



PREPARED

Tallahassee Severe Weather Guide



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Tallahassee Prepared Severe Weather Guide 2025

Helping you stay prepared for severe weather
throughout the year.
Presented by Whiddon Glass

Tallahassee Prepared is an authorized [NOAA/National Weather Service](#)
Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador for Tallahassee and the Big Bend
region of Florida.

Be Weather-Ready



Check the forecast regularly to see if you are at risk for severe weather. Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio to stay informed about severe thunderstorm watches and warnings. Check the Weather-Ready Nation for tips.

Sign Up for Notifications

Know how your community sends warnings. Some communities have outdoor sirens. Others depend on media and smartphones to alert residents to severe storms.

Create a Communications Plan

Have a family plan that includes an emergency meeting place and the necessary contact information. Pick a safe room in your home, such as a basement, storm cellar, or an interior room on the lowest floor with no windows. Get more ideas for a plan at:

<https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>

Practice Your Plan

Conduct a family severe thunderstorm drill regularly so everyone knows what to do if a damaging wind or large hail is approaching. Make sure all members of your family know to go there when severe thunderstorm warnings are issued. Don't forget pets if time allows.

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CREATE EMERGENCY DOCUMENTS

TALLAHASSEE PREPARED suggestions for creating an emergency document for home and business.

Create a master document or folder you can keep on your computer and send to your phone or keep it in Google documents. Have it accessible wherever you go. This master document will contain all your and your family's vital information in case of separation in an emergency.

Step 1: Gather Your Vital Records

Your most important personal records: There are a few documents that you should keep in a secured location such as a fire safe or safe deposit box:

- Social Security card
- Birth certificate
- Passport
- Any other official, hard-to-replace documents

Scan these items so you can have a digital record of them as well.

- Storing these documents in a vacuum sealed bag will protect them from water damage should they not be in a secure, protected location.

Add to your emergency records kit:

- Contact information: Both your contact information and your emergency contacts' info. This includes your nearest relatives, your will executor(s), and employers.
- Will and medical directives: Add a copy of your will/living trust and medical letter of instructions (keep the originals with your legal representative). You can upload a PDF file to Google Docs for this purpose.
- Insurance: Homeowners, auto, medical, life, disability, and other insurance agents/brokers contact info and policy numbers

- Financial accounts: Bank, investment, and credit card/loan account information, including institution names, phone numbers, and account numbers
- Health records: Immunization records, allergies, dietary restrictions, medications, medical/surgical treatments
- Pet information: Description of each pet, vet contact information, and any important medical notes
- Property: Car information, home purchase papers/deeds, and other home inventory items.
- All of this can easily be achieved by preparing a simple Excel spreadsheet with the relevant information added by category.

Step 2: Export Your Account Information

Account Passwords: For login information to important accounts, it's best not to store your logins in an online document. You can export your logins from password managers like LastPass, or 1Password to a CSV file and then encrypt it so it can be shared securely.

Step 3: Share Your Master Information Kit and Vital Documents

The Google Docs spreadsheet is easy to share. Once you've filled out your version of the spreadsheet, click on the Share button and you can email people who you want to be able to view or edit the document. (Think of people who you'd also consider emergency contacts.)

Step 4. Regularly Update Your Emergency Document

You'll need to update your files/master records book when you update your information and accounts. This master information kit will need to be reevaluated from time-to-time. Consider doing so at least yearly (e.g., at tax time, when you're already looking at all your accounts) or, better yet, quarterly.

Set up a reminder on your calendar so you won't forget. When you get your reminder, don't wait. Just quickly look over the items in your document and if anything has changed, update it.

WINDOWS & DOORS

If your home or office has large expanses of glass, consider using impact-resistant glass to protect your investment. Make upgrades now that will prevent possible future damage.

What precautions can you take? If a storm threatens, secure your building. Simply taping your windows with masking tape or other such material is not enough to protect you. Cover non-impact-resistant windows with shutters or plywood. As much as is possible, avoid being near glass windows, and have heavy blankets or other such material covering valuables in the event of flying glass.

Protecting your windows during a severe storm

A lot of folks duct-tape their windows, however this is an ineffective solution against heavy wind and driving rain. Protective window film would be a better option. Consider calling a local glass company or professional contractor for a more permanent solution. There some options you can do yourself and can be less costly.

PLYWOOD

Plywood can be an effective and less expensive option for covering windows. If you choose to do the work yourself, set aside a weekend to measure and cut boards making sure that they are at least 5/8" thick and about 8" larger on each side than the opening you are covering. Store the plywood boards in a dry location that is easily accessible. In advance of a severe storm, you may decide to use screws and anchors or expansion masonry bolts to install the boards. An alternative is to use plywood clips that do not require any screws nor drilling.

In using plywood, here are some important things to keep in mind:

- Consider local building codes that regard temporary use of plywood window covers.
- Consult your homeowners insurance coverage regarding any available discounts offered if you use plywood covers.
- If not secured properly, the boards can become dangerous flying objects.
- Plywood is bulky and must be stored properly to reduce deterioration over time.
- It is less effective in protecting sliding glass doors and large windows.

STORM SHUTTERS

Roll-up or accordion shutters are permanently attached to a house, which makes them easier to use than plywood. All you have to do is pull the shutters into place before a storm. Some shutters use perforation or trans-lucent material to let in light. Any shutter system certified as "impact-resistant" by Leon County Building Code or Florida Building Code is going to be very strong.

- **High-Impact and Impact-Resistant glass:** Laminated glass is a type of safety glass that remains intact when shattered. In the event of breaking, it is held in place by an interlayer of lamination usually made of polyvinyl butyral (PVB) that has been laminated between two or more layers of glass. This interlayer keeps the layers of glass bonded even when broken. One of the most appreciated safety benefits is that its high strength prevents the glass from breaking up into large sharp pieces. It's easily recognized by its characteristic "spider web" cracking pattern which results when an impact is powerful enough to crack the glass. Expect to pay as much as \$50 per square foot for single-glazed impact glass and \$70 per square foot for double-glazed glass.

Protecting exterior and garage doors

Protect glass or wooden doors as you would windows. Check all doors, including solid wood exterior doors for loose or missing screws. Strong winds can buckle any door that is not properly protected and secured.



9 WINDOW FILM

Window film is made from a heavy duty polyester and is a useful, safe way to protect glass by holding shattered glass in place while awaiting repairs. The film also improves the structural integrity of the glass, increasing window strength by up to 80% and making it more resistant to breaking and shattering in the event of severe weather.

Window film on a house window is similar to lamination on a car windshield. But unlike lamination, which must be applied during the manufacture process of a pane of glass, security window film can be applied at any time to existing panes of glass. Here are some benefits to consider:

- Personal safety: Hurricanes and tornadoes produce intense winds which create damage and injury from flying glass. Broken glass can also cause property damage that would not have occurred had the glass remained in its frame.
- Security window film can improve the ability of existing glass to mitigate the impact of explosive force and windblown debris. The primary function of security film is to hold glass intact in the event of it being broken, preventing glass from becoming flying projectiles. In some cases, the glass may shatter but remain intact.
- Window film is popular because it is unobtrusive and can be left in place year-round and removed easily when no longer needed. Many homeowners also like the fact that the film blocks ultraviolet light that can fade carpets and fabric. As an added bonus, privacy films can also reduce a large amount of sunlight and residual heat, increasing your energy savings.



10 GUTTERS & GUTTER MAINTENANCE

Gutters are an important part of your roofing system.

Without gutters, rain water would simply run off your roof and slowly erode your soil and the foundation of your house. Regularly checking your gutters and cleaning will help prevent damage. Making small repairs or changes early on will help prevent more costly repairs. Gutters typically need to be re-nailed or screwed in overtime as they sag off the roof. This does not take much, just a quick nail in or screw depending on how your system is set up.

- Gutters should be cleaned free of debris at least once a year. This should be done more frequently if you have trees close to your house. Installing gutter guards can help reduce the frequency of gutter cleaning needed.
- If the gutters appear to be clean, observe how they function during normal rainstorms. A spillover of runoff is an indication of undersized gutter system. If you see spillover, consider installing larger gutters.



STAY PREPARED

Tony Kelly Heating & Air Conditioning and York have teamed up with Tallahassee Prepared to help you stay prepared for severe weather throughout the year.

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With 775 5-star reviews, you know we are dedicated to our customers. We strive to build lasting relationships so that our customers never have to worry about finding another HVAC company to make repairs.

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Protect your home and yard from heavy rainfall.

- An average sized home can experience hundreds of gallons of runoff coming from the roof during heavy rainfall. If downspouts and sump pumps are not set up correctly, it can cause foundation problems, erosion or wet spots in the yard.
- To start, make sure that the land around the house slopes away from foundation walls and fill in any depressions near the downspout. Ideally, a 5% grade should be maintained for a distance of ten feet around your home.

Protect soil from gutter overflow along the drip line.

If the gutters are spilling over but are not easily accessible or cost too much to replace, consider protecting the soil along the drip line. This can be done by spreading gravel or planting vegetation along the drip line.

- A band of bluestone or pea gravel about 10 – 12 inches wide should provide adequate protection for the soil.
Before putting down the gravel, spread a sheet of landscape fabric over the area. Install plastic edging (4 – 5 inches tall) along both sides of the area where the gravel will be added. The edging will keep the gravel in place. Pour in a layer of gravel about 3 – 4 inches thick.
- Ground covers or a row of thick leafy shrubs can also protect the soil from gutter spillage, complementing existing landscaping. Gravel and vegetative covers can also be used simultaneously.

12 TREE SERVICE & MAINTENANCE

In general, if you notice any abnormality in a tree's appearance, carefully examine the problem. a careful examination of the problem. By identifying the specific symptoms of damage and understanding their causes, you may be able to diagnose the problem and select an appropriate treatment. Damaged trees are especially vulnerable to high winds. Here are some important safety tips that you need to consider:

Consulting a certified arborist can help you maintain the health of your trees and avoid serious problems.

- Be sure that dead or broken branches from trees are trimmed. Trees should be trimmed up off the ground and away from roofs; this will also reduce the risk of fire as well.
 - If a tree or tree limb does fall on your property, it best to consult a professional to ensure your personal safety. There could be power lines entwined in the tree or other hazards.
 - In addition to your home or business, look for trees that may be threatening nearb power lines.
 - Pruning for vehicular and pedestrian clearance is required for oaks used along public streets.
 - Circumstances that suggest removal include when the tree is dead or dying, creates a fire safety concern, considered irreparably hazardous, an obstruction that is impossible to correct through pruning, or crowding and causing harm to other trees. Generally, tree removal is a last resort.
-
- Residential and commercial detailed tree inspections to advise when a tree needs to be removed due to cavities or decay along the trunk or large major limbs, root decay, or construction activity in close proximity.
 - Advice on pruning to correct growth on young trees, or a heritage Oak tree that needs weight reduction trimming, cables, lightning protection, removal of dead and hazardous limbs, etc. As trees enhance our community and your property, we will use all of our tree care knowledge and modern techniques to protect your trees.
 - Examine your trees regularly for signs of weakness, decay, or disease, paying close attention to the trunk, major limbs, and root system.

- Look for dead or dying branches, cracks in the trunk, exposed or damaged roots, or leaning trees.
- Visible fungi or mushrooms on the trunk or around the base can be indicators of internal rot or decay.
- Prune and thin appropriately. Remove dead, diseased, or weak branches: These are more likely to break off in a storm and can become hazards.
- Proper Watering and Mulching: Deep watering promotes strong root growth, and a layer of mulch helps retain moisture and protect roots. Ensure the mulch is kept a few inches away from the trunk to prevent rot.
- Fertilization: Regular fertilization, if needed, can boost a tree's health and resilience. However, do not assume a damaged or stressed tree needs fertilizer.
- Avoid soil compaction: Do not park vehicles or place heavy equipment near trees.
- Check for and address root issues: Problems like shallow roots, damaged or decayed roots, and restricted root space can severely impact a tree's stability and function.
- Provide support when needed. Young trees may benefit from staking for stability until their roots establish. Use appropriate materials and avoid tight strapping. Remove stakes when the tree is self-supporting, usually after 1-2 years.



14 LANDSCAPES & SOIL EROSION

If a storm has washed out or torn up your beautiful vegetable garden or landscaping handiwork, consider restoration with the technique of *top-dressing*.

Top dressing is adding a thin layer of soil over your lawn, improving the soil without killing the existing turf. Top-dressing addresses some of the common storm aftermath, including:

Once a storm has passed and you are surveying your landscape, here are some things to look for to help restore your yard:

- Bare spots from storm wash away.
- Low spots due to rotting tree roots settling, underground pipe, or cable installation.
- Uneven terrain caused by winter freezing and thawing, water runoff, tunneling animals, or general soil settling over time
- Compacted soil in high-traffic areas or low-lying places where water pools after a flood
- Depletion of nutrients due to leaching, neglect, or repeated use of chemical fertilizers.

What you need to know about topsoil

Essentially topsoil is good, clean healthy soil that has been sifted and screened to remove any sticks, rocks, or other contaminants. Topsoil is not usually infused with fertilizer. It is a good rich soil by itself and is a wonderful additive to any gardening and lawn planting.

- Mushroom compost can be mixed in with your topsoil for a robust garden or lawn mix.
- It's important to improve your overall soil quality. If you have an area with poor soil quality and want to make it into a good growing area, mix topsoil and compost with the soil that is already there.

ROOFING PROTECTION & REPAIR **15**

Preparing for severe weather should include a careful consideration of the roof on your home or business.

The points where the roof and the foundation meet the walls of your home are extremely important if your house is to resist high winds and the pressures they place on the entire structure.

- Make certain the walls are properly anchored to the foundation. A registered design professional can determine if these joints need retrofitting, and a qualified contractor can perform the work the design professional identifies.
- Review your home owner's insurance policy now to be sure you have sufficient coverage. Should you incur any property damage, report this immediately to your insurance agent and make temporary repairs to prevent further damage. Choose not to do the work yourself. Consult a trusted roofing company that is licensed and insured.
- Be wary of contractors who go door-to-door especially following a severe storm. These can be "storm chasers" who ask you to pay the entire job upfront and accept only cash; or who suggest you borrow money from lenders they know.
- Get all estimates, guarantees, and work dates in writing. Make sure you get a written estimate, and don't necessarily choose the lowest bidder.



16 CHILD CARE

Kids need extra help.

Be certain that you work out your plan long in advance.

For children, sudden disasters like tornadoes can create intense anxiety and fear. This is particularly true if family members or friends were injured or died or if a child is separated from his or her family during the storm. A child's distress may manifest itself in a variety of ways, including experiencing nightmares or fear of going to sleep, unusual outbursts or tantrums, or withdrawing and becoming more solitary.

There are several things parents and others who care for children can do to help alleviate the emotional consequences of trauma, including the following:

- Be available and encourage older children to ask questions they may have, as well as sharing their thoughts and feelings with you and with one another. This helps reduce their confusion and anxiety related to the trauma. Respond to questions in terms they can comprehend. Reassure them repeatedly that you care about them and that you understand their fears and concerns. Spend extra time with little ones cuddling when possible, reassuring them and offering whatever possible playtime you can.
- Keep regular schedules for activities such as eating, playing and going to bed to help restore a sense of security and normalcy, even if your family has been relocated to a shelter or other temporary housing.
- Reduce the number of times children see the trauma on the news. Repeatedly watching broadcasts of the disaster can re-traumatize children.
- Have a list of applies to children's medication, familiar toys, blankets, games, books and even pillows.

17

AIR CONDITIONING

Common component performance issues.

HVAC systems have over 100 components, and many common component performance issues can degrade energy performance. Regular scheduled maintenance of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems can increase their efficiency.

Try to schedule HVAC maintenance one to two months before summer and even before winter. This can ensure your system is clean and running at its best. That way, you're saving money during those warmer months.

- Change your filter every three month. A dirty filter allows airborne pollutants such as dust, dander, and even mold to circulate through the air. Breathing in these pollutants can cause allergy problems for everyone within your household.
- Keep your HVAC coils clean. They ensure your system runs at maximum operation efficiency. This can even lower heating and cooling costs while improving your indoor air quality.
- Cleaning your system's vents and registers can boost air circulation.

- Remove any debris from around your outdoor unit. This debris can include grass clippings, pollen, twigs, and leaves. You will need protective eye gear and gloves, a water hose with a sprayer, and air conditioner coil cleaner.
- Never close more than 20 percent of your home's registers. That way, you're not placing any unnecessary strain on the system.
- Clean the air-conditioner condensate drain by pouring a 50/50 mixture of water and bleach (about 1 cup) into the drain line. This will help prevent a buildup of mold and algae. Otherwise, your systems might experience clogs that decrease its efficiency



19 PET CARE

Pets Have Special Needs

Providing special care has to be part of your plan for long-term and short-term.

- Be sure that your pets are up-to-date on their vaccinations and have proof of the vaccinations on hand. Many shelters may require proof of vaccines. Make sure you have copies stored in a waterproof container with other supplies so you don't forget to take them. Keep a collar with ID on your pet, make sure you a current photo of your pet, and have a leash on hand.
- Keep a properly-sized pet carrier for each pet - carriers should be large enough for the animal to stand and turn around.
- Plan your evacuation strategy and don't forget your pet! If you do not need to evacuate, bring pets indoors well in advance of a storm. Reassure them and remain calm.

Locate emergency animal shelters

Emergency pet shelter locations will be those designated by either the American Red Cross or the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as meeting the safety standards for humans and/or animals.

- Specialized pet shelters, animal control shelters, veterinary clinics and friends and relatives out of harm's way are ALL potential refuges for your pet during a disaster. If you plan to shelter your pet, work it into your evacuation route planning.
- Pet shelters will be filled on first come, first served basis. Be sure to call ahead.

Never leave a pet behind during an evacuation.

Pets brought to a animal shelter are required to have a proper identification collar and rabies tag, proper identification on all belongings, a carrier or cage, a leash. Also bring an ample supply of food, water and food bowls, any necessary medications, specific care instructions and newspapers or trash bags for clean-up.

