



KNOW YOUR ZONE,
KNOW YOUR HOME
& HOME SAFETY

CHAPTER 4

KNOW YOUR ZONE

KNOW YOUR HOME

Safety is not one size fits all.

Before a storm is close, your family should understand where you live, what risks matter most, and how your home can be made safer. This section turns big emergency words like evacuation zone, storm surge, sheltering in place, and utility shutoff into simple family planning pages.

In this section:

- ☐ Know why hurricane risk is more than wind
- ☐ Write down your evacuation zone and flood risk
- ☐ Choose safer areas inside your home
- ☐ Plan for shutters, sandbags, outdoor items, and utilities
- ☐ Think through transportation, shelter, water, sewer, and special-needs planning



KIDS4KIDS REMINDER:

Kids can help ask questions, find supplies, and understand the plan. Adults and local officials make emergency decisions.

Use official alerts and local emergency instructions for all evacuation and sheltering decisions.

Hurricane Risk Is More Than Wind

A hurricane can affect your home, roads, power, water, school, and routines.

A hurricane category mostly describes wind speed, but families should not focus only on the category. A weaker storm can still cause dangerous flooding, storm surge, tornadoes, rip currents, power outages, road closures, and communication problems.



WIND

Broken branches, roof damage, flying objects, unsafe windows.



WATER

Storm surge, flooding rain, flooded roads, drainage problems.



POWER & UTILITIES

Power outages, downed lines, loss of water, sewer problems.



ROADS & TRANSPORTATION

Traffic, bridge closures, low-water areas, blocked routes.



HEALTH & MEDICAL

Heat, medication storage, oxygen, medical equipment power.



YOUTH MENTAL WELLNESS

Stress, disrupted routines, scary media, separation from friends or school.



PRO TIP:

Do not ask only "What category is it?"
Ask: "What are the water, wind, power, road, and family impacts where we live?"

Hurricane hazards can include wind, storm surge, flooding rain, tornadoes, and outages.

Evacuation Zone Worksheet

Write your zone down before a storm is coming.

Evacuation zones are different from flood zones. Your local officials use evacuation zones to decide who may need to leave before a storm. Find your zone early and write down the official source.

Our evacuation zone	
Zone lookup website	
County/city alert signup	
Local emergency management office	
Nearest shelter option	
Pet-friendly shelter option	
Who will monitor evacuation orders	
Last checked date	



LOCALIZE IT:

If your area uses letters, colors, or numbers for evacuation zones, write exactly what your local system uses.

If an evacuation order is issued for your area, follow local instructions.

Flood & Storm Surge Risk

Water is one of the biggest hurricane dangers.

Flooding can happen from storm surge, heavy rain, overflowing canals or rivers, blocked drains, or low roads. This page helps your family think about water risk before you have to make decisions quickly.

Is our home near the coast, bay, canal, river, lake, or low area?	
Does our street flood during heavy rain?	
Where does water collect near our home?	
Which roads near us flood first?	
Where can we move important items higher?	
Where can we park a vehicle on higher ground?	
Official flood/storm surge resource	



SAFETY FIRST!

Never walk, bike, or drive through floodwater. You may not see the depth, current, holes, debris, or downed power lines.

Turn Around, Don't Drown. Avoid floodwater and follow local road closures

Know Your Home Worksheet

Choose safer places inside your home before the wind starts.

Every home is different. The goal is to know where supplies are, what rooms to avoid, and what needs to be secured before the storm arrives.

Safest interior room	
Lowest safe level we can use	
Rooms with the most windows to avoid	
Where flashlights are stored	
Where emergency supplies are stored	
Outdoor items to bring inside	
Window/shutter plan	



CALM CHECK:

Kids feel less overwhelmed when they know where the family will go inside the home and what simple things they can help gather.

Use your family plan and local instructions to decide whether to shelter or evacuate.

Safe Room House Diagram

A simple way to talk about where to shelter from severe wind.

Use this page to mark your safer room. In many homes, a better shelter area is an interior room on a lower level, away from windows and exterior doors. Your safest option may be different if local officials tell you to evacuate.



Area	Usually safer?	Family notes
Top floor / attic	Avoid for severe wind	
Room with large windows	Avoid	
Interior room / hallway / closet	Often better	

If you are in an evacuation zone or unsafe structure, follow evacuation orders instead of sheltering in place.

Sheltering from Severe Winds

What to bring into your safe area.

If your family is sheltering in place, choose the safest area before winds increase. Do not wait until conditions are dangerous to move supplies or pets.

- ☐ Flashlights
- ☐ Shoes for each person
- ☐ Phone & charger/power bank
- ☐ Battery radio or alert device
- ☐ Water & snacks
- ☐ Pet leash/carrier nearby
- ☐ Basic first aid
- ☐ Student comfort item

Where stored: _____

Where stored: _____

Charged? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Batteries? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Enough? _____

Pet plan: _____

Location: _____

Item: _____



WHAT NOT TO DO:

Do not go outside during severe winds, and do not assume the storm is over if conditions suddenly become calm. Wait for official updates.

Stay indoors and away from windows during severe wind unless officials instruct otherwise.

Hurricane Shutter Safety: Before the Storm

Plan ahead so nobody is rushing when conditions are unsafe.

Shutters and window protection can reduce damage, but installing them at the last minute can be risky. Decide who is responsible, where supplies are stored, and when the work should be done.

- ☐ Know where shutters, hardware, or plywood are stored
- ☐ Decide who is physically able to install them safely
- ☐ Keep one safe exit plan in mind
- ☐ Bring outdoor furniture and loose items inside
- ☐ Check that tools, screws, wing nuts, and labels are complete
- ☐ Install early enough to avoid dangerous wind or lightning
- ☐ Do not ask kids to climb ladders or handle heavy panels
- ☐ Check on neighbors only if it is safe to do so



PARENT/GUARDIAN TIP:

Label shutters by room before hurricane season. A little organization now can prevent stress when a storm is approaching.

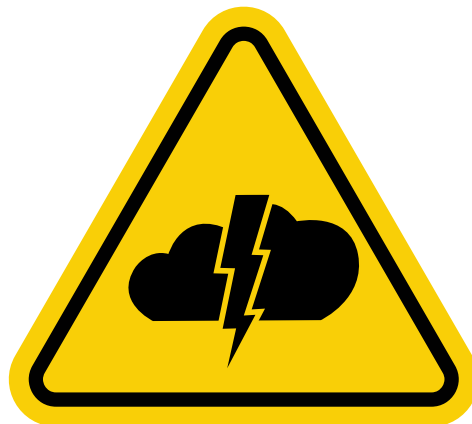
Do not install shutters or climb ladders when weather conditions are unsafe.

Hurricane Shutter Safety: After the Storm

Remove or open storm protection when it is safe.

Once officials say it is safe, think about light, ventilation, emergency exits, and fire rescue access. Shutters should not stay closed longer than needed.

- ✓ Wait until winds are down and it is safe to go outside
- ✓ Check for downed lines, broken glass, loose branches, or standing water first
- ✓ Remove or open at least one safe exit route
- ✓ Make sure bedrooms and living spaces are not trapped behind closed shutters
- ✓ Check that smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are working
- ✓ Store shutter hardware in labeled bags for next time
- ✓ Take photos of any storm damage before cleanup



SAFETY FIRST!

Do not let children explore around shutter panels, broken glass, or loose metal. Damaged areas can be sharp and unstable.

After the storm, wait for safe conditions before removing shutters or inspecting damage.

Sandbags & Flood Barriers

Helpful for some water issues, but not a guarantee.

Sandbags can sometimes help redirect shallow water or slow minor water intrusion, but they do not make a home floodproof and they are not protection from dangerous storm surge.

Before the storm	Find your county sandbag source. Bring ID if required. Do not wait until supplies run out.
Placement	Use around doors, garage openings, or low entry points when recommended.
Limits	Sandbags may fail in deep water, fast-moving water, or storm surge.
Receipts	Keep receipts/photos for flood-loss avoidance expenses when applicable.
After the storm	Treat used sandbags as potentially contaminated and follow local disposal instructions.



SMALL WIN:

Write your county sandbag pickup site on page 6 before hurricane season.

Use sandbags only as one part of a larger flood and evacuation plan.

Outdoor Items & Yard Safety

Anything loose can become a hazard in high wind.

Before winds increase, bring in or secure objects that could blow around. This is a good place for students to help with safe, lightweight tasks while adults handle heavy or dangerous items.

☐ Patio chairs and cushions

☐ Pool toys and floats

☐ Potted plants

☐ Bikes and scooters

☐ Loose branches/yard debris

☐ Outdoor electronics/cords

☐ Trash/recycling bins

☐ Garden tools and hoses

☐ Sports equipment

☐ Grills or propane tanks (adult only)

☐ Decorations, flags, umbrellas, signs

☐ Balcony items



STUDENT HELPER ROLE:

Students can help gather lightweight items, but adults should handle propane, ladders, sharp tools, and heavy furniture.

Bring in or secure outdoor items before conditions become unsafe.

Reinforce Your Home

Small improvements can reduce stress and damage.

Home reinforcement does not have to happen all at once. Use this page as a starter list for things to check before hurricane season.

Item	Done	Need Help
Window/door protection plan	☐	☐
Garage door check	☐	☐
Roof/soffit visual check	☐	☐
Tree/branch trimming plan	☐	☐
Outdoor drainage check	☐	☐
Insurance contact reviewed	☐	☐
Photos of home taken	☐	☐



PRO TIP:

Take a slow video of the outside of your home before hurricane season. It can help later if you need to show what changed.

Ask licensed professionals about repairs or mitigation work when needed.

Apartments, Condos, Dorms & High-Rises

Your building plan matters too.

If you live in a shared building, you need both a family plan and a building plan.

Elevators, parking garages, balconies, management alerts, and common areas may all be affected.

Building/management contact	
Building alert method	
Elevator plan if power goes out	
Parking garage/flooding plan	
Balcony items to bring inside	
Guest/visitor rules during storms	
Where packages/mail may be held	
Building shelter guidance	



LOCALIZE IT:

Ask your building, dorm, HOA, or property manager where official storm updates will be posted.

Follow building rules and local emergency instructions during severe weather

Manufactured Homes, RVs & Boats

Some places are not safe to ride out severe weather.

Families living in or staying in manufactured homes, RVs, campers, boats, or temporary structures should plan early. These spaces may not provide enough protection from severe wind, flooding, or storm surge.

- ☐ Know where the nearest safer shelter or sturdy building is
- ☐ Decide when your family would leave
- ☐ Plan transportation before winds or flooding begin
- ☐ Pack medications, documents, pets, and comfort items early
- ☐ Move the RV/boat only if it is safe and time allows
- ☐ Follow marina, campground, park, or local official instructions
- ☐ Do not stay because you are worried about belongings



SAFETY FIRST!

If local officials tell your area or structure type to evacuate, do not wait. **Property can be replaced; people cannot.**

Roads, Bridges & Low-Water Areas

The route that looks fastest may not be safest.

Hurricanes can flood roads, damage bridges, knock down power lines, and block familiar routes. Your family should know a primary route and a backup route before an evacuation is needed.

Low roads near us	
Bridges or causeways we use	
Roads that flood in heavy rain	
Official traffic/511 resource	
Backup route 1	
Backup route 2	
Where printed maps are stored	



WHAT NOT TO DO:

Do not take shortcuts through flooded or unfamiliar roads. Follow posted closures and official routes.

Do not drive through floodwater. Turn around and choose another route.

“Tens, Not Hundreds” Planning

Evacuation distance depends on the storm and your risk.

Sometimes evacuating may mean going far away. Other times, a safer location tens of miles inland may be enough. The key is not the distance; the key is following local instructions and getting to a safer place before conditions are dangerous.

Option	Where could we go?	Good for
Nearby safer place		Leaving a flood/evacuation zone while staying local
Family/friend inland		More space, pets, medical needs
Hotel		Privacy, power, pet policies if allowed
Shelter		If you need a public shelter option



PRO TIP:

Do not choose distance first. Choose safety first: zone, flooding risk, shelter availability, pets, medical needs, and official instructions.

Evacuation choices should be based on official guidance, storm risk, and your family's needs.

Transportation & Fuel Plan

Do not wait until everyone is on the road.

A family evacuation plan needs more than a destination. Think about the car, fuel, chargers, printed directions, pets, medications, and what happens if traffic is heavy.

Primary vehicle	
Backup vehicle/ride	
Driver	
Gas/charging plan	
Car charger location	
Printed directions location	
Pet/carrier plan	
Car kit location	



SMALL WIN:

During hurricane season, try not to let the gas tank get too low. A half-full tank gives your family more options.

Leave early if officials tell your area to evacuate. Do not wait for roads to become unsafe.

Utility Shutoff Plan

Adult-only planning for water, gas, and electricity.

Some emergencies may require utilities to be turned off, but this should be handled by adults who know the correct instructions. Students should know who to ask, not try to do this themselves.

Utility	Where is it?	Who handles it?
Water shutoff		
Electrical panel		
Gas shutoff		
Utility company phone		
Instructions stored		
Tools needed		



SAFETY FIRST!

Students should not turn off gas, electricity, or water unless specifically trained and directed by a trusted adult. If you smell gas, leave and call for help.

Follow utility company and local official instructions for shutoff and reconnection.

Water & Sewer Outage Plan

Plan for drinking water, washing water, and bathroom needs.

Power outages and storms can affect water systems, wells, pumps, wastewater systems, and local boil-water notices. Write down how your family will handle water if services are interrupted.

Drinking water stored	
Water for pets	
Water for washing/cleaning	
Water utility alert source	
Boil-water notice source	
Private well/pump plan	
Septic/lift station concern	
Bathroom backup plan	



LOCALIZE IT:

Know who your water provider is. A boil-water notice may apply to one service area but not another.

Follow local water and wastewater advisories after a storm.

Bathtub Water Plan

Useful for flushing, cleaning, and washing - not your main drinking water.

Before a storm, some families fill a clean bathtub or large containers with water for non-drinking uses. This can help if water service is interrupted.

- ☐ Clean the tub before filling it
- ☐ Use bathtub water for flushing toilets, basic cleaning, or washing when appropriate
- ☐ Do not rely on bathtub water as your main drinking water
- ☐ Store drinking water separately in clean, food-safe containers
- ☐ Keep young children and pets away from filled tubs unless supervised
- ☐ Follow local boil-water or water-safety instructions



PRO TIP:

Write “drinking water” and “washing/flushing water” on containers so nobody mixes them up during a stressful moment.

Use safe drinking water guidance from local officials. Do not drink unsafe stored water.

Toilet Flushing Without Running Water

Know the basic idea before you need it.

Toilets and plumbing systems are different. Some homes can flush manually with stored water; others may have pumps, septic systems, or sewer issues that make flushing unsafe or limited. Follow local wastewater guidance.

What to check	City sewer? Septic? Well pump? Lift station? Smart toilet?
Stored water source	Tub, bucket, rain-safe container, or other non-drinking water.
Basic method	Pour water into the toilet bowl or tank only if your plumbing system can handle it.
When to stop	If water backs up, drains slowly, or local officials say to limit wastewater use.
Who handles it	Adult or older teen with adult permission; younger kids should not manage sanitation tasks.



SAFETY FIRST!

Never mix cleaning chemicals, and wash hands carefully after handling any bathroom backup supplies.

Plumbing systems vary. Follow local utility or wastewater guidance during outages.

Shelter, Hotel, or Staying With Family

Compare options before a storm is close.

The best evacuation location depends on your family's risk, budget, transportation, pets, medical needs, and how far you need to go. Use this page to compare options calmly.

Option	Address/Contact	Pets?	Medical/Power?
Family/friend		☐ yes ☐ no	☐ yes ☐ no
Hotel		☐ yes ☐ no	☐ yes ☐ no
Public shelter		☐ yes ☐ no	☐ yes ☐ no
Pet-safe location		☐ yes ☐ no	☐ yes ☐ no
Backup option		☐ yes ☐ no	☐ yes ☐ no



CALM CHECK:

Kids often feel calmer when they know where they might sleep, whether pets can come, and who will be with them.

Check shelter availability and rules through official local sources before relying on a location.

Special Needs Shelter / Registry

Register early if your family may need extra support.

Some communities have special needs registries or shelters for people who need medical, mobility, oxygen, electricity, transportation, or caregiver support. These programs are usually not automatic - families may need to register early.

Registry website/phone	
Who in our family may need support	
Medical equipment or oxygen need	
Transportation need	
Caregiver/contact person	
Documents needed	
Registration date / confirmation	



ADULT/MEDICAL PLANNING

Ask doctors, equipment suppliers, and local emergency management what backup plan your family needs before hurricane season.

Special needs shelter and registry rules vary by county or state. Confirm details locally.

Know Your Zone & Home Review

One last check before you move on.

Use this page to mark what your family has completed and what still needs attention.
You do not have to finish everything today.

Action	Done	Still need
Evacuation zone written down	☐	☐
Flood/storm surge risk discussed	☐	☐
Safest room chosen	☐	☐
Shutter/window plan reviewed	☐	☐
Outdoor items plan made	☐	☐
Sandbag/flood barrier source noted	☐	☐
Transportation/fuel plan discussed	☐	☐
Utility shutoff adult identified	☐	☐
Water/sewer backup plan discussed	☐	☐
Shelter/hotel/family options compared	☐	☐
Special needs registry checked	☐	☐



SMALL WIN:

Pick one "Still Need" item and schedule a time to handle it. Preparedness is built in small steps.



KIDS4KIDS REMINDER:

The goal is not to scare anyone. The goal is to help the whole family feel safer, calmer, and more ready.

Always follow official alerts and local emergency instructions.