

LYNNE MATTHEWS HURRICANE TIPS for 2024

Here are my annual hurricane tips that I have compiled over the past 27 years. I publish this every year both as a reminder for those who have been here for a while as well as for our new residents.

1. Take ALL items off your docks and stow them away. High winds and excessively high tides mean you may never see them again if you leave them on the dock.
2. Put all decorative items in your yard and on your lanai in storage or inside the walls of the storm shutters - they become flying projectiles if left out.
3. If you have a landline, forward your house phone to your cell phone prior to the storm. We had no phone, internet or TV for 30 days after Charley, so cell phones were the only means of communication. We were also without power for 14 days, so plan alternate options accordingly!
4. Share your contact information with neighbors and close friends to make sure you have a way to communicate after the storm. This can mean the difference between life and death in a serious storm. I speak from experience!
5. Fill your gas tanks - all gas pumps blew away in Charley and the closest gas was in North Port and Venice. This includes gas for your portable generator. Make sure you start the generator to ensure it is in good working order.
6. Have enough water for one gallon per person per day for at least three days (and don't wait until the last minute to get your supply - it was a highly sought after commodity after Charley).
7. If you ever thought you didn't need to take the time to PUT UP YOUR STORM SHUTTERS, think again! It's always better to be prepared and to help keep you and your property safe. Plan for the worst and hope for the best!
8. Fill all your prescriptions today if they are close to renewing time. If you have to leave, it's a lot easier than trying to get them transferred somewhere else.
9. Have flashlights and candles around in case the power goes out. And don't forget matches (in a waterproof container) or a lighter. These were very handy after Charley passed through.
10. Have adequate supplies for your pets, including food, water, medicine, leash, bed, etc.
11. Have extra cash on hand - after the last storm, many stores and restaurants had no capability of using credit card machines.
12. Fill propane tanks for your grill - if you don't have electric, you don't have a way to cook most food!
13. Make a box up with all important insurance policies, contractor phone numbers, bank accounts, investment accounts, utility company accounts, etc. so you have something to start with after the storm.
14. Fill your bathtub with water just prior to the storm - we had no running water after Charley for seven days, and to flush the toilets, you needed to put water in them.
15. Make sure you have sunblock, insect repellent and a first aid kit on hand - we spent a lot of time in the pool and yard doing cleanup after the storm, and you'll thank me for this tip!
16. Start filling bags with ice from your freezer to keep items cold, if you use the filtered water from your fridge and the ice melts, you can always use for drinking, cooking, etc.
17. Have vet records for your pets, and crates for them, in case you have to bug out. Any shelter that allows pets will require a crate, leash, muzzle and other things, so be prepared.
18. Trim all landscaping before storm season. Well-trimmed trees and shrubs are more wind resistant and less likely to fly around as battering rams in high winds.



19. Start eating your frozen food. Have canned and non-perishable food on hand, and a manual can opener. Paper plates, napkins, plastic silverware, paper cups and paper towels will come in handy too.
20. Keep a bottle of bleach and extra cleaning supplies handy, extra garbage bags, toilet paper and paper towels. You'll thank me for this!
21. If you have external chargers for your cell phone, make sure they are fully charged - that might be the only way to keep your cell phone going if the power goes off. You may want to also invest in a charger that can be plugged into your car lighter.
22. Have a tire plug kit on hand. After Charley, there were a lot of screws and nails on the ground after people removed plywood and other protective materials, and the roofers dropped them everywhere. Many experienced nails in car tires.

23. During the storm, please close all internal doors in your house. If there are severe winds, it will help to slow windage if any portion of your house is breached.
24. With the ongoing issues with COVID-19, please also remember to bring along face masks, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes and other supplies to keep you and your family safe.
25. You may want to have a portable battery powered radio to monitor the storm to stay in communication for weather information.
26. If you have to evacuate, have a plan in place of where you will go and what you will need to bring with you. And don't wait until the last minute! Shelters fill up quickly, so be prepared in advance.
27. If you are a boat owner, make sure you double up your lines and fenders on your vessel. Secure all loose items on the decks. When attaching lines, allow for storm surge! Make sure your bilge pumps are working.
28. If your boat is in a lift, secure lines around the boat in the lift, and raise the lift so it will not be underwater in a storm surge.

And remember, plan for the worst and hope for the best!
Lynne Matthews, Punta Gorda Mayor 2024