



If you are experiencing an emergency, call 9-1-1.

Hurricanes and High Winds

Hurricane and High Wind Safety Tips

Both Tropical Storms (with winds above 39 mph) and Hurricanes (winds above 74 mph) can have deadly coastal storm surge and cause significant damage.

Hurricanes are a rotating low-pressure tropical weather system. Systems with maximum sustained surface winds of less than 39 miles per hour (mph) are called tropical depressions. Those with maximum sustained winds of 39 mph or higher are called tropical storms. When a storm's maximum sustained winds reach 74 mph, it is called a hurricane. [The Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale](#) is a 1 to 5 rating, or category, based on a hurricane's maximum sustained winds. The higher the category, the greater the hurricane's potential for property damage.

Hurricanes have the power to cause widespread devastation, and can affect both coastal and inland areas. Threats from hurricanes include:

- Storm surge
- High winds
- Heavy rainfall
- Inland flooding
- Tornadoes
- Rip currents

Although the Atlantic hurricane season is officially June 1 through November 30, the most active time for these storms in Massachusetts is late August through September.

Hurricane, Tropical Storm & High Wind Advisories, Watches, and Warnings

The National Weather Service issues tropical storm, hurricane and high wind advisories, watches, and warnings to alert the public of potential hazardous conditions. It is important to understand the difference between an advisory, watch, and a warning, so you know what to do to stay safe.

High Wind Advisory & Warning

- High Wind Advisory — Sustained winds of 31-39 mph are expected for an hour or more. Gusts may reach 46-57 mph for this duration.
- High Wind Warning — Sustained winds of 40 mph or more are expected for an hour or more. Gusts may reach 58 mph or higher for this duration.

Hurricane & Tropical Storm Watch

- Hurricane Watch — Hurricane conditions are possible within the next 48 hours.



- Tropical Storm Watch — Tropical storm conditions are possible within the next 48 hours.

Hurricane & Tropical Storm Warning

- Hurricane Warning — Sustained winds ≥ 74 mph associated with a hurricane are expected to affect a specified area within 24 hours.
- Tropical Storm Warning — Sustained winds of 39–73 mph associated with a tropical storm are expected to affect a specified area within 24 hours.

What to do before a Hurricane Strikes

- The Town of North Andover uses Smart911 to inform and alert residents of issues in the area. The alerts can be sent to all types of phones, including mobile, landline, VOIP, and cable. [Sign up for alerts](#) and update your profile every six months to a year to make sure you are receiving the most pertinent information. You can also download the Town of North Andover's app to your smart phone for [Android](#) or [iOS](#).
- [Be informed](#) by receiving alerts, warnings, and public safety information from the state government before, during, and after emergencies. Download the [Massachusetts Alerts](#) app.
- North Andover is not in hurricane zone, but you may want to learn more about [hurricane zones in the area](#).
- Find out whether your property is in a flood-prone or high-risk area. Explore the [Federal Emergency Management Agency's \(FEMA\) flood maps](#).
- Create and review your [family emergency plan](#).
- If you live or work in a flood zone, [hurricane evacuation zone](#), or an area that is prone to flooding, you should be prepared to [evacuate](#).
- If you receive medical treatment or home health care services, work with your medical provider to determine how to maintain care and service if you are unable to leave your home or have to evacuate during an emergency.
- [Assemble an emergency kit](#).
- Follow instructions from public safety officials.
- [Prepare for possible power outages](#).
- Ensure your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working and have fresh batteries.
- Consider purchasing a generator or home battery to provide power during an outage. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and learn how to use it safely before an outage. More tips on [generator safety](#).
- If you have life-support devices or other medical equipment or supplies which depend on electricity, [notify your utility](#) and work with your medical provider to prepare for power outages.
- Make a record of your personal property by taking photos or videos of your belongings. Store these records in a safe place.
- [Prepare your home](#).



- Flood losses are not typically covered under renter and homeowner's insurance policies. Consider purchasing flood insurance through the [National Flood Insurance Program \(NFIP\)](#).

What to do when a Hurricane or Tropical Storm Is Approaching

- Listen to a [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration \(NOAA\) Weather Radio](#) or to a local news station for the latest information.
- Review your [family emergency plan](#).
- If you live or work in a flood or an area that is prone to flooding, be ready to [evacuate](#).
- If you are not in an area prone to flooding and planning on riding out the storm at home, gather adequate [supplies](#) in case you lose power and water for several days and you are unable to leave due to.
- [Prepare for power outages](#) by charging cell phones and electronics and setting your refrigerator and freezer to their coldest settings. If you use electricity to get well water, fill your bathtub with water to use for flushing toilets.
- Keep your car's gas tank full. Pumps at gas stations may not work during a power outage.
- [Prepare your home](#).
- Secure or bring in outdoor objects (patio furniture, children's toys, trash cans, etc.) that could be swept away or damaged during strong winds or flooding.
- Clear clogged rain gutters to allow water to flow away from your home.
- If damaging winds are expected, cover all of your windows. If you don't have storm shutters, board up windows with 5/8" exterior-grade or marine plywood.
- Go Tapeless! Taping windows wastes preparation time, does not stop windows from breaking in a hurricane, and does not make cleanup easier. In fact, taping windows may create larger shards of glass that can cause serious injuries.
- Turn off propane tanks if you are not using them.
- Prepare for [flooding](#) by elevating items in your basement, checking your sump pump, unplugging sensitive electronic equipment, clearing nearby catch basins, and parking vehicles in areas not prone to flooding.
- If instructed, turn off your gas and electricity at the main switch or valve.

What to do during High Winds

- The safest place to be during high winds is indoors. Postpone outdoor activities if a wind advisory or high wind warning has been issued.
- If you are caught outside during high winds:
 - Take cover next to a building or under a shelter.
 - Stand clear of roadways or train tracks, as a gust may blow you into the path of an oncoming vehicle.
 - Use handrails where available on outdoor walkways and avoid other elevated areas such as roofs without adequate railing.



- Watch for flying debris. Tree limbs may break and street signs may become loose during strong wind gusts. Keep an eye toward nearby balconies for loose objects that may fall.
- In the event of a downed power line, call for help. Report downed lines to [your local utility emergency center](#) and to the police. Do not try to free lines or to remove debris yourself.
- Avoid anything that may be touching downed lines, including vehicles or tree branches.
- Puddles and even wet or snow-covered ground can conduct electricity in some cases. Warn others to stay away.
- If you see someone who has been shocked who may be in direct or indirect contact with a power line, do not try to touch them. You may become a second victim. Get medical attention as quickly as possible by calling 911.
- If a line falls on your car, stay inside the vehicle. Take care not to touch any of the metal frame of your vehicle. Honk your horn, roll down the window and warn anyone who may approach of the danger. Ask someone to call the police. Do not exit the car until help arrives, unless it catches on fire. To exit, open the door, but do not step out. Jump, without touching any of the metal portions of the car's exterior, to safe ground and get quickly away.
- If you are driving:
 - Keep both hands on the wheel and slow down.
 - Watch for objects blowing across the roadway and into your path.
 - Keep a safe distance from cars in adjacent lanes as strong gusts could push a car outside its lane of travel.
 - Take extra care in a high-profile vehicle such as a truck, van, SUV, or when towing a trailer, as these are more prone to be pushed or even flipped by high wind gusts.
 - If winds are severe enough to prevent safe driving, get onto the shoulder of the road and stop, making sure you are away from trees or other tall objects that could fall onto your vehicle. Stay in the car and turn on the hazard lights until the wind subsides.

What to do during a Hurricane

- Avoid driving or going outdoors during a storm. Flooding and damaging winds can make traveling dangerous.
- If you must be out in the storm:
 - Do not walk through flowing water. Six inches of swiftly moving water can knock you off of your feet.
 - Remember the phrase "Turn Around, Don't Drown!" Don't drive through flooded roads. Cars can be swept away in just two feet of moving water. If your vehicle is trapped in rapidly moving water, stay in the vehicle. If the water is rising inside the vehicle, seek refuge on the roof.
 - Do not drive around road barriers.



- Continue to monitor media for emergency information.
- Follow instructions from public safety officials.
- If advised to [evacuate](#), do so immediately. Take only essential items, and [bring your pets](#) if possible.
- If told to [shelter](#) in place:
 - Stay indoors and away from windows.
 - Listen to local television or radio for updates.
 - Conditions may change quickly; be prepared to evacuate to a shelter or neighbor's home if necessary.

What to do after a Hurricane has passed

- Continue to monitor the media for emergency information.
- Follow instructions from public safety officials.
- Call 9-1-1 to report emergencies, including downed power lines and gas leaks.
- Call [2-1-1](#) to obtain shelter locations and other disaster information.
- Stay away from downed utility wires. Always assume a downed power line is live.
- Remember the phrase "Turn Around, Don't Drown!" Don't drive through flooded roads. Cars can be swept away in just two feet of moving water.
- Stay out of damaged buildings and away from affected areas and or roads until authorities deem them safe.
- If you have evacuated, return home only when authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Listen to news reports to learn if your water supply is safe to drink. Until local authorities proclaim your water supply safe, [boil water](#) for at least one minute before drinking or using it for food preparation.
- Check your home for damage:
 - Never touch electrical equipment while you are wet or standing in water.
 - Consider hiring a qualified electrician to assess damage to electrical systems.
 - Have wells checked for contamination from bacteria and chemicals before using.
 - Have damaged septic tanks or leaching systems repaired as soon as possible to reduce potential health hazards.
 - If you believe there is a gas leak, go outdoors immediately, and do not turn electrical switches or appliances on or off. If you turned off your gas, a licensed professional is required to turn it back on.
 - If your home or property is damaged, take photos or videos to document damage, and contact your insurance company.
 - If your power is out, follow these [power outage safety tips](#).
 - Report power outages to [your utility company](#).
 - Avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Use generators and grills outside in a well ventilated area because their fumes contain carbon monoxide. Make sure your carbon monoxide detectors are working as it is a silent, odorless, killer. More tips on [generator safety](#).



- Clean and disinfect anything that got wet, and take steps to prevent and detect mold.
- Consider using professional cleaning and repair services. See more tips to recover from [flooding](#).
- Throw away food (including canned items), that has come into contact with floodwaters, was exposed to temperatures above 40 °F for more than two hours, or has an unusual odor, color, or texture. When in doubt, throw it out!
- If a traffic light is out, treat the intersection as a four-way stop.
- If phone lines are down, use social media or texting to let others know you are OK.
- Look before you step. After a hurricane or flood, the ground and floors can be covered with debris, including broken bottles and nails.
- Avoid entering moving or standing floodwaters. Floodwater and mud may be contaminated by oil, gasoline, or raw sewage.
- Be a good neighbor. Check on family, friends, and neighbors, especially the elderly, those who live alone, those with medical conditions and those who may need additional assistance.

This text was adapted from “[Hurricane Safety Tips](#)” published on Mass.gov, the website for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and from “[High Wind Safety Rules](#)” from the National Weather Service.

Further Resources

[Hurricanes from Ready.gov](#)

[Hurricane Safety from The American Red Cross](#)

[Hurricane Preparedness from the National Hurricane Center](#)

[Refrigerated Foods and Power Outages from Foodsafety.gov](#)

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