

ACCOMMODATIONS INDUSTRY HURRICANE PLANNING GUIDE



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HURRICANE PLANNING GUIDE

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HURRICANE PLANNING GUIDE

PURPOSE

This guide has been produced and distributed to assist owners and operators of accommodations in Pinellas County in developing in-house plans and procedures to protect guests, employees and property before and during hurricane conditions. In accordance with the Pinellas County Code Section 34, all properties are required to have on file with the appropriate municipality or the County, in non-incorporated areas, a hurricane evacuation plan.

Every property, whether in evacuation areas or not, should have a total emergency or hurricane plan. Hopefully, some of the material provided will assist you in developing or updating your procedures for evacuation into a complete plan. The information presented is not director in nature, but is offered as a service to the industry by the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and Pinellas County Emergency Management.

This publication is patterned after similar guides distributed by the Lee County Visitors and Convention Bureau, the State of Alabama and the Alabama Hotel Motel Association.

1. Plan Development: All plans should contain the following:

- A.** Include general information about hurricanes in the plan. This will greatly help staff who may not be familiar with hurricane terminology, descriptions and effects such as storm surge, high winds, tornadoes, etc.
- B.** Establish an emergency organization that will be responsible for decision making during the hurricane crisis. Either having an executive committee or emergency coordinator established is acceptable.
- C.** Establish means of communications with your staff and guests that can be used in the event you lose telephone service.
- D.** Establish a command center in a suitable location.
- E.** Establish an action checklist to be implemented once the command center is activated. A specific list of actions will prove very useful during times of crisis.
- F.** Establish responsibilities for management and staff to carry out when a hurricane threatens Pinellas County. These responsibilities should be specific and organized into different hurricane phases, such as Hurricane Watch and Hurricane Warning.
- G.** Maintain a log of actions taken during the emergency.

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2. For properties not in evacuation areas:

- A. You should still have a complete, written hurricane plan.
- B. Review your hurricane plan and inventory your supplies.
- C. Secure outside equipment.
- D. Alert your staff that they may be required to handle additional guests from evacuating hotels/ motels if an evacuation is ordered.
- E. Relocate emergency supplies where they can be controlled.
- F. When effects of the hurricane are imminent, activate your command center.
- G. Contact the St. Petersburg/Clearwater Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. Advise them that you are available for business and how many rooms you have unoccupied. Keep the bureau updated on your status.

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Pinellas County Government has divided its hurricane plan into four phases. These phases deal with your property as follows:

1. Monitor Phase (1 June through 30 November-Hurricane Season)

- A.** The duty manager should be required to tune into weather reports at least twice daily; once in the morning and again in the evening.
- B.** Plans must be prepared/reviewed to protect employees, families, guests and the facility.
- C.** Make sure every guest receives a copy of the Hurricane Plan letter (Appendix A or B) at the front desk.

2. Warning Phase

- A.** Upon issuance of a Hurricane Watch for Pinellas County by the National Hurricane Center, your Hurricane Evacuation Plan should be activated.
- B.** Staff who live in evacuation zones or mobile homes should be released for 4-6 hours to prepare their families and homes for the storm.
- C.** All property guests will be advised of the watch by notice (Appendix C).
- D.** Future reservations for the next 72 hours should be notified of the Watch.

3. Response Phase

- A.** When an evacuation order is issued, all internal preparedness plans must be completed as soon as possible.
- B.** All must be prepared to assist and support your guests in every way possible.

4. Recovery Phase

- A.** As soon as the storm has passed, key staff will assemble to begin recovery operations and damage assessment.
- B.** All staff must be prepared to assist with recovery efforts.

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SUGGESTED COMMAND CENTER ACTION CHECKLIST

A. 72 - 48 Hours before forecasted hurricane landfall:

1. Initiate tracking the hurricane on the tracking map.
2. Review hurricane plan.
3. Department managers review individual responsibilities.
4. Review department staff responsibilities.
5. Check supplies and equipment.

B. 48-24 Hours before forecasted hurricane landfall depending on storm strength:

1. Activate command center if local authorities are considering evacuation or a Hurricane Watch has been issued by the National Hurricane Center.
2. Call in Executive Committee or Emergency Coordinator and managers.
3. Initiate log of actions taken to implement hurricane plan.
4. Schedule for possible guest evacuation.
5. Schedule evacuation transportation if necessary.
6. Issue information flyers to all guests.
7. Prepare rooms, outside areas, windows and guest facilities to minimize possible injury and/or damage.
8. Notify incoming groups and guests with reservations of potential hurricane situation.
9. Prepare vital records and equipment for evacuation.
10. Establish record system to monitor guest departures.

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C. 24 Hours before forecasted hurricane landfall, a Hurricane Warning is issued, or the Governor or Board of County Commissioners orders evacuation:

1. Review all actions taken to identify any shortfalls.
2. Insure that all guests are aware of the situation
3. Review responsibilities to insure all preparations have been made.
4. Secure excess baggage and equipment to higher floors of the facility.
5. Implement guest evacuation plan.
6. Secure facility.

D. Tropical Storm Consideration:

1. If a tropical storm is forecasted to hit the area and no evacuation recommendation or order has been given, and the Executive Committee or Emergency Coordinator decides not to evacuate, continue to operate interior restaurants and lounges.
2. Warn guests not to go outside, onto balconies and advise them to stay away from windows.
3. Consider organizing some recreational activity for those guests that stay so that they will not become distraught or wander outside the facility.

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SUGGESTED MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Identify resources needed to evacuate and protect the facility.
2. Arrange for transportation of guests and staff.
3. Establish a decision making mechanism to protect the guests, employees and property that considers the following factors:
 - A. Severity of storm.
 - B. Danger imposed (from flooding, winds, etc.).
 - C. Date/time of greatest danger (example, if the storm is expected during nighttime, then more time may be needed for preparation).
 - D. Number of guests in the facility.
 - E. Condition of facility and equipment.
 - F. Transportation available.
 - G. Staff on call.
 - H. Financial considerations (example, having enough cash on hand for guest check requests).
 - I. Legal considerations.
 - J. Emergency support available (police, fire, emergency medical).
 - K. When to establish command center.
 - L. Assignment of responsibilities for management and staff.
 - M. Notification of guest.
 - N. Notification of Convention Visitors Bureau.
 - O. Storage and receiving of food, supplies and equipment for emergency use.
 - P. Preparation of hotel grounds and buildings.
 - Q. Designated areas to be used if the decision is made to stay with the facility.
 - R. Staff scheduling of 24-hour emergency operations.
 - S. Operation of emergency generator(s).
 - T. Obtaining supplies, fuel, batteries, etc.
 - U. Plan for post storm cleanup.
 - V. Plan for storing food and feeding the cleanup crews.
 - W. Security concerns after the storm passes.
 - X. Determining what equipment will be needed and where it will be stored for cleanup
 - Y. Providing information to cleanup crews about snakes and animals that may have sought shelter on the premises during the storm.

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SUGGESTED STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES BY DEPARTMENTS

1. Housekeeping:

Pull drapes in all guest rooms, place patio furniture in the guest rooms, place pool furniture in the pool, move lobby furniture to second floor (if feasible), fill bathtubs with water, assemble in one area all post storm cleanup equipment, assemble blankets and pillows for guest comfort if needed.

2. Front Desk:

Man switchboard until evacuation, run key computer reports, turn on guest room message lights, remove computer terminals and files that could sustain water damage to higher floors or wrap with double plastic and tape for day storage, keep an accurate count of guests staying or leaving the facility.

3. Restaurant and Lounge:

Remove all cash registers to office or upper floors, secure all liquor, tape windows in restaurant/lounge, and remove restaurant furniture to an interior room or to a higher floor.

4. Recreation:

Take boats, equipment and chairs on beach to the most secure part of beach and tie or anchor in the most sheltered area. Develop games for guests if the decision is made not to evacuate, move electronics games to upper floors (if feasible), evacuate gift shop or sales items to an upper floor, assist Housekeeping in securing outside equipment.

5. Security:

Post security at exits until guests leave.

6. Kitchen:

Place all perishable food items in the cooler/freezer unit, plan menu for command center and post storm cleanup crew, obtain vehicle for food storage and transportation if necessary to move in evacuation.

7. Engineering:

Secure facility, turn off water, gas and electricity as necessary, obtain additional fuel for portable generator(s), start and check portable generator(s) and electrical service at predetermined time.

8. Accounting:

Print hard copies of all records and secure them, remove records to a secure upper floor or evacuate them to secure safe location, secure all cash and maintain a record of cash received, double wrap records in plastic if dry storage is not available.

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9. Catering:

Secure all silver, bring in props from outside, secure records, assemble post storm cleanup equipment, pull drapes, and remove audiovisual equipment to an upper floor.

10. Personnel Department:

Secure employee personnel and guest files and either remove them to a secure upper floor or evacuate to a safe location, help with employee family needs where appropriate.

11. Sales:

Notify incoming groups and guests with reservations of hurricane status, notify all tour operators and receptive operators, and notify Convention & Visitors Bureau.

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SUGGESTED GUEST EVACUATION PROCEDURES

1. Notification:

- A. Notify all guests as soon as possible once the decision has been made to evacuate.
- B. Notify all guests via a flyer placed under each room door, announcements through the telephone, or other means (see attachment for suggested notice).
- C. Notify guest in the lounge, dining areas, pool and beach areas.
- D. Request guests notify the front desk prior to leaving the facility.
- E. Request guests notify their families on their evacuation (i.e. where they are going).
- F. Have information available (maps showing evacuation routes) at convenient location.
- G. Notify incoming guests by telephone not to come.

2. Evacuation:

A. Guest with transportation:

- 1. Urge guest having vehicles to leave the facility with their baggage as soon as possible.
- 2. Have facility personnel assist in guest departure by advising what routes to use to leave the county or area.
- 3. If emergency shelter is requested by departing guests, make sure they are given proper direction to nearest opened shelters. LISTEN FOR THE NAMES OF SHELTERS TO BE OPEN WHEN THE EVACUATION ORDER IS ISSUED.

B. Guest without transportation:

- 1. Determine the number of guest requiring transportation.
- 2. Arrange for enough vehicles to evacuate guests.
- 3. If necessary, secure all excess baggage in secure area on upper floors. Give guests receipts.
- 4. Arrange for facility personnel to assist guests out of the hotel and onto arranged transportation.
- 5. Notify CVB where you are taking the guests (i.e. Shelter, airport or other hotel).

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RECOVERY ISSUES

- A. The reentry policy for Pinellas County into evacuation areas consists of the following phases:
- 1. Search and Rescue** – Teams of emergency response, utility and public works Personnel will enter damaged areas to search for those who stayed behind. They will also be assessing utility damages and developing initial emergency access to evacuated areas.
 - 2. Damage Assessment** - Teams of people will enter the damaged area to determine the extent and magnitude of damages to homes, business and public facilities. They also will be determining how safe it is to return to evacuated area and what will have to be done to make dangerous areas safe for those living or working there.
 - 3. Limited Reentry** – Those people living or having business in damaged areas will be allowed to return once health and safety concerns are addressed. It is at this point where you can go back and determine the extent of your facility's damage. Efforts to repair or rebuild damaged facilities will also commence at this time.
 - 4. Full Reentry** – Once the damage has been repaired, those who do not live or work in the damaged area will be allowed to reenter. This would include tourists and seasonal visitors.
- B. Assume working conditions will be primitive. Electricity and telephone service may be out for a while and you may also lose water, sewer and road access.
- C. Establish procedures for notifying your staff on when you want for them to return to work. Consider that the telephone service may not be working.
- D. If necessary, establish a policy on layoffs in case your facility is damaged extensively and may be out of operation for an extended period of time.
- E. Establish who will conduct a damage assessment of your facility.
- F. Identify who will handle insurance claims. This includes notification of insurance companies.
- G. Establish procedures for repairing damaged facilities. Remember that selecting contractors for repair or restoration is your responsibility, not the insurance companies. An accurate damage assessment and the use of local contractors will help speed up the restoration of your property.

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- H. Establish backup procedures for purchasing equipment and supplies needed to recover. If you use a computer for record keeping, think about a backup if the electricity is out. Count on delays in procuring local equipment and building supplies.
- I. Establish criteria to determine when your facility can be reopened. **Work closely with the CVB so that they can help promote your availability to outside markets.**

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Appendix A Suggested Hurricane Plan Communiqué with Guest

HURRICANE EVACUATION PLAN FOR

NAME

ADDRESS

This _____ **is not** in a Hurricane Evacuation Zone.
Hotel/Motel/Condo, etc.

If a Hurricane were to affect our area during your stay, you would be informed of the threat by the following means:

1. By phone/message light on your phone
2. A note on your door
3. Personal contact by our staff

The notices you will receive during the approach of a hurricane will be given when a "Hurricane Watch" issued, when a "Hurricane Warning/Evacuation Order" is given and finally when arrival of the storm is eminent.

If you receive a "Hurricane Watch" notice, you should keep in close touch with the front desk. If you decide to leave the area, it is recommended that you move well inland, away from any coastal area. It is suggested that you notify friends/relatives of your plans.

If you choose to stay, we will do the best we can to keep you safe and comfortable.

If a "Hurricane Warning" is issued, you will be required to stay on the grounds of the property. As it becomes apparent that arrival of the storm is imminent, you will be directed to safe areas within our facility to "ride out the storm."

It is possible that we will lose electricity and telephone service during a hurricane, so please be prepared. Hot meals may not be possible. After the storm has passed, we will return to normal service as quickly as possible.

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Appendix B Suggested Hurricane Plan Communiqué with Guest Evacuation Area Property

HURRICANE EVACUATION PLAN FOR

NAME

ADDRESS

This _____ is in a Hurricane Evacuation Zone.
Hotel/Motel/Condo, etc.

If a Hurricane were to affect our area during your stay, you would be informed of the threat by the following means:

1. By phone/message light on your phone
2. A note on your door
3. Personal contact by our staff

The notices you will receive during the approach of a hurricane will be given when a "Hurricane Watch" is issued and when a "Evacuation Order" is given.

During the "Watch" phase, you will be asked to keep in close touch with the front desk. Because of Pinellas County's limited evacuation routes and public shelters, you should consider checking out and seeking shelter well inland. It is suggested that notify friends or relatives of your plans.

If you choose to stay, we will do the best we can to keep you safe and comfortable.

When a "Evacuation Order" is issued, you will be **required** to check out as quickly as possible. The Evacuation Route from our property is shown on the attached map. Also shown are the public shelters for Hurricane Evacuations. These shelters should only be used as a last resort. If time permits, you should leave the area altogether and seek shelter inland.

If you do go to a shelter, you should bring everything you need except for food. Don't forget important items such as medications and special dietary needs.

Shelters **do not** have cots, blankets or pillows, so be prepared to rough it. You will not be allowed to bring pets, firearms or alcohol into the shelter. Smoking is not permitted.

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Appendix C Weather Update Handout

DATE/TIME: _____

SITUATION: _____

Example: A hurricane watch has been issue for Pinellas County as of _____

ACTIONS: _____

Example: Keep in close touch with the front desk. If you decide to check out and move well inland, notify friends and relatives of your plans.

AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE: _____

Example: Maps of the area are available at the front desk; Rental cars are available at _____; for Transportation to the airport, call _____.

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Appendix D Suggested Communication Equipment

1. Portable radio, with charger and extra battery.
2. Weather radio tuned to NOAA Radio frequency 162.55 MHz.
3. Television to monitor local stations and the Weather Channel.
4. Cellular telephones.
5. Battery operated AM/FM radio to tune into the local Emergency Alert System stations.
6. Bullhorn for announcing emergency information to guests.
7. Beepers with chargers and extra batteries.
8. CB radio(s).
9. Radio receiver/VHR Marine Radio if you have guests who use local boats, or traveled by boat.
10. Facsimile machine

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Appendix E Suggested Equipment and Supplies for Command Post Operation

1. Hurricane evacuation plan and supporting procedures.
2. Hurricane tracking map.
3. Flip charts with markers.
4. Portable generators(s).
5. First aid kit(s).
6. Oxygen supplies.
7. Portable generator(s).
8. Cyanamid light sticks (in case lighting is lost and light is needed to guide guests from the parking lot to the road).
9. Extra flashlights with spare batteries.
10. Sufficient supply of tape.
11. Sufficient supply of rope.
12. Coffee maker with coffee supplies.
13. Non-perishable food items.
14. Soft drinks (include diet and decaffeinated).
15. Bottle water.
16. Tables and chairs.
17. Buildings plans for your property.
18. Spare fire extinguishers.