

Hurricane Checklist for the Technically Inclined

Created by Ray Vaughan, June 2010

- Many modern home telephones need power to operate. Have at least one simple phone that has no power cord.
- Cell phones will need to be recharged. Have a car charger ready.
- Have many spare batteries (D, C, AA, AAA and 9 volt) and rotate them throughout the year. Hint: Buy a year's worth of batteries every June.
- Both telephone lines and cell towers are dependent on power. Most systems have batteries but these will run down after a few hours. Lines will be very busy and there may be outages. When the cell phone towers fail, you will lose all services on your cell phone, including the Internet.
- Please keep your calls short. Often texting works if you can't complete a call. You may not be able to call 911.
- Home Internet service, including telephone lines delivered by the Internet (VoIP), will also fail.
- Have a printout or list of all your important phone numbers in case your cell phone is damaged or goes dead.
- Know the physical location of your nearest Fire Station, Hospital, and Police Sub Station in case you have no telephone communication at all.
- Before the storm, take digital pictures or video of your home and valuables. Keep the cameras and media in a water proof box. Take more pictures of any damage before you start repairs. These pictures can be helpful for insurance claims later.
- Scan your important documents and keep them on a USB flash drive that you keep with you. Identification, insurance policies, medical history, prescriptions, family photos, licenses, vehicle registration... anything that could help you when you get to another computer later.
- Use a family member outside of South Florida as your point of contact for all your friends and relatives. That way you only need to let one person know you're okay.
- If the phone lines and cell phones fail, a small Family Radio Service (FRS) walkie talkie (available at most department stores) will give you a way to talk to your neighbors. Ask your Condo or Home Owners Association (HOA) to coordinate a channel to use before the storm. Some FRS radios can also receive the NOAA Weather Radio stations.
- Keep an FRS radio with you in your safe room in case you need help getting out after the storm. Have some spare batteries too. Keep a whistle in the safe room also.
- After the 'all clear' is given, check on your neighbors.
- If you have a Ham Radio (Amateur) operator in your neighborhood, he or she will be

able to communicate with authorities outside of the neighborhood. Look for the houses with the big antennas and get to know the Ham Operator before a storm.

- Cable TV is also dependent on the power. Many satellite dishes will be damaged by the high winds. Only modern portable or battery operated TVs will receive the Digital TV signals directly from the local stations. Check your TVs now to make sure they get DTV.
- Have portable AM/FM radios for news and information. Many radio stations will simulcast the local TV stations. Hand crank radios and lights are a good option when you run out of battery power.
- Before the storm, turn your freezer and refrigerator to their coldest setting and minimize opening the door after the power goes out.
- Have a manual mechanical can opener for canned goods.
- Stow away some MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) just in case you do not have time to go shopping before the disaster.
- For cooking and boiling water use an indoor-safe burner that uses butane cartridges or cans. Never use charcoal indoors.
- Have a few cigarette lighters. Matches can get wet.
- To avoid damage from power surges, unplug your valuable electronics before the storm. Turn your air conditioner off at the first sign of power problems.
- Do not run your car or a generator during the storm. When it's safe to go outside, then you can set up your generator. Never run your car or a generator in the garage or patio. They should be far from any open window.
- Have a heavy chain and padlock to secure your generator.
- Every June, start up your portable generator and let it run until it runs out of gas. Never store a generator with gas in the tank or the carburetor. Follow generator instructions carefully. Some small generators need an oil change every 24 hours.
- Use heavy duty extension cords and limit the number of splits. If a cord or plug ever feels warm to the touch, it is overloaded.
- You should have battery operated smoke and Carbon Monoxide (CO) detectors in multiple locations around your home. Fires and carbon monoxide poisonings are very common after a hurricane.
- Outdoor solar-powered garden lights can be brought in the house at night to give a little room lighting. Do not use candles.
- Traffic lights and stop signs will be down after the storm. If you must drive, treat every intersection like it's a 4-way stop. Everything will look different and many landmarks may be gone so you may not recognize even your own street. Nights will be very dark so travel during daylight hours. If there is flooding, what looks like a street could be a canal.
- If you have a chain saw and know how to use it safely, please clear any trees from your street first so emergency vehicles can get in and out. Do not cut or approach any tree that is touching any wires.

- Bank ATMs will be down and stores without power or communication will not be able to take debit or credit cards. Have cash.
- Treat all downed power lines, and anything they are touching, like they're live. Keep a safe distance. Downed lines can be re-energized at any time with no warning.

For comments and suggestions, please email ray@rayvaughan.com

Ray Vaughan, June 2010 <http://hurricanechecklist.com/>

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