

Tips for Hurricane Preparation or Evacuation

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A scientific survey of Monroe County residents conducted during the 90's after Hurricane Andrew with the assistance of Florida Sea Grant indicated that approximately two-thirds of the residents intend to evacuate in the event of a major hurricane. However, another sixteen percent of the residents are not sure what they will do. This group of unsure residents would probably make their decisions at the last minute and be less prepared than those that intended to evacuate.

How can you prepare for evacuation? Basically, preparation is similar whether you plan to evacuate or not, with some minor differences. Evacuees need to store less food and other supplies and although "non-evacuees" probably just store food and water in a closet or attic, everyone should have their supplies stored in such a way that you can easily carry them with you.

Even though you may not plan to evacuate you may change your mind at the last minute and decide to go to a safer building or even to evacuate to the mainland, depending on the severity and direction of the storm. So, it would be wise to be prepared to carry your supplies with you regardless of your current plans.

Surprisingly, thirteen percent of the County's households say they plan to tow a boat or trailer when they evacuate. If you plan to take a trailer out of the county you should reconsider your options. It may be easier, and definitely safer, to shelter your boat and concentrate on protecting your home and family. You can always get boat insurance to cover losses.

If you do insist on trailering your boat during an evacuation, plan on leaving early. Once hurricane warnings are issued, law enforcement will force you to abandon your boat and trailer. No trailers or high profile vehicles will be allowed on the highway after a hurricane warning has been issued.

In general, 69 percent, or about 54,000 of the county's residents said they would evacuate after a hurricane warning was issued. Most people who say they would evacuate would do so within six hours of hearing the evacuation notice. Twenty-three percent would evacuate immediately; sixty percent within three hours; and a total of eighty-three percent within six hours. An immediate public response, as indicated above, coupled with the County's phased evacuation plan should ensure an orderly and trouble free evacuation.

Even if you do not intend to evacuate, it is still important to prepare for an evacuation as a backup plan, because you never know what circumstances you may be faced with in a future hurricane.

The survey results found that households that were uninformed about their susceptibility to hurricane impacts were also the most unprepared. Don't hesitate to get prepared! All it will cost you is a small amount of money and time! Time spent today will reduce frustration and stress later, and may save you and your family from a life-threatening situation!

Prepare a family plan that includes evacuation as an alternative. Talk to family and friends that live outside the County about staying with them during an evacuation. You can even make preliminary arrangements with an out of county hotel by making a reservation immediately upon learning of a storm coming your way--you can always cancel the reservation 24 hours prior to arrival without a penalty. Most importantly, think through all your options with your family and neighbors and **BE HURRICANE PREPARED!!!**