

CELEBRATING BLACK ACHIEVEMENT THROUGHOUT FLORIDA

# ONYX

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economy and  
we should have  
their backs

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# FORECASTERS WARN: 2024 COULD BE A HISTORICAL HURRICANE SEASON

HOW TO PREPARE FOR EXTREME WEATHER EVENTS.

BY GREG PADGETT

As the world grapples with increasingly severe weather patterns and the impacts of climate change become more evident, it is crucial to ensure that individuals and communities are adequately prepared for the upcoming hurricane season and there is reason to take note.

In the past few months, researchers and forecasters have issued grim warnings—the 2024 Hurricane Season will be extremely active due to several environmental factors that will likely cause a record number of storms to form. Unusually warm ocean temperatures in the Atlantic and the setup of La Niña conditions in the Pacific Ocean Basin provide the perfect conditions for increased tropical activity which ultimately increases the likelihood of impacts in Florida, the most vulnerable state in the U.S.

Hurricanes and any tropical system can bring devastating winds, heavy rainfall, storm surges, and flooding—posing significant risks to life, property, and infrastructure. To plan for these risks and enhance resilience, proactive preparation is key. Here are some essential steps to prepare your family and community for hurricane season:

**1. Create a Family Emergency Plan:** Developing a comprehensive family emergency plan is essential for ensuring everyone's safety during a hurricane. This plan should include evacuation routes, designated meeting points, communication strategies, and emergency contacts. Assign specific responsibilities to each family member to ensure everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency.



The most important item I recommend for your disaster kit is a solar cell phone charger!

**2. Build an Emergency Kit:** Assemble a well-stocked emergency kit that includes essential supplies to sustain you and your family for at least three days. This kit should include non-perishable food, water, medications, first aid supplies, flashlights, batteries, a battery-powered radio, cash, important documents, and any specific items for infants, elderly family members, or pets.

**3. Secure Your Home:** Take proactive measures to secure your home and property against hurricane damage. Trim trees and branches, secure loose outdoor items, reinforce windows and doors, install storm shutters or plywood, and consider investing in a generator for backup power. Ensure that your insurance policies are up to date and provide adequate coverage for hurricane-related damages.

**4. Stay Informed:** Stay informed about approaching hurricanes and potential evacuation orders by monitoring weather forecasts and official communications from local authorities. Sign up for

emergency alerts and notifications from your local government or emergency management agencies. Familiarize yourself with evacuation routes and shelter locations in your area.

**5. Evacuation Planning:** If you live in a hurricane-prone area or a designated storm surge evacuation zone, have a plan in place for evacuating safely. Determine your evacuation route in advance, arrange transportation if needed, and don't forget your pets. Follow evacuation orders issued by local authorities

promptly and evacuate to a safe location outside of the storm's path. In Florida, emergency managers suggest you should only evacuate out of storm surge zones to a hurricane-fortified structure like a shelter or hotel. It is not recommended to evacuate hundreds of miles out of town.

**6. Prepare Your Business:** If you own a business, take steps to protect your employees, customers, and assets during hurricane season. Develop a business continuity plan that outlines essential functions, backup systems, and communication protocols. Secure important documents and data, implement measures to safeguard your property, and ensure that employees are trained in emergency procedures.

**7. Community Preparedness:** Engage with your community and neighbors to promote collective preparedness and resilience. Participate in local preparedness events, volunteer with community organizations, and support vulnerable populations in your area. Collaborate with local authorities and emergency management agencies to develop community-wide preparedness initiatives and response plans. Don't forget to check on the elderly and anyone who lives by themselves.

## MORE RESOURCES

- **National Hurricane Center:** Provides real-time updates, forecasts, and information on hurricane preparedness and safety.
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):** Offers comprehensive resources, guides, and tools for hurricane preparedness, response, and most importantly – information on how to register and qualify for disaster aid if impacted by a storm.
- **American Red Cross:** Provides information on hurricane preparedness, emergency kits, evacuation planning, and shelter locations.
- **Ready.gov:** Offers practical tips, checklists, and resources

for preparing for hurricanes and other emergencies.

• **Your Local Emergency Management Agency:** Contact your local emergency management agency for specific information, resources, and guidance tailored to your area including determining if you are in a hurricane storm surge risk area.



Greg Padgett is an award-winning meteorologist and disaster preparedness advocate focusing on the needs of marginalized and vulnerable communities. He currently serves as the Director of External Affairs for the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management and has penned the Environmental column for ONYX Magazine.