



Storm season approaches: Safeguard your home

When Mother Nature shows her fury, there's no stopping her. But you can take measures to protect your family and your belongings when a tornado or severe storm strikes.

PLAN AHEAD

Designate a safe shelter in the event of a tornado. This should be a storm cellar or the center of your basement or home, away from windows.

Keep important documents and files in your shelter. If a tornado hits your home, the last thing you need to worry about is recovering personal, confidential information.

Create a disaster emergency kit and keep it in your shelter. You should also prepare a home inventory so we can better understand what you lost in the event your home is hit by a tornado. Learn how to do both below.

Maintain your landscaping. Use shredded bark instead of gravel or rock, which can easily turn into flying debris and damage windows, siding, and automobiles. Keep trees and shrubbery trimmed, and remove weak branches or trees that could fall on your house.

WHEN A STORM IS ANNOUNCED

React to the weather appropriately. Move furniture, lawn ornaments, and other objects into your home or secured garage when authorities issue a watch for a tornado or other windstorm. These objects can become debris and damage your home or autos. However, if authorities issue a tornado warning, move immediately to your designated shelter or other sturdy structure; a warning indicates a tornado is imminent.

Do not open your windows during high winds. At one time, people thought this could help save a house. Now experts agree that you could make things worse by allowing wind and rain into your home.

Create a home inventory

By taking inventory of your personal belongings, you're taking charge. In the event of any natural disaster, an inventory helps you during the claims process. It will be quicker and easier because you'll know exactly what you need to recover.

Build an emergency kit

Plan for storm season by creating an emergency kit to keep in a designated shelter. Below are examples of what you can keep in your kit. Each year, you should replace items that are no longer usable.

- First-aid supplies
- Portable NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) weather radio
- Flashlight
- Drinking water and non-perishable food
- Portable lanterns
- Fresh batteries
- Wrench and other basic tools

You can purchase personal inventory kits online or at local office supply stores. Or use free software and services available at these websites:

www.knowyourstuff.org www.makeitfeasy.com

- Cash
- Clothing, blankets
- Extra car and house keys
- Important documents like insurance policies
- Baby items
- Prescription medications
- Extra eyeglasses
- Work gloves

Source: DisasterSafety.org

Minimize water damage to your property

Basements are prone to water damage this time of year. By taking the following steps, you can help prevent or minimize some of the damage.

The foundation

- Ask a professional about applying waterproof sealant to the inside and outside of your foundation walls.
- Call a professional for repair if you notice:
 - Cracks in foundation walls.
 - Moist or soft drywall in a finished basement.
 - Water spots on foundation walls.
- Keep your basement floor drains clear so water can flow to the sump pump properly.

The sump pump

- Install a battery-operated backup in case a storm causes a power outage.
- Test your sump pump annually.
- Keep your pump clean for efficiency and to avoid burn out.
- Use an alarm system to detect water in your basement.

Appliances and other belongings

- Elevate your heating, ventilating, and air conditioning equipment.
- Raise washers and dryers from the ground with blocks.

- Keep all personal items stored in plastic storage bins to prevent them from being destroyed by water.
- Build storage shelves to keep personal items off the floor.

Outside your home

- Keep eaves troughs cleared of leaves and debris.
- Direct downspouts 6-10 feet from your house.
- Properly seal your chimney and roof exhaust pipes.
- Make sure your roof is not deteriorated or worn and your shingles are not curling.
- Cover window wells or install metal wells with gravel bases to drain water properly.
- Seal windows and fit doorways tight to their frames.
- Remove trees if they are too close to the house. Roots could cause the foundation and basement walls to crack.
- Do not plant shrubs too close to the house.
- Monitor irrigation systems.
- Be sure your yard has a drainage system that prevents water from flowing toward your home.
- Slope any paved surfaces next to the house downward away from the home. Regularly check the sealant between the house and paved surface for cracks.

Find more safety tips like these on SECURAS' *Prevention Connection* at www.secura.net.

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- Vehicle and ATV safety tips
- Home and property protection advice
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- Winter weather safety

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