



This guide is a 2023 update based on information compiled by Chenier “Klie” Kliebert, Déja Jones, Sarah Tuttle Goff, and Bri Lentz with The Resiliency Initiative – and worked from IWW’s “COVID-19 Guide to Hurricane Season” published in 2020 by IWW staff.

2023 Guide to Hurricane Season

We know this time of year is especially stressful, so we worked hard to make this ***Imagine Water Works: Guide to Hurricane Season*** as **trauma-informed, practical, and accurate** as possible.

We also recognize that everyone has different needs and levels of experience with storms. This is why we cover a wide range of prep options, including special considerations for **Queer and Trans Folks**.

Consider this a “choose your own adventure” version of a hurricane guide — we keep it simple while providing as many details as possible. You decide what you need to focus on and, hopefully, are able to have some peace of mind. Now, on to the guide!

Start here.

The **Quick Checklist** below should help you cover the basics. If you haven’t done each of these things or need more information on a particular step, or in general, continue reading beyond the checklist:

- ❑ **Who are your primary emergency contacts, both locally and out-of-state?**
Make a list and check in with them. Emergency contacts can include family, friends, and neighbors. Consider a list for both local and out-of-state contacts.

- ❑ **Who are your neighbors? Say hello!**
Exchange contact information and hurricane plans – you may have extra supplies (flashlights, food, etc.) that can be shared in the event of an emergency.

- ❑ **Do you have cash on-hand in case ATMs aren’t available?**
We recommend at least \$350, if possible. *For more info, go to Page 4.*

- ❑ **Have you created your own “Grab + Go” box, complete with important documents?**
Make a list of what can't be replaced so that it's easier to pack. *For suggestions, go to Page 5.*
- ❑ **Have you gathered supplies that will keep you safe?**
This includes enough food and water for each individual in the household for at least three days, as well as any tools that may be needed. *For a longer list of supplies, go to Page 7.*
- ❑ **Do you have a plan for your pets?**
Decide now whether you can evacuate with your pets. Make sure you have enough food, medicine, and supplies to keep them safe. *For tips from our pets, go to Page 7.*
- ❑ **Is your home secure or are there any leaks from windows or roof?**
If you've noticed any leaks, consider patching them or place a bucket/bowl in this location. If you can, consider closing shutters or using plywood to cover openings if the winds are projected to be strong. *For more home tips, go to Page 12.*
- ❑ **Have you secured your trash/recycling bins and any outside furniture, plants, etc.?**
Move them to a safe place indoors or tie them down. If you are unable to do so, recruit neighbors or friends to help. *For more tips about securing outdoor items, go to Page 13.*
- ❑ **Have you cleaned out your block's storm drain, including the ground around it?**
Clear out any leaves, trash, or debris that might keep the water from draining. *For more information about cleaning catch basins, go to Page 13.*
- ❑ **Have you taken photographs/video of your home to document items that can be replaced by insurance?**
Walk through your home using your phone's camera/video to document the condition of your space and any valuable items that could be damaged. *For insurance info, go to Page 13.*
- ❑ **Have you made an evacuation plan?**
Include local, regional, and out of state options – where will you evacuate depending on the direction and strength of the storm? Talk with friends and family ahead of time to see who you can evacuate with. *For more information on creating an evacuation plan, go to Page 14.*
- ❑ **Is your car ready for a long trip?**
Fill your tank, check your tires and oil, and make sure your car battery is working.
- ❑ **If you don't have a reliable car for a long trip, can you talk with friends or family now about how you will evacuate together?**

We highly recommend catching a ride with friends if you can. Do not rely on City Assisted Evacuation, which may or may not be available when a storm comes. *For more information about City Assisted Evacuation, go to Page 16.*

Do you have any medical needs or will you require assistance during an emergency?

The City of New Orleans recommends signing up for Smart 911 to receive customized alerts. Register by calling 311 or at <https://specialneeds.nola.gov/>. Register if you use life support systems, are insulin dependent, have trouble walking, are blind, deaf or hard of hearing, have speech, developmental, or mental health disabilities, use service animals, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or have other medical needs that mean you might require assistance. We also recommend joining or following local mutual aid groups who may be able to step in. Imagine Water Works' mutual aid group can be found on Facebook at [Imagine Mutual Aid \(New Orleans\)](#). Please note that this group is neighbors helping neighbors, and support will depend on who is around, available, and able to get online.

Where will you park your car in the event of street flooding?

Pay attention to where the ground stays dry in your neighborhood during thunderstorms. Parking restrictions are often lifted during storms, so this may include the neutral ground. Text NOLAREADY to 77295 for updates on parking restrictions.

Are you someone who likes more details and step-by-step plans? We got you! Keep on reading.

Now that you've thought through the **Quick Checklist**, it's time to review some additional information for anything that you may have had questions about. Here's where we'll include special considerations for **Queer and Trans Folks** in color-coded text boxes, in addition to general hurricane season tips. *You'll also see personal, practical tips from New Orleanians throughout the guide.*

Ready? First things first...

Take a deep breath. It will help your brain and keep you grounded. You got this.

And then...

Gather your people. Who are your friends/family (**chosen and related!**) and do y'all have a

plan? Who are your neighbors? Do you have each other's emergency contact information? Who makes you feel good and grounded? Who do you want to be around when you're stressed out? Reach out to folks in town and friends in other locations who might be able to host you in case of an evacuation.

Laura's Tips for Emergency Contacts

"It's a good idea to designate people as emergency contacts in case you're busy or don't have service – provide your trusted friends/relatives' with each other's contact info. For example, my mom has my best friend's phone number and my boyfriend's mom's phone number as well."

Now you can...

Make a plan together. Things to make a note of ahead of time:

1. **Elevation:** What's the land like around you?
 - a. Does your street flood more or less often than your friends' streets?
 - b. Think about your local friends, family, coworkers, and **chosen family**. Does anyone live in an elevated house, ideally close to the levees or high ground (for example 9th Ward, French Quarter, or near Esplanade Ridge)? Should you consider sheltering in place there together?
 - c. If you choose to evacuate but can't bring some of your valuables, consider storing them at houses with higher elevation.
 - d. If you'd like to check your location's estimated flood risk, visit the LSU Ag Center for [Louisiana's Flood Maps](#). **But remember: Your lived experience is going to be more accurate. Observe your own block during rain events!**

2. **Transportation:** Who has a car that can evacuate safely out of town?
 - a. Do you have enough spots in the car to get other people out? What about pets?
 - b. Do you need to do anything to make your car evacuation-ready? Does it need an oil change? Air in the tires? Do your windshield wipers work? Do you have a full tank of gas? If riding with a friend, can you offer to help with any of these things, either by going with them to do the car maintenance or pitching in for gas?

3. **Emergency Funds:** Do you have any cash you can set aside as an emergency fund? Can you pool your cash together with a friend?
 - a. ATMs and credit cards may not work for several days if there's a major event. If possible, you'll want to withdraw cash well before the storm hits.

- b. At minimum, we recommend having enough cash for two tanks of gas and a hotel room if need be – around \$350.

Thibodeaux's Emergency Fund Tip

"At the start of hurricane season, I start taking an extra \$20 cashback when I go to the grocery store to build up my emergency fund. This way I am squirreling away funds gradually rather than having to withdraw a big amount right before a storm."

4. **Emergency Packing:** Have you made your Grab + Go Box?

- a. You'll need your Grab + Go Box, plus things you likely couldn't pack in advance, including your wallet (with credit cards and health insurance card), computer, car registration, insurance cards, and any last minute supplies additions.
- b. To build your Grab + Go Box, keep reading onto the next section.
- c. **Don't forget to pack something that brings you joy!**

5. **Leaving:** Have you thought about where you'll go if you do leave? Remember...

- a. Evacuation locations may differ depending on the path of the storm, but that shouldn't stop you from thinking about 2-3 places you could go right now. You'll want to think about how long you'll be gone for, how far inland you should go, **and how supported you might feel in that space**. Think about locations that are to the West, North, and East (for example Shreveport, Mississippi, and Alabama).
- b. For even more information about evacuation decisions, go to Page 14.

One Resident's Evacuation Plan

"If I'm worried about heavy rainfall or a tropical storm, I'll shelter in place at my house close to the levee in the 9th Ward. If it's a Category 1 or 2 hurricane, I may go to stay with friends on the North Shore or in Mississippi. If it's a Category 3, 4, or 5 hurricane, I'll likely go to Jackson or Atlanta, depending on the expected path. My friends and I keep in touch to check on each other's evacuation needs. If we're evacuating, my dog is coming with me!"

Feeling a little better? Let's get you fully packed.

If you've got the time or feel better being even more prepared, there's more:

1. **Pack a Grab + Go Box now.** This is useful regardless of whether you stay or evacuate. If you pack your Grab + Go Box today, it can double as your storage system year-round. **The items below don't include anything that you need on a daily basis and can be packed and stored any time.**

First get a waterproof container.

A plastic storage bin works well, though you may want to check how well it seals shut. Ziplock bags work, too. If you're able, you can purchase waterproof bags online for around \$10 - \$40. If you don't have the funds for a waterproof container, consider asking your friends or neighbors in the [Imagine Mutual Aid \(New Orleans\)](#) group to see if anyone has a spare.

Fill your container with ...

- a. **IDs:** Passport, birth certificate, social security card, green card, naturalization papers, visas, proof of residence, COVID vaccination cards, and any other legal paperwork or court documents. You can also take photos, make copies, or store your Louisiana license digitally through the state approved [LA Wallet](#) app.
- b. **Medicines and prescriptions:** Store up an extra bit of any vital meds, contact lenses and solution, menstruation supplies. For uncontrolled substances, depending on the insurance carrier, you can ask your pharmacist for a 30-day supply of medications. For longer-term evacuations, consider asking the pharmacist to switch the pick-up pharmacy.
- c. **House papers:** Lease, house deeds, proof of homeowners or renters insurance.
- d. **Car papers:** Car title, a copy of your car registration and insurance cards. Most major insurance providers also have an app to access your cards through your phone. Download it now so you don't have to worry about it later!
- e. **Pet papers:** Vaccine info, recent vet paperwork, prescriptions. You will need this if you have to board them while evacuated.

Alex's Waterproof Container Tip

"My mom already keeps a lot of this stuff in a container on the top shelf of the closet. She said it's protected during floods and most hurricanes already, without having to worry about it every summer."

- f. **Education documents:** Student transcripts, report cards, etc.
- g. **Bank stuff:** Tax forms, extra checkbook, etc.
- h. **Chargers:** External battery pack for your phone, car charger. Car power inverters are also handy and are around \$15 online.

Klie's Power/Charger Pro Tips

"When a storm's coming, I start charging everything asap. First, I plug in my phone's portable battery pack to get it fully ready. You can buy those pretty cheap on the internet these days.

When the storm gets closer, I turn off my laptop and leave it plugged into a surge protector 100% of the time so that I'll have a full charge when the power goes out. That way, when my phone's battery dies (and the backup pack runs out of charge too), I can use the USB port on my laptop to get another couple of charges in. Last, I track down my car charger. Over the years, I've charged lots of phones in cars when the power's out..."

- i. **Anything irreplaceable:** Regalia, spiritual items, artwork that isn't on display heirloom seeds, old journals. Also include family photos, but consider what you can scan to save digitally. What do you need hard copies of?

Queer/Trans Packing Tips

- Any additional paperwork (i.e. name change documentation, receipts from gender affirming surgeries, WPATH surgery letter, etc)
- Extra syringes for HRT, PrEP, Antiretrovirals
- Special clothing and gender essential items (tucking gaffs, chest binders, packers, wigs, clippers/razors, makeup, wax kits, padded bras)

2. As a potential storm approaches, gather supplies for staying or going. This section is for packing things that aren't already in your Grab+Go Box, either because you use them regularly or because they're relatively replaceable items. However, everything in this section is important to have! You'll want to get another bag for the items below and combine it with your Grab + Go Box to complete your packing:

- a. **Toiletries:** Soap, shampoo, toilet paper, face and body wipes, contacts, contact solution, eyeglasses, menstruation supplies, adult diapers, ear plugs.
- b. **Pets:** Food, medication (get extra if possible!), leash/crate, toys, bedding.

Rôder and Turkey's Pet Tips

"I love going in the car! Just remember my bed, food, water, treats, and special toys that keep me calm!" - Rôder, Age 2, Cattle Dog Mix and Best Boy

"Cars are the WORST. If I know you're about to put me in my carrier, I'll hide and/or fight you... so give yourself extra time to find me if I'm onto you. Don't forget my calming treats! And litter box! And maybe an extra towel for any so-called 'accidents' in the car... I'm still going to be mad." - Turkey, Age 10, Black Cat Boss

- c. **Flashlights and Candles:** With extra batteries or lighters.
- d. **Radio:** With extra batteries. If a USB radio, make sure you have the charging cable for it. These can also be replaced pretty cheaply online.
- e. **Clothing:** Light and comfortable layers and shoes. It's a perfect time to buy those shrimp boots you've been eyeing...

Klie's "It's Hot Out There" Clothing Advice (and a QT Tip!)

"One of the things that I remember most about Hurricane Katrina is how hot we were with the power out for so long... everyone in our apartment basically stripped down and laid on the tile floor to keep as cool as possible.

For folks who might be less comfortable doing this, I'd recommend finding the coolest clothing possible. It's hard to feel super exposed when you're having anxiety or body dysphoria — planning ahead of time and finding the right clothes for a hot situation might help reduce some stress."

- f. **Infant Supplies:** Food/formula, diapers, and other essential items.

Sarah's Advice for Breastmilk and Medicine

"For parents or caregivers who need to keep breastmilk or certain formulas cold, "pop & shake" ice packs can be a lifesaver! Order them now because they may be hard to get when a storm is coming. This also works for medications that need to be kept cold."

- g. **Food:** Minimum three-day supply of food per person. Remember to get food that will not expire and will not need to be cooked using a microwave or stove. Don't forget a manual can opener, utensils, trash bags, and plates.
- h. **Drinking Water:** The rule of thumb is to have at least 1 gallon for each person and pet for at least 3 days. Consider storing extra water, given how hot it is here, and extra water for pregnant people or people who are sick. If possible, try to store a one week supply.

Monique's Watery Pro Tip

"Before the storm hits, I always fill my bathtub to the top. If the water supply is affected, we use the tub water to flush toilets and wash up. I also like to fill up reusable water bottles, jugs, or mason jars in case of a boil water alert... which sometimes happens when the power goes out."

Chenier's Addition: *"Those extra bottles and jars can be added to your freezer, which will also help keep your food cold in the event of a power outage!"*

Boudreaux's Water Filter: *"I keep 2-3 gallons of filtered water under the sink. I replace it each week, using it to water plants, so that I'm never without fresh water. I have a Berkey water filter, which they claim can even filter river water in a pinch. It's portable, and I've brought it with me on more than one evacuation."*

i. **First Aid Kit:** Buy a pre-put together first aid kit or build your own.

j. **Tools:** Screwdriver, hammer, knife, rope, bungee cords, duct tape, whistle.

Don's Shelter In Place Tool Tip

"I'm old school, but we always used to stay home and kept an axe in the attic. If the water rises and you get stuck up there, an axe can save your life."

k. **Liquor, wine, instant coffee, chips, your favorite snack, etc:** Whatever you need to help cope with stress. We grew up with hurricane parties — no judgment! Just remember that you might be sharing space with others in close quarters, and be kind about folks' sensitivities to smells, smoke, etc.

l. **Fun:** An instrument if you have room for it, cards, books, anything to keep you calm + entertained through power outages.

Anne's Advice for Kids

"If you're evacuating with kids, make sure to tell them what's going on. It doesn't have to be scary, just that there might be a storm, so we're going to leave for a day or two. Bring something fun and comforting in a little evacuation activity bag for them."

3. Stay Safe While Sheltering in Place with a Generator:

a. **Electrical Safety:** We care about you and the folks you're sheltering with – please don't get electrocuted on our watch, or ever? Keep the generator dry and don't use it in the rain. **DO NOT** touch the generator with wet hands.

b. **Ventilation:** Operate the generator on a dry surface under an open structure. Consider buying a generator tent – they're designed to keep the generator dry while providing proper air flow. You can also make a DIY tent in a pinch, but make sure the tent isn't touching the generator and that you've allowed space at the bottom for enough air flow. Consider looking at generator tents online now to see how they're designed.

c. **Distance:** Run it at least 20 ft away from your house or garage.

d. **Fuel and Oil:** Use the recommended type of fuel and store it in an approved safety can. Same for oil.

Déja's Tip for Gas

"You may want to keep an extra container of gas tank at home in case of shortages, as we experienced during Hurricane Ida. Make sure it's in a safe container!"

e. **Carbon Monoxide:** Install Carbon Monoxide alarms in central locations and outside sleeping areas. Alternatively, you can get portable carbon monoxide detectors online for \$15-\$40. Even if you don't have a generator, consider getting one of these and bringing it with you if you're sheltering with others who do have a generator. Community care!

f. Be sure to **turn the generator off** and let it cool down before refueling.

g. **Share your power with others when you have it**, whether it's through a generator or your power comes back on before others' does.

Join our [Community Power Map](#) to spread the word about your Power Station!



Whew, that was a lot! Time for self care...

Don't skip this step!

It's important that we remain as calm as possible during times of crisis — it not only feels better, but it helps us make quick decisions with a clear mind. It also helps us be more kind and patient with those around us. Here are a few things you can do to take care of yourself.

1. Remember to breathe.

Want a GIF to help practice breathing? [We recommend this one.](#)

2. Ask for support/give support.

Your people have your back. Remember to practice reciprocal mutual aid.

For Neighbors in the Greater New Orleans Area

Join our Mutual Aid Response Network online through the [Imagine Mutual Aid \(New Orleans\) Facebook group](#) to request and offer whatever you need before, during, and after a storm.

3. Newer residents, can you support native New Orleanians and others who have been through some of our harder storms?

If you aren't experiencing Katrina, Laura, or Ida PTSD, how can you support those who are having a hard time? Consider offering to run prep-related errands, gathering your friend group to discuss their plans, staying up to date through resources that already exist, etc.

Laura on Offering Support

"I'm happy to help! There are several ways I can think of to check in and offer help to my native New Orleanian neighbors. I have a car, so I can offer a space or two to folks who need a ride out of town. I can also help folks by offering up any extra non-perishables I have... and can babysit if they need a few hours to relax or storm prep. I've got tools people can borrow, and I can help my neighbors board up windows and doors.

And for my older folks, I can help make copies of documents. If they have a cell phone, I can teach them how to text and how to save family + friends' phone numbers as favorites to access them quickly."

Klie's Bonus Tip on Technological Support

"After Hurricane Laura, we canvassed the streets and helped people get into the online mutual aid group. Sometimes folks would just hand us their phones, and we would join the group for them. In other cases, we or someone else would post on their behalf. Check in on your neighbors, and make sure they have access to the group through at least one individual so that we can stay in touch and get them exactly what they need."

4. Don't Forget to Sleep!

Nobody can run on an empty tank. Please get your plan together and then consider resting as part of your prep. Grab a sleep mask if you need one (headbands from CVS work too), ear plugs, tinctures, or whatever helps.

Home Sweet Home...

1. Preparing your home for wind and water when a storm is coming:

a. **Eat or toss any meat products** from the fridge/freezer.

Anonymous Food Safety Tip

“The coin trick! Fill a cup of water, and freeze it. After it’s frozen, put a coin on top. If the power goes out for a long time while you’re away, the water in your cup will melt and the coin will sink to the bottom. That way, you’ll know whether your food is safe to eat when you come back home.”

b. **Put remaining items in garbage bags or plastic bags and put back into the fridge/freezer.** If power is lost and your food is compromised, this will prevent leaks that can ruin your fridge and will make clean up easier.

c. **Unplug electronics:** If things need to remain plugged in, use a surge protector.

d. **Elevate, wrap, and move valuables to higher ground** or to an alternate location. This can include carpets, electronics, and even furniture.

Water Resistant Storage Advice from Locals

“Need even more space? Dry out your dishwasher and use it as a waterproof place to store things from floodwaters.”

e. **Could rain get in through windows, doors, or holes in the roof?** Do what you can to caulk them now. Use a tarp if needed. Have buckets or big pots on hand to put under any minor leaks that might happen.

f. **Secure cleanup materials** like masks, gloves, mops, buckets, and bleach. We recommend having at least one respirator per person who might be helping remove items in the case of mold damage/growth.

g. **Clean out gutters and downspouts,** allow water to flow away from your home.

h. **Prepare sandbags** or find other ways to block water from entering your home. If you can’t find sandbags, use potting soil instead. After the storm passes, you might be able to repurpose it by using it in the garden! Place a layer of trash bags and/or tarps under the sandbags to prevent leakage. **Note: Do not use potentially contaminated soil in your edible garden.*

i. **Take photos of your property and belongings.** Make sure the photos are time-stamped. Also take a video and do a complete walk-through of both the inside and outside of your home. This will help you capture details that you might otherwise miss by taking photos only.

3. Securing outside your home:

a. Pick up trash and debris on your block: Clear anything that could clog catch basins, **including trash from nearby sidewalks or lawns** and any loose yard clippings. Water flows across property lines and will carry everyone's loose trash, grass, and leaves to the drain. Ask your neighbors if they need help or if they mind you clearing the debris for them. Bag all trash and clippings and put it into a trash can or dumpster.

b. Clean out storm drains: If your catch basin/storm drain near your house is clogged, the water won't drain.

i. Take 15 minutes to remove trash, leaves, grass, and other visible debris from in front of catch basin openings. Place lawn debris in garbage cans — never blow or sweep grass down a catch basin. Use gloves and a rake or shovel if necessary. Avoid lifting the catch basin lid; they're very heavy, and you don't want to be injured when a storm comes!

ii. Call 311 to report catch basins that are not fully functioning. You can also do this online at <https://nola311.org/service-request/> by selecting "Road/Drainage" and then "Catch Basin - Clogged". *(Hot tip: You can also use the phone or online portal to request bulk trash pickups or report missing/broken street lights and signs.)*

iii. To reduce risk of street flooding, do not park in front of or on a storm drain.

c. Secure your trash/recycling cans and any outside items: Patio furniture, potted plants, construction materials, or anything else that could blow away or become a projectile in strong winds should be stored in a safe location, preferably inside. In a pinch, heavier items can be leaned against your house – choose the side of your home that has the least amount of air flow to reduce the threat of wind gusts. For example, in neighborhoods where the layout is predominantly shotguns close together, this may be the walkway between your and your neighbor's house. In the French Quarter, this may be the shared patio area. Tape trash cans, recycling bins, and other receptacles shut if they are staying outside.

d. Buy insurance: Homeowners, renters, and flood insurance policies are the most effective financial recovery tools currently available. Remember that flood insurance is separate from your homeowner's or renter's insurance and requires a **30-day waiting period**. It's likely that you won't be able to add a flood policy or change any of your regular policy coverage if there's a hurricane on the way, but you should still contact your agent or company in advance in order to understand your policy limits, co-pays, deductibles, and where to call with any claims will come in handy if you are affected by the storm. Remember that many folks face issues getting repairs covered, even with insurance. Document as much as you can before and after a storm, and be prepared for a lengthy process to get your home repaired.

We're getting there!

The next section provides details on the evacuation decision making process.

Evacuation decisions can be stressful and hard to make. Let's talk about it:

1. The first step is to Monitor, but do a mental health check-in first. It's hurricane season, but that doesn't mean you should be worried all the time. Instead, do what you can now, and then let yourself take a break. Keep an eye out for the following terms on your trusted news and social media sources:

Term	What Does it Mean?	Action
Hurricane Watch	A hurricane watch means that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are possible within the specified area. A hurricane watch is issued 48 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds in an area.	Prepare your home and review your plan for evacuation in case a hurricane or tropical storm warning is issued. Follow our social media channels and listen closely to information and instructions from trusted, informed sources. If you do not already have a Grab + Go Bag, make it immediately.
Hurricane Warning	Hurricane warnings indicate that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are expected . Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force (sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph), the hurricane warning is issued 36 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds to allow for important preparation.	Complete storm preparations and immediately leave the threatened area if directed by local officials. Note: Do NOT wait to evacuate only if deemed mandatory by officials. Everyone's storm experience is different; there are many reasons why local officials may not issue a mandatory evacuation when it is in your best interest to do so. Be prepared to make your own decisions based on your own lived experience, what you've read in this guide, and other trusted sources.

2. Evaluate the situation based on trusted news sources and the specific needs of you, your people, and your pets.

- a. **If a hurricane watch is issued**, you should begin thinking about your evacuation options in case (1) the watch becomes a warning, (2) a mandatory evacuation order is issued, or (3) it's the best decision based on your needs **and** the resources that may or may not be available to you after even a relatively minor storm.

For example, is the storm likely to leave you without power for days in extreme heat? Are you caring for anyone else who extreme heat may be particularly dangerous for? Danger aside, will folks just be miserable in the heat? Do you have the resources, community connections, and/or the financial means to avoid having to go through that? If so, consider evacuating.

- b. **If you don't think you and every member of your chosen family, including your pets, can or should attempt to last more than three days without electricity**, plan to evacuate for a Category 3 or greater hurricane.

Recent Hurricane Category History with Klie

"If you were here for Hurricane Zeta, you might remember that it was a Cat 2 until right before landfall... then it rapidly became a Cat 3, and it took power out for several days – weeks in some places. And it was late in the season, Halloween!

I don't want folks to be scared all of the time, but we should be aware that a Cat 2 can jump to a Cat 4 within hours. We should also be aware that contraflow hasn't been activated since Gustav 15 years ago. I wouldn't count on the interstates opening up extra lanes for a smooth evacuation... I understand the stress and systemic barriers in place, but if people can pool resources and get to safety several days before the storm, I'd really recommend that at this point."

- c. **If you have questions about evacuation, currently available resources, preparedness, or anything else related to storms**, we encourage you to ask them via our "24/7 Anonymous Storm Prep Q&A" [found in our Instagram stories](#). We open up the Q&A every time there's a named storm in the Gulf. You can ask questions about anything, and we answer them with a combination of trained Emergency Management experience, lived experience, generations of family knowledge, and Indigenous science.

3. Evacuate as soon as you have decided it's the best option for you and your people.

- a. **Evacuation Option #1: Your own vehicle is best.** If your own vehicle is in good condition, this is the ideal situation. Invite others to ride with you if you have the space. Make sure any maintenance is done and that you have a full gas tank. Be prepared to sit in an extensive amount of traffic while getting to your evacuation point. The longer you wait to evacuate, the more traffic there will likely be.
- b. **Evacuation Option #2: A friend or family member's vehicle is great too!** If you know someone who is evacuating, ask if they have an extra seat in their car and if you can join them if they are evacuating to a hotel or somewhere you can

get a room. If you are comfortable with this individual, sharing a room will help with the cost.

- c. **Evacuation Option #3: City-Assisted Evacuation (CAE) should be your last resort.** *This section references resources potentially provided by the City of New Orleans. While we are happy to share what we've learned over the years about the realities of evacuation and information that has been shared with us, we are not affiliated with and do not receive any funding from or have any obligation to the City of New Orleans or NOLA Ready.*

If you don't have your own vehicle and can't find a friend or family member who is evacuating, your final option will be to participate in the City-Assisted Evacuation program if it is available at the time. A couple things to note about CAE:

i. This program will only be activated if a mandatory evacuation order is issued by local officials. Because of the quickly evolving nature of hurricanes due to climate change, it's becoming less and less likely that the timing necessary to facilitate this program will exist. **Please do not rely on City-Assisted Evacuation, which may or may not be available.**

ii. If activated, this program will bring you to a state run shelter. They may not be able to tell you what city you'll be arriving in. They may not be able to verify whether you will be sheltering in a large shared area or individual rooms. It will likely be unclear whether translation services are available or **whether the facilities will be gendered** and policed. If you have trauma with the sheltering system or a variety of other experiences that may make this exceedingly difficult, we very strongly encourage you to err on the side of caution and to find another means of evacuation.

iii. If you need to participate in this program, check out NOLA Ready at ready.nola.gov/evacuate or Text EVACNOLA to 77295. If you sign up now, the City of New Orleans will text you when a mandatory evacuation order has been issued.

What the City-Assisted Evacuation Process Will Look Like

- During a mandatory evacuation, the City will set-up a centralized evacuation location. You will likely have to find your own ride there or get there by making your way to your nearest bus stop.
- If you can't self-evacuate because of medical needs, you may be eligible to be picked up from your home. Call 311.
- Buses will bring you to a state shelter outside of the affected area and bring you back when **they have determined** it's safe.
 - NOTE: You may only be given a few hours of notice before being removed from the shelter and offered a ride back home, regardless of whether or not you have a secure home to return to.
 - You can "check out" of the shelter system any time and stay in a hotel of your

choosing, but they will not cover the costs and they will no longer be responsible for getting you back to New Orleans.

- Registration is not required to use this service.
- Identification documents are not required. However, we still recommend bringing them with you, as they may be required for other support services.
- Each person may bring only 1 carry-on size bag, as well as any necessary medical equipment. **Do not leave your medical equipment at home.** Canes, crutches, wheel chairs, and shower stools can be very difficult, if not impossible, to find at a shelter.
- Families will be kept together, and all pets are welcome.
- Pets should have an ID collar, leash, medications, and a carrier.

4. When it's time to go... No matter what option you chose, once you make the decision to evacuate, it's time to go. Grab your go box/bag, activate your evacuation plan, and take a breath. Trust yourself and the krewe that you thought so carefully about when you chose them as your evacuation buddies days, months, or weeks ago. You know the best decision for you.

What comes next?

1. If it floods and you have not evacuated:

a. Shelter in Place During Heavy Rainfall. It is very dangerous to leave during heavy rainfall. During a storm, residents will be allowed to park on the neutral ground and sidewalks, as long as vehicles do not block intersections or streetcar tracks. Move your car beforehand and then stay put.

b. NO WAKE ZONE: Don't Drive. Driving through a flooded area can be extremely dangerous and can also push water into your neighbor's home. When driving, stay safe by watching for flooding in low lying areas, especially at bridges and highway dips. As little as six inches of water can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.

Just a couple of inches can hide a dangerous pothole. You don't want to damage your car right after a storm – your car may be an essential way to access supplies in the days to come, and mechanics will not be readily available. If you can wait for the waters to go all the way down, wait.



IF YOUR CAR TAKES ON WATER

- Don't try to start it.
- Begin drying out your interior ASAP.
- Use DampRid or similar to absorb excess water.
- Check the oil dipstick for water droplets.
- Change the oil and transmission fluid.
- Consider contacting a mechanic to check the electrical components, fuel tank, and fuel line for water damage.

2. If your home flooded:

- a. **Wear an N-95 mask and gloves** and be careful when reentering your property!
- b. **Watch out for any electrical wires** that may be damaged, gas leaks, etc.
- c. **If your drywall got wet, keep the walls open** until they are completely dry to avoid mold. Remove vinyl wallpaper, which can trap moisture, and wear an N-95 mask to protect yourself from mold.
- d. **Before you repair or rebuild**, consider the following:
 - i. Document all damage for insurance or assistance claims. Take a video of your entire property, inside and out, in case you accidentally miss something in photos.
 - ii. Move electrical outlets and breaker boxes above expected flood level.
 - iii. Replace drywall or gypsum wallboard with a flood resistant material, such as wood paneling, tile, or marine-grade plywood.
 - iv. Select insulation that can be protected or easily replaced. FEMA recommends using rigid foam board insulation. Please note that spray foam has many benefits but also creates a less breathable seal – make sure your carbon monoxide detector is working and consider using natural cleaning products to reduce toxins inside your home.
 - v. Elevate your water heater, A/C unit, washer/dryer, and generator on a platform or cinder blocks.
 - vi. Replace carpet with waterproof flooring such as tiles, brick, vinyl, stained concrete, terrazzo, or solid wood planks.
- e. **Remember, you may need a permit to repair damages to your home.** Check with local officials and insurance agents before beginning repairs.
- f. **Stay plugged in to our social media** to get updates on repair and recovery programs as they exist.

Additional Resources:

[Queer/Trans Guide to Hurricane Season](#): For those who identify as LGBTQ, this pulls directly from this main guide but adds queer and transgender specific information throughout.

[Anonymous Storm Prep Q&A](#): We host an anonymous Q&A in our Instagram Stories, every time there's a named storm in the Gulf, so you can ask anything that's on your mind regarding storm prep. Find us at [@imaginewaterworks](#).

Mutual Aid Response Network: We have a vast network of thousands of neighbors across the Greater New Orleans Area who offer and request support, information, and specific supplies both offline and online before, during, and after storms. Visit our website to learn more or join ["Imagine Mutual Aid \(New Orleans\)"](#) on Facebook.

[Hurricane Season Checklist](#): For those who want to read and share the quickest version of storm prep possible, take a look at this checklist on our website.

[LSU AgCenter Flood Smart](#): Includes resources on flood risk & vulnerability, river stages and forecasts, activities for kids, and tips for avoiding flood damage.

[NOLA Ready](#): The City's NOLA Ready website and social media channels have information in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese on how to prepare for a storm, shelter in place, evacuate, and return home. We recommend following them on all platforms at [@NOLAReady](#). **Sign up for alerts, which will notify you of emergency situations, by texting NOLAREADY to 77295.**

Stay informed about weather using the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Hurricane Center website](#), the [Weather Underground](#), [Margarett Orr](#) on Twitter, or [TheTinderMeteorologist](#) on Instagram.

For legal information and direct assistance to people impacted by natural, social, and economic emergencies, check out [emergencylegalresponders.org](#).

For mental health support from folks who are hurricane season aware, check out [NOLABlackMentalHealthMatters](#) and [Brightside Therapy Collective](#) on Instagram.

And last but certainly not least...

For comic relief check out [NOLA PREPARED](#) on Instagram.

You made it to the end of the guide!
Thanks for trusting us with your safety. Our best resource will always be each other.

If you found this guide useful, there are several ways to show your support:

- [Donate here](#) to help keep our work going.
- Share this guide with your friends and neighbors.
- Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), or [Twitter](#).

About Us:

Imagine Water Works is reimagining the future through art, science, and connection. Founded in New Orleans and led by queer, trans, and Native New Orleanians, we've organized to help keep each other safe and informed for nearly a decade. **Our core focus areas are land stewardship, climate justice, and disaster readiness and response.**

Some of our other current projects and resources include:

The Imagination Farm
Storm Zine Project
Hurricane Season Checklist
Anonymous Storm Prep Q&A on Instagram
"Imagine Mutual Aid: New Orleans" on Facebook
Queer/Trans Guide to Hurricane Season
COVID-19 Guide to Hurricane Season
Mutual Aid Response Network (MARN)
Marine Biodiversity Observation Network: Sea Level Rise Sentinels (MBON)
... And various storm supply distributions and events from New Orleans to St. James Parish throughout Hurricane Season

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Contact us with questions, additions, requests, and offers to collaborate: klic@imaginewaterworks.org.