



## **Office of Emergency Management**

*Bryan C. Haughey - Director*

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### **Subject: Disaster and Emergency Preparedness - Community PSA**

It is vitally important to understand the potential impact that natural hazards may have on you and your family. A community's ability to respond to and recover from disasters depends on the level of preparedness of every member of that community. Each individual family should prepare for the potential impacts of severe weather.

The Town of Holland Office of Emergency Management is distributing this informational document to help our citizens understand and prepare for threats like hurricanes, floods, and other storms. It is also essential to prepare for less predictable incidents like earthquakes, wildfires, and extended power outages<sup>1</sup>.

Severe weather can include hazardous conditions produced by thunderstorms, including damaging winds, tornadoes, hail, flooding, as well as winter storms associated with freezing rain, sleet, snow, and strong winds. Severe weather can happen at any time, and in any part of the country, but it is critical that you know risk factors and understand the type of hazardous weather that is likely to affect your local community. Basic individual preparedness requires enough resources to survive without external help for several days<sup>2</sup>.

If you have not done so already, we recommend that you sign up for Holland's community notification system, [CodeRED](#). Any home or business in Holland with a landline telephone or TTY should automatically be in the system but you can also add your mobile phone number.

The National Weather Service NWS Boston-Norton and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration NOAA [NWS-NOAA Weather Radio](#) provides emergency weather alerts, and the [Emergency Alert System EAS](#) is a national public warning system that allows the President to address the nation within 10 minutes during a national emergency.

### **General Preparedness Safety Tips:**

Pay close attention to authorities for information and instructions and evacuate immediately if told to evacuate.

Avoid driving except in emergencies and never drive around barricades. Local responders use them to safely direct traffic out of danger areas. Do not drive through flooded roadways. Just six inches of fast-moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away.

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<sup>1</sup> [Ready.gov](#)- Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA

<sup>2</sup> Federal Emergency Management Agency- [FEMA](#)

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Stay clear of fallen power lines and trees. Always ASSUME fallen power lines ARE LIVE and report them immediately. Pay close attention to weather forecasts for information on when it is safe to go outside.

### **Planning:**

Create an [emergency plan](#) so that you and your family know what to do, where to go, and what you will need to protect yourselves from a severe weather event or disaster. Identify sturdy buildings close to where you live, work, study, and play. Your family may not be together if a disaster strikes, so it is important to know which [types of disasters](#) could affect your area. Know how you will contact one another and reconnect if separated. Identify if you may need additional help during an emergency if you or anyone else in your household is an [individual with a disability](#). Establish a family meeting place that is familiar and easy to find. Save phone calls for emergencies and [get tech ready](#). Phone systems often are down or busy after a disaster. Use text messages or social media to communicate with family and friends.

Prepare for long-term stay at home or sheltering in place. Gather [emergency supplies](#), cleaning supplies, non-perishable [foods](#), [water](#), and medical supplies. Gather enough supplies in case you need to stay home for several days without power. Keep in mind each person's specific needs, including medication, and remember the [needs of your pets](#).

Practice and [learn your evacuation routes](#). You may have to evacuate quickly so it is important to know your evacuation zone and practice evacuating with your household. Identify where you will stay ahead of time.

Include your [workplace, children's day care, and anywhere else you frequent](#) in your emergency plans. If you have a business ensure that you have a [continuity plan](#) to continue operating when disaster strikes. Help your Neighborhood. Check with neighbors, [senior adults](#), or those who may need additional help establishing emergency plans.

Return home only when authorities say it is safe and be careful to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Only use generators and grills outdoors and away from windows. Never heat your home with a gas stovetop or oven. Contact your healthcare provider if you are sick and need medical attention. Wait for further care instructions and continue to shelter in place.

Wear appropriate gear during clean-up. Wear thick-soled shoes, long pants, and work gloves, and use appropriate face coverings or masks if cleaning [mold or other debris](#). People with [asthma and other lung conditions and/or immune suppression](#) should not enter buildings with indoor water leaks or mold growth that can be seen or smelled. Children should not take part in disaster cleanup work.

Document any property damage with photographs and contact your insurance company for assistance.

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### **Power Outages:**

Extended power outages may impact the whole community and the economy. A power outage may disrupt communications, water flow, transportation, medical devices, and close retail businesses, grocery stores, gas stations, and banks. Power outages may also cause food spoilage and water contamination in your household<sup>3</sup>.

Take an inventory of the items you need that rely on electricity. Plan for batteries and other alternative power sources to meet your needs when the power goes out, such as a portable charger or power bank. Have flashlights for every household member. Determine whether your home phone will work in a power outage and how long battery backup will last.

Know your medical needs: Talk to your medical provider about a power outage plan for medical devices powered by electricity and refrigerated medicines. Find out how long medication can be stored at higher temperatures and get specific guidance for any medications that are critical for life. If the power is out for more than a day, discard any medication that should be refrigerated, unless the drug's label says otherwise. Consult your doctor or pharmacist immediately for a new supply.

Food storage: Have enough nonperishable food and water. Keep freezers and refrigerators closed. The refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours. Use coolers with ice if necessary. Monitor temperatures with a thermometer. Throw out food if the temperature is 40 degrees or higher. When in doubt, throw it out. Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 40 degrees or higher for two hours or more, or that has an unusual odor, color, or texture.

Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment, and electronics: Power may return with damaging surges or spikes.

Carbon monoxide & generator safety: Generators can be helpful when the power goes out but it is important to know how use them safely to prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning and other hazards. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that can kill you, your family, and pets.

Install carbon monoxide detectors with battery backup in central locations on every level of your home. Generators, fuel, camp stoves, and gas and charcoal grills should always be used outdoors and at least 20 feet away from windows, doors, and attached garages. Never use a gas stovetop or oven to heat your home.

Keep the generator dry and protected from rain or flooding. Touching a wet generator or devices connected to one can cause electrical shock. Always connect the generator to

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<sup>3</sup> [Ready.gov- Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA- Power Outages](https://www.ready.gov/federal-emergency-management-agency-fema-power-outages)

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appliances with heavy-duty extension cords. Let the generator cool before refueling. Fuel spilled on hot engine parts can ignite and Follow manufacturer's instructions carefully.

### **Thunder & Lightning:**

Lightning is a leading cause of injury and death from weather-related hazards. Although most lightning victims survive, people struck by lightning often report a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms. Thunderstorms are dangerous storms that include lightning and can create or cause powerful winds over 50 mph, hail, flash flooding, and/or tornadoes<sup>4</sup>.

Strengthen your home: Cut down or trim trees that may be in danger of falling on your home. Consider buying surge protectors, lightning rods, or a lightning protection system to protect your home, appliances, and electronic devices.

If you are under a thunderstorm warning: When thunder roars, go indoors. Move from outdoors into a building or car with a roof, pay attention to alerts and warnings, avoid using electronic devices connected to an electrical outlet, and avoid running water. Pay close attention for information on whether it is safe to go outside and instructions regarding potential flash flooding.

### **Winter Weather:**

Winter storms create a higher risk of car accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks from overexertion. Winter storms including blizzards can bring extreme cold, freezing rain, snow, ice, and high winds. A winter storm can last a few hours or several days, cut off heat, power, and communication services, and put older adults, children, sick individuals, and pets at greater risk<sup>5</sup>.

Know your winter weather terms: If you are under a winter storm warning, find shelter.

1. Winter Storm Warning: Issued when hazardous winter weather in the form of heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet is imminent or occurring. Winter Storm Warnings are usually issued 12 to 24 hours before the event is expected to begin.
2. Winter Storm Watch: Alerts the public to the possibility of a blizzard, heavy snow, heavy freezing rain, or heavy sleet. Winter Storm Watches are usually issued 12 to 48 hours before the beginning of a Winter Storm.
3. Winter Weather Advisory: Issued for accumulations of snow, freezing rain, freezing drizzle, and sleet which will cause significant inconveniences and, if caution is not exercised, could lead to life-threatening situations.

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<sup>4</sup> Ready.gov- Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA- [Thunder & Lightning](#)

<sup>5</sup> Ready.gov- Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA- [Winter Weather](#)

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Preparing for winter weather: Prepare your home to keep the cold out with insulation, caulking, and weather stripping, and learn how to keep pipes from freezing. Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups. Have extra batteries for radios and flashlights on hand at all times.

Limit your time outside: If you need to go outside, then wear layers of warm clothing. Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia. Reduce the risk of a heart attack by avoiding overexertion when shoveling snow and walking in the snow. Stay off the roads if possible.

Learn the signs of and basic treatments for frostbite, and hypothermia: Frostbite causes loss of feeling and color around the face, fingers, and toes.

- Signs: Numbness, white or grayish-yellow skin, firm or waxy skin.
- Actions: Go to a warm room. Soak in warm water. Use body heat to warm. Do not massage or use a heating pad.

Hypothermia is an unusually low body temperature. A temperature below 95 degrees is an emergency.

- Signs: Shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech, or drowsiness.
- Actions: Go to a warm room. Warm the center of the body first - chest, neck, head, and groin. Keep dry and wrapped up in warm blankets, including the head and neck.

### **Tornadoes:**

Tornadoes are violently rotating columns of air that extend from a thunderstorm to the ground and can easily destroy buildings, flip cars, and create deadly flying debris. A tornado can occur at any time and in any location, and bring intense winds over 200 miles per hour. Tornadoes look like funnels<sup>6</sup>.

If you are under a tornado warning: Go to a safe shelter immediately, such as a safe room, basement, storm cellar, or a small interior room on the lowest level of a sturdy building. Stay away from windows, doors, and outside walls. Do not go under an overpass or bridge. You're safer in a low, flat location. Watch out for flying debris that can cause injury or death. Use your arms to protect your head and neck. If you can't stay at home, make plans to go to a public shelter.

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<sup>6</sup> Ready.gov- Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA- [Tornadoes](#)

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Know your area's tornado risk: In the U.S., the Midwest and the Southeast have a greater risk for tornadoes.

Know the signs of a tornado: including a rotating, funnel-shaped cloud, an approaching cloud of debris, or a loud roar like a freight train.

Pay attention to weather reports: Meteorologists can predict when conditions might be right for a tornado.

Identify and practice going to a safe shelter: Such as a [safe room built using FEMA criteria](#) or a storm shelter built to ICC 500 standards. The next best protection is a small, interior, windowless room or basement on the lowest level of a sturdy building.

Do not try to outrun a tornado in a vehicle: If you are in a vehicle or outdoors and cannot get to a building, cover your head and neck with your arms, and cover your body with a coat or blanket, if possible.

### **Floods:**

Flooding is a temporary overflow of water onto land that is normally dry. Floods are the most common natural disaster in the United States. Failing to evacuate flooded areas or entering flood waters can lead to injury or death. Floods may result from rain, snow, coastal storms, storm surges, and overflows of dams and other water systems, and they may develop slowly or quickly. Flash floods can come with no warning at all. Floods may cause outages, disrupt transportation, damage buildings, and create landslides<sup>7</sup>.

If you are under a flood warning: Find safe shelter right away. Do not walk, swim, or drive through flood waters. Remember, just six inches of moving water can knock you down, and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away. Avoid wading in floodwater, which can be contaminated and contain dangerous debris. Underground or downed power lines can also electrically charge the water.

- Get to the highest level if trapped in a building. Only get on the roof if necessary and once there signal for help. Do not climb into a closed attic to avoid getting trapped by rising floodwater.
- Stay off bridges over fast-moving water.
  - Fast-moving water can wash bridges away without warning. Stay inside your car if it is trapped in rapidly moving water. Get on the roof if water is rising inside the car.

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<sup>7</sup> Ready.gov- Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA- [Floods](#)

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- Depending on the type of flooding:
  - Evacuate if told to do so.
  - Move to higher ground or a higher floor.
  - Stay where you are.
- Be aware of the risk of electrocution. Do not touch electrical equipment if it is wet or if you are standing in water. Turn off the electricity to prevent electric shock if it is safe to do so.

### Hurricanes:

Hurricanes are dangerous and can cause major damage from storm surge, wind damage, rip currents, and flooding. They can happen along any U.S. coast or in any territory in the Atlantic or Pacific oceans. Atlantic- (east) coast hurricane season- is June 1 to November 30. Hurricanes are not just a coastal problem. Rain, wind, water, and even tornadoes could occur far inland from where a hurricane or tropical storm makes landfall<sup>8</sup>.

Just like with any other hazardous situation [know your hurricane risk and start preparing now](#). Make sure everyone in your household knows and understands your hurricane plans. Follow the instructions from local emergency managers, who work closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies and partners. They will provide the latest recommendations based on the threat to your community and appropriate safety measures.

Respectfully,



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<sup>8</sup> Ready.gov- Federal Emergency Management Agency- FEMA- [Hurricanes](#)