

# HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS GUIDE



Palm Beach County Medical Society  
3540 Forest Hill Blvd., Suite 101  
West Palm Beach, FL 33406  
P: 561-433-3940 F: 561-433-2385

# Disaster Planning

***Immediately after an emergency, essential services may be cut off, and local disaster relief and government responders may not be able to reach you right away. Even if they could reach you, knowing what to do to protect yourself and your household is essential. This section describes how to prepare for any kind of disaster. It also provides specific information about emergency water and food, and a recommended disaster supply kit.***

## Creating a disaster plan

One of the most important steps you can take in preparing for emergencies is to develop a household disaster plan.

1. Learn about the natural disasters that could occur in your community from your local emergency management office or American Red Cross chapter. Learn whether hazardous materials are produced, stored or transported near your area. Learn about possible consequences of deliberate acts of terror. Ask how to prepare for each potential emergency and how to respond.
2. Talk with employers and school officials about their emergency response plans.
3. Talk with your household about potential emergencies and how to respond to each. Talk about what you would need to do in an evacuation.
4. Plan how your household would stay in contact if you were separated. Identify two meeting places: the first should be near your home—in case of fire, perhaps a tree or a telephone pole; the second should be away from your neighborhood in case you cannot return home.
5. Pick a friend or relative who lives out of the area for household members to call to say they are okay.
6. Draw a floor plan of your home. Mark two escape routes from each room.
7. Post emergency telephone numbers by telephones. Teach children how and when to call 911.
8. Make sure everyone in your household knows how and when to shut off water, gas, and electricity at the main switches. Consult with your local utilities if you have questions.
9. Take a first aid and CPR class. Local American Red Cross chapters can provide information. Official certification by the American Red Cross provides “good Samaritan” law protection for those giving first aid.
10. Reduce the economic impact of disaster on your property and your household’s health and financial well-being.
  - Review property insurance policies before disaster strikes—make sure policies are current and be certain they meet your needs (type of coverage, amount of coverage, and hazard covered—flood, earthquake)
  - Protect your household’s financial well-being before a disaster strikes—review life insurance policies and consider saving money in an “emergency” savings account that could be used in any crisis. It is advisable to keep a small amount of cash or traveler’s checks at home in a safe place where you can quickly gain access to it in case of an evacuation.
  - Be certain that health insurance policies are current and meet the needs of your household.
11. Consider ways to help neighbors who may need special assistance, such as the elderly or the disabled.
12. Make arrangements for pets. Pets are not allowed in public shelters. Service animals for those who depend on them are allowed.



## Preparing Important Family Documents

- **Keep these records in a waterproof, portable container:**
  - Will, insurance policies, contracts deeds, stocks and bonds
  - Passports, social security cards, immunization records
  - Bank account numbers
  - Credit card account numbers and companies
  - Inventory of valuable household goods, important telephone numbers
  - Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)
- **Store your kit in a convenient place known to all family members. Keep a smaller version of the supplies kit in the trunk of your car.**
- **Keep items in airtight plastic bags. Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh. Replace your stored food every six months. Re-think your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update clothes, etc.**
- **Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.**

To get copies of American Red Cross Community Disaster Education materials, contact your local Red Cross chapter or click on the following link for the American Red Cross Disasters Checklist:

[http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA\\_CustomProductCatalog/m4240190\\_Be\\_Red\\_Cross\\_Ready.pdf](http://www.redcross.org/images/MEDIA_CustomProductCatalog/m4240190_Be_Red_Cross_Ready.pdf)



# Physician Practice Disaster Response Plan

Seth L. Toback, MD, FAAP

## ***No business should risk operating without a disaster plan.***

The Palm Beach County Medical Society has compiled this Disaster Response Plan to assist you in the preparation and response to emergency situations. It should serve as a guide for more efficient internal communication and provide a basic understanding of duties and responsibilities of your staff. Planning prior to a disaster is the sensible, logical way to begin to cope with an emergency in order to minimize the associated trauma of suffering loss of life, injury and property damage. Policies and procedures should be flexible in order to respond to a disaster.

When you start to develop your disaster plan consider three subjects: human resources, physical resources and business community. Think about how a disaster could affect your employees, patients and workplace. Think about how you could continue doing business if the area around your facility is closed or streets are impassable. Think about what you would need to serve your customers even if your facility is closed.

## **BUILDING AND OFFICE BASICS**

- Determine structural soundness.
- Ensure adequate insurance is in place.
- Secure copies of important documents.
- Computer data base backup tapes and files.
- Insurance documents
- Titles for vehicles & insurance policies
- Master inventory list
- Previous year's tax records & financial statements
- Archives
- Personnel Records.
- Make arrangements for alternate site to maintain an office-post-disaster.
- Provide for equipment & general supplies.
- Assemble as much as possible prior to storm.
- Instruct personnel to secure office.
- Back up computer files.
- Unplug electrical equipment.
- Move equipment away from window.
- Clear desk tops & table surfaces.
- Remove items from floor, store at least 2 feet above floor.
- Cover equipment with plastic sheeting
- Seal documents in double plastic bags.
- Remove personal items from building.
- Identify essential files that need to be moved with red/orange dots.
- If you have a voice mail system at your office, designate one remove number on which you can record messages for employees. Provide the number to all employees.
- Arrange for programmable call forwarding for your main business line(s). Then, if you can't get to the office, you can call in and reprogram the phones to ring elsewhere.
- If you may not be able to get to your business quickly after an emergency, leave keys and alarm code(s) with a trusted employee or friend who is closer.
- Back up computer data frequently throughout the business day. Keep a back-up tape off site.
- Use UL-listed surge protectors and battery backup systems. They will add protection for sensitive equipment and help prevent a computer crash if the power goes out.
- Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio with a tone alert feature. Keep it on and when the warning signal sounds; listen for information about possible severe weather and protective actions to take.
- Stock a minimum supply of goods, materials and equipment you would need for business continuity.
- Consult with your insurance agent about special precautions to take for disasters that may directly impact your business. Remember, most policies do not cover earthquake and flood damage. Protect valuable property and equipment with special riders. Discuss business continuity Insurance with your agents.
- Keep emergency supplies handy, including –
  - Flashlights with extra batteries
  - First aid kit
  - Tools
  - Food and water for employees and customers to use during a period of unexpected confinement at your business, such as if a tanker truck overturned nearby and authorities told everyone in the area to stay put for an extended period.

*For more information on suggested disaster supplies, see <http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/supplies.html>*

## FINANCES

- Provide authorization for limited expenses.
- Arrange access to checkbook and petty cash.
- Include provision for staff affected by disaster.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Prepare and maintain list of all personnel with home phone numbers and addresses.
- Create key contact and reference list.
- Establish a buddy system with another physician's office in a different geographic location.
- Have redundant communication systems (landline, mobile, and walkie talkie or out-of-state phone).
- Establish an affiliate agreement with another practice in another part of the county to use phone line and office.
- Check Palm Beach County Medical Society web site ([www.pbcms.org](http://www.pbcms.org)) and local media for current information.
- Post and distribute informational flyers to your patients.

## STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- Identify key staff positions and responsibilities.
- Develop chain of command and communications procedures.
- Notify staff where and when to return to work after a disaster.
- If a staff member is severely affected, they should be helped in 24-28 hours.

## OPERATIONAL CONDITIONS

**Hurricane Watch:** Indicates a hurricane is near enough that everyone in the area should listen for advisories and be ready to take precautionary actions in case hurricane warnings are issued. Implies the possibility of dangerous conditions within 25-28 hours.

**Hurricane Warning:** Indicates that winds of 74 MPH and higher, or a combination of dangerously high water and very rough seas, are expected in a specific coastal area. Hurricane conditions are considered imminent and may begin immediately or at least within the next 24-48 hours. All precautionary measures and actions should be instituted immediately for the protection of life and property.

**Impact:** All staff should take shelter.

**Recovery:** All clear.

- All staff should notify key contact of their safety.
- Contact the Medical Society at 433-3940 if assistance is needed.



# Hurricane Preparedness for Patients

Are you prepared to address your health and medical needs in the event a hurricane strikes Palm Beach County this year?

Hurricane season is June 1st through November 30th. In preparation for the season, the Palm Beach County Medical Reserve Corps and Palm Beach County Medical Society Services encourages all patients to develop a health and medical hurricane preparedness plan. This article is designed to provide general information to help patients in their planning process. Consult with your physician and your medical supply vendors to make sure you are appropriately prepared in the event a hurricane strikes Palm Beach County.

## SPEAK TO YOUR PHYSICIAN

Prior to hurricane season is the time to speak with your physician regarding your health and medical hurricane plan. Some medical conditions require special provisions to avoid complications that can be brought on by the destruction of a hurricane. Examples include:

- Oxygen dependent patients – backup electrical power for concentrators or backup oxygen cylinders will be needed. Also ask your vendor what their plan is to replenish your oxygen supply after the storm.
- Insulin dependent patients – backup electrical power to keep insulin refrigerated will be needed.
- Pregnant women – high risk or 36 weeks or beyond should consult with their physician regarding whether or not to shelter at a hospital.
- Bedridden or immobile patients – should make sure that their caregiver will be with them during the storm.
- Medication dependent patients – must maintain at least a 2 week supply of critical medication in the event retail pharmacies or physician offices are closed for an extended period.
- Dialysis patients – will need to receive dialysis just prior to the storm and pre-schedule an appointment for post-storm dialysis.

## CHECKLIST OF ITEMS TO HAVE OR BRING TO THE LOCATION WHERE YOU STAY DURING THE STORM

- List of current medications and a two week supply of your medications (Pharmacies may be closed for extended periods of time)
- Documentation of specific medical information
- Medical equipment (if applicable) and name and contact information for your equipment and supply vendor
- Oxygen equipment such as nebulizers and concentrators
- Diabetic equipment and supplies such as meters, strips, insulin, and syringes.
- Canes, wheelchairs, and walkers
- Personal hygiene items including deodorant, toothpaste/toothbrush, wash cloth, towel, soap, etc.
- Infant care items such as formula, diapers, baby food, etc.
- Caregiver if not independent
- Sleeping equipment – cot, pillow, blanket, etc.
- Extra clothing, flashlight, radio, extra batteries, cell phone with charger, entertainment items, toys for children, non-perishable foods for snacks, etc.
- DO NOT BRING pets, firearms, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or perishable foods.

## DURING A HURRICANE PATIENTS MUST PREPARE FOR THE WORST BECAUSE....

- Pharmacies will begin closing 24 hours prior to landfall
- There will be wide-spread loss of power throughout the county for up to 2 weeks or longer
- Most dialysis centers do not have generator backup power
- Many physician offices could be closed as a result of damage or lack of power
- Medical supply vendors will stop delivering oxygen cylinders prior to threatening weather
- Ambulance services will stop responding once conditions outside become threatening (45 mph winds)

For an electronic copy of this brochure in Spanish or Creole please contact the Medical Society at (561) 433-3940.



## WHERE TO STAY

Based on patients' medical needs, they should plan ahead and make arrangements for where they will stay during a hurricane. If constant electrical power is a requirement, patients must make sure the location they choose to stay has backup electrical power from a generator.

Examples of locations where patients can stay during a storm include:

1. Out of Town – leaving the area that is in the path of the hurricane is the best way to avoid being placed in a situation in which your medical needs could be complicated by the destruction of a hurricane.
2. At Home – if you do not live in an evacuation zone, a properly secured home is often the best place to stay.
3. With family or friends – if you are in an evacuation zone, the best place to stay is often at the home of family or friends in a properly secured dwelling.
4. Hotel – if you are in an evacuation zone, a properly secured hotel outside the evacuation zone is an option.
5. Red Cross Shelter – should only be considered as a last resort. NOT for patients with special medical needs.
6. County Special Care Unit – only for patients with special medical needs that meet eligibility requirements. All patients should be pre-registered. For more information please call PBC Emergency Management at (561) 712-6400 and ask to speak with a Special Needs Coordinator.

## HOSPITALS DURING A HURRICANE

- Hospitals are NOT an option for general sheltering during a hurricane.
- Hospitals are reserved as the place to treat life threatening situations.
- Hospitals will continue to accept emergency and/or trauma patients.
- Many hospitals will shelter pregnant women with a physician's referral who are 36 weeks or greater or at high risk for pre-term labor.
- Hospitals are not able to dispense medication to the public so patients must make arrangements to have at least a 2 week supply on hand through their physician and retail pharmacy.

## PHYSICIAN OFFICES DURING A HURRICANE

Physician offices like all other businesses close prior to a hurricane to allow staff to complete their personal hurricane preparations. As a result, patients should:

- Make sure all refills on prescriptions are up to date and at least a 2 week supply is on hand.
- Understand their physician's "On-Call" policy should the office be unable to re-open following the storm.
- Check local TV & Radio for additional information.

# Business Continuity Planning for Hurricanes

When doing business continuity planning for hurricanes, businesses should consider the following recommendations:

- **Ask your local emergency management office about community evacuation plans.**
- **Establish facility shutdown, warning and evacuation procedures. Make plans for assisting employees who may need transportation.**
- **Make plans for communicating with employees' families before and after a hurricane.**
- **Purchase a NOAA Weather Radio with a warning alarm tone and battery backup. Listen for hurricane watches and warnings.**
- **Survey your facility. Make plans to protect outside equipment and structures.**
- **Protect windows. Permanent storm shutters offer the best protection. Covering windows with 5/8 inch marine plywood is a second option.**
- **Consider the need for backup systems:**
  - **Portable pumps to remove flood water**
  - **Alternate power sources such as generators or gasoline powered pumps**
  - **Battery-powered emergency lighting**
- **Prepare to move records, computers and other items within your facility or to another location.**

## Source:

Virginia Department of Emergency Management  
<http://www.vdes.state.va.us/05hurr/business.cfm>



## Important Questions to Consider

### **Your practice was closed for 1 day?--1 week?--1 month?--Longer?**

It is important that you consider the impact on your practice after a disaster. Consider what the impact of closing your practice would have on your cash flow and just how long you could survive with no income. While insurance and government assistance loans may help, you should think about how much that will be and how quickly it will be available to you.

### **Your employees couldn't get to work?**

Think of ways that you could run your practice if some or all of your employees couldn't get to work. Your business might not be affected, but the neighborhoods where your employees live and the access routes to your business might be.

### **You could open, but your patients couldn't get to your place of business?**

It is quite possible that you could open, but access for your customers could be limited or non-existent. Think of ways that you could reach out to your patients in this instance.

### **You could open, but your suppliers and vendors either couldn't get to you or they were also impacted and couldn't meet your needs?**

If your current suppliers and vendors were unable to meet your needs, you should have alternate resources identified. Palm Beach County's Emergency Needs Posting System may be a valuable resource in securing assistance after a disaster.

### **What sources would you use to fund recovery?**

While insurance and government loan assistance may be available to you after a disaster, you should consider how much will be available and how long it will take. The Insurance and Business Recovery Assistance elements of your plan will help you make these determinations. Other sources of funds may include business loans, personal loans, personal savings, company assets, family help or other forms of local government assistance. You should carefully read the other information contained in this element and use it to help guide you regarding funding your recovery.

### **How strong is the business?**

If your practice was not financially strong prior to a disaster, it may be extremely difficult for you to survive after. You should give careful consideration to the condition of your practice and the viability of continuing in the post-disaster environment.

It is important to understand that the answers to these questions are not easy. They will be unique to your business and your circumstances.

**For additional information, contact [www.pbcgov.com/hurricanes](http://www.pbcgov.com/hurricanes)**

# WEB LINKS TO DEVELOP YOUR PRACTICE'S HURRICANE PLAN

Palm Beach County Medical Society (561) 433-3940	<a href="http://www.pbcms.org/">http://www.pbcms.org/</a>
Hurricane Planning Guide for Your Business	<a href="http://www.pbcgov.com/dem/hurricane/">http://www.pbcgov.com/dem/hurricane/</a>
Disaster Help for your Business	<a href="http://www.disasterhelp.gov">www.disasterhelp.gov</a>
Disaster Resource Guide for Businesses	<a href="http://www.disaster-resource.com">http://www.disaster-resource.com</a>
Medical Group Management Association	<a href="http://www.mgma.com">www.mgma.com</a>
Physician Office Practice Disaster & Recovery Plan	<a href="http://www.thedoctors.com/TDC/Subsidiaries/index.htm">http://www.thedoctors.com/TDC/Subsidiaries/index.htm</a>

## ADDITIONAL LINKS

American Medical Association	<a href="http://www.ama-assn.org/">http://www.ama-assn.org/</a>
American Red Cross-Disaster Services	<a href="http://www.redcross.org/what-we-do/disaster-relief">http://www.redcross.org/what-we-do/disaster-relief</a>
Center for Information & Crisis Services	<a href="http://211palmbeach.org/">http://211palmbeach.org/</a>
Citizen Corps	<a href="http://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps">http://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps</a>
Department of Homeland Security	<a href="http://www.dhs.gov/">http://www.dhs.gov/</a>
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	<a href="http://www.fema.gov/">http://www.fema.gov/</a>
Florida Department of Insurance	<a href="http://www.fldfs.com/consumers/hurricane_2006/">http://www.fldfs.com/consumers/hurricane_2006/</a>
Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)	<a href="http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/HomePage/">http://www.medicalreservecorps.gov/HomePage/</a>
National Hurricane Center	<a href="http://www.nhc.noaa.gov">http://www.nhc.noaa.gov</a>
National Weather Services	<a href="http://www.weather.gov/">http://www.weather.gov/</a>
Palm Beach County Division of Emergency Management	<a href="http://www.pbcgov.com/dem/knowurzone/">http://www.pbcgov.com/dem/knowurzone/</a>
Health Department	<a href="http://www.pbchd.com/">http://www.pbchd.com/</a>
Palm Beach County Public Safety	<a href="http://www.pbcgov.com/">http://www.pbcgov.com/</a>
Department of Emergency Management (FDEM)	<a href="http://www.floridadisaster.org">http://www.floridadisaster.org</a>
United Way of Palm Beach County	<a href="http://www.unitedwaypbc.org/">http://www.unitedwaypbc.org/</a>

## PALM BEACH COUNTY HOSPITALS

### BETHESDA HEALTH

2815 S. Seacrest Boulevard Boynton  
Beach, FL 33435  
[www.bethesdaweb.com](http://www.bethesdaweb.com)  
(561) 737-7733

### JFK MEDICAL CENTER

5301 S. Congress Avenue  
Atlantis, FL 33462-1149  
[www.jfkmc.com](http://www.jfkmc.com)  
(561) 642-3494

### PINECREST REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

5352 Linton Boulevard  
Delray Beach, FL 33484  
[www.delraymedicalctr.com](http://www.delraymedicalctr.com)  
(561) 495-0400

### BOCA RATON REGIONAL HOSPITAL

800 Meadows Road  
Boca Raton, FL 33486  
[www.brrh.com](http://www.brrh.com)  
(561) 395-7100

### JUPITER MEDICAL CENTER

1210 S. Old Dixie Highway  
Jupiter, FL 33458  
[www.jupitermed.com](http://www.jupitermed.com)  
(561) 744-4409

### ST. MARY'S MEDICAL CENTER

901 45th Street  
West Palm Beach, FL 33407-2495  
[www.stmarysmc.org](http://www.stmarysmc.org)  
(561) 844-6300

### DELRAY MEDICAL CENTER

5352 Linton Boulevard  
Delray Beach, FL 33484  
[www.delraymedicalctr.com](http://www.delraymedicalctr.com)  
(561) 495-3100

### LAKESIDE MEDICAL CENTER

39200 Hooker Highway  
Belle Glade, FL 33430  
[www.lakesidemedical.org](http://www.lakesidemedical.org)  
(561) 996-6571

### VETERANS ADMINISTRATION MEDICAL CENTER

7305 N. Military Trail  
West Palm Beach, FL 33410-6415  
[www1.va.gov/visn8/westpalm/](http://www1.va.gov/visn8/westpalm/)  
(561) 882-8262

### GOOD SAMARITAN MEDICAL CENTER

1300 N. Flagler Drive West  
Palm Beach, FL 33402  
[www.goodsamaritanmc.com](http://www.goodsamaritanmc.com)  
(561) 655-5511

### PALM BEACH GARDENS MEDICAL CENTER

3360 Burns Road  
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410  
[www.pbgmc.com](http://www.pbgmc.com)  
(561) 622-1411

### WELLINGTON REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

10101 Forest Hill Boulevard  
West Palm Beach, FL 33414  
[www.wellingtonregional.com](http://www.wellingtonregional.com)  
(561) 798-8500

### JEROME GOLDEN CENTER FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

1041 45th Street  
West Palm Beach, FL 33407  
[www.goldenctr.org](http://www.goldenctr.org)  
(561) 383-8000

### PALMS WEST HOSPITAL

13001 Southern Boulevard  
Loxahatchee, FL 33470  
[www.palmswesthospital.com](http://www.palmswesthospital.com)  
(561) 798-3300

### WEST BOCA MEDICAL CENTER

21644 State Road 7  
Boca Raton, FL 33428  
[www.westbocamedctr.com](http://www.westbocamedctr.com)  
(561) 488-8000

### WEST PALM HOSPITAL

2201 45th Street  
West Palm Beach, FL 33407  
[www.westpalmhospital.com](http://www.westpalmhospital.com)  
(561) 863-3802