Local stations include:

- **WUSF 89.7 FM** (public radio)
- **WMNF 88.5 FM** (community radio)
- **WFLA 970 AM** (news)
- **Maxima 92.5 FM** (Spanish)
- **Rumba 100.3 FM** (Spanish)

### Important contacts

**County Information Center**  
(during emergencies)

727-464-4333

Live Chat on **disaster.pinellas.gov**

**Pinellas County Emergency  
Management**  
727-464-3800

### KIDS ACTIVITY

#### TRACKING NATURAL DISASTERS

Weather conditions will rapidly deteriorate as the storm approaches. Thunderstorms, lightning and tornadoes are all possible before the storm reaches the area. It is common for tornadoes to form during hurricanes. Weather and natural disasters affect our daily lives, health and the economy. For example, hurricanes, lightning strikes, flooding and tornadoes can

be very costly to an individual or the community. In other parts of the world, there are earthquakes, tsunamis and typhoons. The stress and tragedy accompanying these events impact entire communities. Use the Tampa Bay Times to keep track of natural disasters over a two- or three-week period. Keep a natural disaster journal. Identify the disaster and its location in your journal. Create a chart listing all the natural disasters. Choose a disaster that did not happen in your area and make a list of some of the ways in which you or other people in your community

would be affected by this kind of disaster. Write a brief essay outlining the disasters and how they affect communities. Share your information with your class.

**Florida Standards:** SC.6.E.7.8; SC.68.N.1.1; ELA.68.EE.1; ELA.68.EE.2; ELA.68.EE.3; ELA.68.EE.4; ELA.68.R.2.1; ELA.68.R.2.2; ELA.68.R.2.4; ELA.68.C.1.3; ELA.68.C.1.4; ELA.68.C.2.1; ELA.68.C.3.1; ELA.68.C.4.1; ELA.68.C.5.1; ELA.68.F.1.3; ELA.68.F.1.4; ELA.68.V.1.1; ELA.68.V.1.3