



**READY TOGETHER
PREPAREDNESS ESSENTIALS**

CHAPTER 2

PREPARATION SAVES LIVES

It can also help families feel calmer before a storm

This section turns big hurricane-preparedness advice into simple family actions. You do not have to do everything at once. Start with one step, then build from there.

In this section:

Make a family emergency plan

Know your zone and your home

Understand watch vs. warning

Plan for pets, cars, alerts, documents, and insurance

Build toward a seven-day kit



KIDS4KIDS REMINDER:

Kids should feel included, not responsible. Adults and local officials make emergency decisions. Students can help by learning the plan, asking questions, and taking small safe actions.

PREPARE EARLY, Not Scared

The goal is calm, confidence, and clear action.

A hurricane plan should not make your family feel more anxious. A good plan should make the next step easier to understand. When kids know what the family is doing, who is making decisions, and what they can safely help with, the situation can feel less confusing.

PREPARE EARLY

Start before the storm rush. Add supplies over time and review your plan before hurricane season.

USE TRUSTED INFORMATION

Follow official alerts, local emergency management, school updates, and weather sources.

SUPPORT KIDS EMOTIONALLY

Include kids in simple conversations without making them responsible for adult decisions.



CALM CHECK:

Ask: What would help me feel calmer if our routine changes for a few days?



SMALL WIN:

Only have 10 minutes? Pick one out-of-town contact and save that number in every family member's phone.

Always follow official alerts and local emergency instructions.

Disaster Preparedness ESSENTIALS

Ten things to think through before a storm is on the radar.

Use this page as a visual checklist. You do not need to finish everything in one day.

Circle the three items your family should work on first.

1



*Make an
emergency plan*

2



Know your zone

3



*Know your
home*

4



*Stock a seven-
day kit*

5



*Know evacuation
routes*

6



*Keep your car
ready*

7



*Gather
documents*

8



*Update
insurance*

9



Plan for pets

10



*Sign up for
official alerts*

Get Started!

Use official alerts and follow instructions from local officials.

ESSENTIAL 1:

Make an Emergency Plan



KIDS4KIDS REMINDER:

Kids can help by asking questions and learning the plan. Adults are responsible for evacuation, medical, driving, and home-safety decisions.

A simple plan can reduce confusion when a storm is coming.

A family plan does not have to be perfect. It just needs to answer the most important questions: Who do we contact? Where do we go? What do we bring? What does each person do?

FAMILY MEETING SCHEDULED:

EVACUATION DESTINATION CHOSEN:

OUT-OF-TOWN CONTACT CHOSEN:

SHELTER-IN-PLACE ROOM CHOSEN:

COMFORT ITEMS CHOSEN:

PET PLAN REVIEWED:

SCHOOL PICKUP PLAN REVIEWED:

EMERGENCY CONTACTS PRINTED:

Need a quick version? Use the Family Hurricane Plan Snapshot on page 3.

ESSENTIAL 2:

Know Your Zone

Know whether your family may need to evacuate.

Your evacuation zone is not just a map detail. It helps your family understand when local officials may ask your area to leave. Write down your local source now so you are not trying to find it during a storm.



LOCALIZE IT:

Start with your county or city emergency management website. Search: “[your county] evacuation zone lookup” or “Know Your Zone.” Enter your home address, then write down your zone and the website. For flood risk, also check your county flood/storm-surge map or the FEMA Flood Map Service Center. Shelter and pet-friendly shelter lists may change by storm, so check them again when a storm is approaching.

01

Our evacuation zone:

02

Our flood or storm surge risk:

03

County/city zone lookup website:

04

Local emergency management website:

05

Shelter information source:

06

Pet-friendly shelter/source:

Remember: Knowing your zone does not mean you automatically evacuate. It tells you what to listen for if local officials issue evacuation orders.

Date Last Checked: _____

Always follow official evacuation orders and local emergency instructions.

ESSENTIAL 3:

Know Your Home

Know where to shelter if local officials say it is safe to stay.

Every home is different. Before a storm, talk through which room is safest, what rooms should be avoided, and where supplies will be kept.

BEST SHELTER AREA:

- ✓ Interior Room
- ✓ No Windows
- ✓ Lower level if safe from flooding
- ✓ Emergency kit nearby
- ✓ Shoes and flashlight nearby

AVOID:

- ✗ Outside areas
- ✗ Rooms with windows
- ✗ Areas with loose glass or objects
- ✗ Flood-prone rooms
- ✗ Top-floor rooms if better options exist



If local officials tell your area to evacuate, follow evacuation instructions.

ESSENTIAL 4:

Stock a Seven-Day Kit

Start with what you have. Build toward seven days over time.

A seven-day kit can sound overwhelming. The goal is not to buy everything at once. Start small, add one item at a time, and make sure the kit fits your family's real needs.

BASICS:

- ☐ Water
- ☐ Non-Perishable Foods
- ☐ Manual Can Opener
- ☐ Flashlights
- ☐ Batteries

FAMILY SPECIFIC:

- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Medical supplies
- ☐ Baby/senior needs
- ☐ Pet supplies
- ☐ Allergy-safe foods

COMFORT & WELLNESS:

- ☐ Comfort item
- ☐ Book/journal
- ☐ Headphones
- ☐ Small game
- ☐ Family photos



SMALL WIN:

Pick one category per week. Preparedness is built over time, not in one stressful shopping trip.

Use the Supply List & Shopping Hub on page 12 for printable lists and examples.

ESSENTIAL 5:

Understand Watch vs. Warning

Two words that tell your family when to get ready and when to act.

The wording can be confusing, especially for kids. Use this simple version when talking with your family.



HURRICANE WATCH

Conditions are possible

A watch means hurricane conditions are possible, often about 48 hours before tropical-storm-force winds could begin.

Prepare your home, review your evacuation route, and be ready to act.

Check supplies, pack go bags, and monitor instructions from local officials.

Move earlier if your household needs extra time because of medical, transportation, pet, or accessibility needs.



HURRICANE WARNING

Conditions are expected

A warning means hurricane conditions are expected, often about 36 hours before tropical-storm-force winds could begin.

Finish storm preparations; stay off roads unless evacuating or directed.

If local officials issue an evacuation order for your area, leave as instructed.

Text family updates to save phone battery and reduce network congestion.



CALM CHECK:

If watch/warning updates feel scary, ask a trusted adult: What does this mean for our family right now?

Always follow official weather alerts and local emergency instructions.

ESSENTIAL 6:

Know Evacuation Routes



PRO TIP:

Use QR codes or websites before a storm, but print your main route and backup route before hurricane season.

Plan your route before roads are crowded.

Evacuation does not always mean traveling hundreds of miles. Depending on the storm and your risk, a safer place tens of miles away may be enough. Follow local officials and choose routes before you need them.

01

Primary destination:

02

Backup destination:

03

Primary route:

04

Backup route:

05

Fuel stop:

06

Pet-friendly stop:

Printed Map Stored: _____

Follow evacuation routes and local traffic instructions. Do not take unsafe shortcuts.

ESSENTIAL 7:

Keep Your Car Ready



PRO TIP:

Do not wait until the last minute to fill the tank. Long lines and shortages can happen before a storm.

Halfway full = halfway there.

During hurricane season, transportation is part of the plan. A car with gas, chargers, and printed directions gives your family more options if local officials tell your area to leave.

FUEL & TRANSPORTATION

WHO WILL DRIVE?

WHERE IS THE SPARE KEY?

WHERE COULD WE STOP FOR FUEL?

WHAT IF OUR USUAL ROUTE IS BLOCKED?

WHO CAN HELP IF WE NEED A RIDE?



CAR READINESS CHECKLIST

- ☐ Gas tank at least half full when a storm may form
- ☐ Phone charger in car
- ☐ Printed route and backup route
- ☐ Water and snacks
- ☐ Flashlight and first aid kit
- ☐ Pet supplies if needed

Only travel when it is safe and follow local evacuation instructions.

ESSENTIAL 8:

Gather Documents

Keep important papers ready in a waterproof grab-and-go bag.

Important documents can be hard to replace after flooding or evacuation. Keep copies in a waterproof bag and store digital backups when possible.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Passports / IDs | ☐ Home/renters insurance |
| ☐ Birth certificates | ☐ Flood insurance if applicable |
| ☐ Health insurance cards | ☐ Insurance declaration pages |
| ☐ Medication list | ☐ Pet vaccination records |
| ☐ Allergy list | ☐ Recent family photo |
| ☐ Doctor/pharmacy contacts | ☐ Recent pet photo |
| ☐ School IDs or records | ☐ Printed evacuation route |



PARENT/GUARDIAN TIP:

A recent family photo can help with reunification if family members become separated. Keep a printed copy with emergency documents.

Need the full list? See the Waterproof Grab-and-Go Document Bag on page 10.

ESSENTIAL 9:

Update Insurance & Document Property

A few photos before the storm can make recovery easier later.

This page is mainly for adults and guardians. Before a storm, document your home and know how to reach your insurance company if you need to file a claim.



BEFORE THE STORM

- ☐ Take photos/videos of each room
- ☐ Photograph valuables and serial numbers
- ☐ Photograph the outside of the home
- ☐ **Print** policies and declaration pages
- ☐ Save claim phone numbers
- ☐ Back up photos digitally



PRO TIP:

Take a slow video of each room. Open closets and cabinets if it is safe and appropriate. Store the video somewhere you can access if your phone is damaged.

INSURANCE CONTACTS

HOME/RENTERS INSURANCE:

Agent Phone: _____

Policy #: _____

Claims Phone #: _____

FLOOD INSURANCE:

Agent Phone: _____

Policy #: _____

Claims Phone #: _____

AUTO INSURANCE:

Agent Phone: _____

Policy #: _____

Claims Phone #: _____

This workbook is not insurance advice. Contact your insurance company or agent for policy-specific guidance.

ESSENTIAL 10:

Plan for Pets

Pets are part of the family plan.

Do not wait until an evacuation order to figure out where your pet can go. Not every shelter accepts pets, so choose a pet-safe location ahead of time.



PET KIT

- ☐ Food, water, and treats
- ☐ Leash, collar, and ID tag
- ☐ Carrier or crate
- ☐ Medication
- ☐ Vaccination records
- ☐ Photo of pet
- ☐ Comfort toy



SAFETY FIRST!

If your family may evacuate, plan for pets before the storm. **Do not assume every shelter can take them.**



PRO TIP:

Be sure your pet's microchip subscription is current in case you need to track them after the storm.

PET-SAFE PLAN

VETERINARIAN:

MICROCHIP NUMBER:

PET-FRIENDLY SHELTER:

BACKUP SAFE LOCATION:

KENNEL/FACILITY CONTACT:

CARRIER LOCATION:

Follow county guidance for pet shelters and service animals.

Business, School & Club Communication Tree

How groups share updates without confusion.

Families are not the only ones that need a communication plan. Schools, clubs, teams, and youth chapters should know who sends updates, who checks in, and what source everyone should trust.



LEADERSHIP NOTE:

Student leaders can help share reminders and resources, but adults make decisions about closures, travel, safety, and emergency instructions.

ROLE	PRIMARY PERSON	BACKUP PERSON
Main Adult Contact		
Student leader		
Backup student leader		
Person checking official alerts		

Do not ask students, volunteers, or employees to travel during unsafe conditions.

Real-Time Information Matters

Trusted updates help families avoid rumors and last-minute panic.

During a storm, information changes quickly. **Write down official sources before you need them**, and do not rely only on social media posts or group chats.

LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

COUNTY/CITY ALERT SIGNUP:

SCHOOL CLOSURE SOURCE:

FEMA APP / RESOURCES:

LOCAL RADIO STATION:

BACKUP ADULT CHECKING ALERTS:



CALM CHECK:

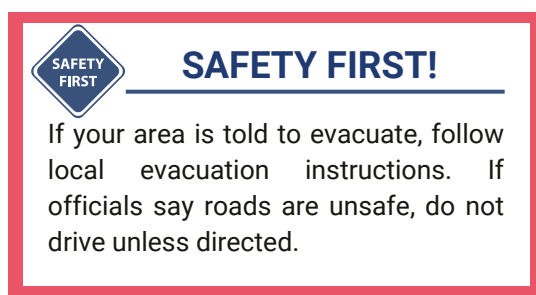
Trusted information helps reduce rumors, confusion, and panic. If updates feel overwhelming, take a break and ask a trusted adult what the family plan is.

Write down important websites. Do not rely only on QR codes during an emergency.

Local Officials Make the Call

This workbook helps you prepare. It does not make emergency decisions.

Ready Together can help families organize contacts, supplies, documents, and plans. But during a real storm, the safest instructions come from local officials, emergency management, schools, and trusted emergency alerts.



THIS WORKBOOK CAN HELP YOU:

- ☐ Think ahead
- ☐ Write down contacts
- ☐ Build supplies over time
- ☐ Include kids in safe ways
- ☐ Prepare emotionally and physically

LOCAL OFFICIALS DECIDE:

- ☐ Evacuation orders
- ☐ Shelter openings
- ☐ Road safety
- ☐ School closures
- ☐ When it is safe to return

When in doubt, follow official alerts and local emergency instructions.

Florida Note: Disaster Preparedness Tax-Free Items

Check official state rules before you shop.

Florida permanently exempts selected disaster-preparedness items from sales tax. Eligible products, price limits, and definitions apply, so check the current official list before shopping. Examples may include batteries, portable generators, tarps or waterproof sheeting, gas cans, smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, insect repellent, life jackets, and tie-down kits.

ITEMS FAMILIES OFTEN CHECK:

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Batteries | ☐ Coolers |
| ☐ Flashlights | ☐ Tarps |
| ☐ Portable radios | ☐ Pet supplies |
| ☐ Generators | ☐ Other emergency supplies |



OFFICIAL SOURCE TO CHECK:

Florida Department of Revenue or Florida Division of Emergency Management

Website: FloridaDisaster.org/TaxFree

Last checked: August 2026



LOCALIZE IT:

If this workbook is used outside Florida, replace this page with your state's preparedness shopping guidance or remove it.

Tax rules change. Confirm current rules through official state sources before publication or shopping.

Preparedness Essentials Reflection

Use this page to choose your family's next small step.

The goal is not to finish everything today. The goal is to know what matters most and take the next useful step.



ONE THING WE ALREADY HAVE READY:

ONE THING WE STILL NEED TO DO:

ONE QUESTION WE WANT TO ASK A TRUSTED ADULT OR LOCAL OFFICIAL:

ONE THING THAT WOULD HELP KIDS IN OUR FAMILY FEEL CALMER:

OUR NEXT SMALL STEP:



SMALL WIN:

Preparedness is built one step at a time. If your family takes one action after reading this section, that counts.



KIDS4KIDS REMINDER:

Preparedness should create calm, connection, and confidence - not fear.

Next section: Make a Plan for Every Family Member.