

## Hurricane Season is Coming: Are You Ready?

The 2017 hurricane season broke records, and unfortunately, **2018 has been predicted to be another volatile weather year.**

If there is any good news, it's that hurricanes are one of the few disasters that come with advance notice. So, take the time now to prepare both your property and congregation for what may happen.

### Preparing Your Property

Secure the windows, doors, and other openings on your main buildings. Hurricane shutters work best, but plywood can also be effective. Hire a qualified professional to go up on your roof and reinforce any rooftop equipment and have them check for weak points and corrosion in work that has already been completed.

If there are places in your building where water from less severe rainfall regularly infiltrates, consult with an expert and take steps to waterproof; stop any major leaking and flooding before it starts.

Store any portable outdoor furniture indoors or tether it down so it cannot be blown around by high winds. Secure any outbuildings such as sheds and trailers that may not be as soundly built as your main buildings.

Look at your landscaping to determine whether trees need to be trimmed of any dead limbs that may become projectiles during a storm. Pick up any other debris.

### Preparing Your Equipment

Cover electronic equipment with plastic and place it on pallets or on upper floors of your buildings. Make sure that multiple people on the premises know how to shut down systems, such as electricity, fuel, and water, in case it becomes necessary. Consider purchasing a **generator** and make sure that you know how to use it properly to avoid fires or other hazards. For example, run the generator only in open air and do not refuel the generator while it is running.

Check to make sure that your fire protection systems are operational. For example, test sprinklers and smoke alarms and check the expiration dates on fire extinguishers.

### Properly Store Records and Valuables

If you have hard copies of paper records, make digital copies and store them in the cloud or on portable hard drives. Keep the hard drive off-site in an area that will not be affected by the weather. Some of your important documents, such as old records, Bibles, and hymnals, have more value than a digital copy.

Place those items in waterproof storage containers. Many people choose to put copies of important documents in compact emergency kits, so that they can be easily taken if you are forced to evacuate.

**Make an inventory** of the items in your church. This used to be an onerous process, but now you can simply take your smart phone (or someone else's) and walk around and record what you need to.

### **Preparing Your Congregation**

Keep a list of volunteers and staff who will need to know information about the church before, during, and after the storm. Create a phone tree—either a hard copy or a group text chain—to make it easy for people to contact each other and share information.

Check your church's roster for people who may be vulnerable during severe storms: the elderly, people with small children, and people with disabilities. Check in with them before a storm to make sure that they have been able to prepare adequately, and after the storm has hit, check in with them again to see if they need assistance.

Take advantage of the advance warning that a hurricane is on its way. Though devastation of property cannot be fully avoided, these types of preparations can lessen the effect that a storm has on both church property and its people.