

HURRICANE INFORMATION FOR VA EMPLOYEES

Are you prepared?

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

Hurricane Preparedness

Prior to Hurricane Season (December through May)

What to Do

- Time to consider having hurricane panels professionally installed.
- Check your roof, seal your windows, discard unnecessary objects in your yard, trim branches close to your home or electrical lines.
- A small external emergency generator can run a refrigerator, fan, and a few appliances— read and follow all manufacturer’s warnings.
- Consider purchasing a weather radio, battery operated fans, small gas stoves, and small refrigerators.
- Water tanks/reserve: a large trash can will hold water to use to shower, flush toilets, etc.

Start of Hurricane Season

What to Do

STARTING JUNE 1ST

- Get your hurricane supply kit together (see page 7) and make it readily accessible.
- Make a good inventory of valuable items. Insurance companies will accept photos as evidence. Review your insurance policies.
- If you are not able to safeguard your home, live in a mobile home, or other structure that may not withstand a hurricane, contact your county or local Emergency Management Office to find out where your local shelters are located. If needed, now is the time to prepare your evacuation plans.
- Review your storm responsibilities at work.
- Register your family members and service pets in Live Process and ensure that your account has your current contact information.





Hurricane Watch is Declared

What to Do



- Buy your last minute groceries now, even if the storm is not clearly headed in our direction.
- If you feel your home is not safe to ride out a storm, call or visit your local shelter to find out when it will open. Find out what their requirements are regarding pets and medical needs.
- Identify a family member/friend who lives far away from expected impact area.
 - » Everyone in your family should have that person's phone number. Inform them they will be contacted as soon as possible after the hurricane to let them know everyone is fine.
 - » If they don't hear from you within a reasonable time, have them try to contact local authorities.
- If predictions show the storm is coming in our direction, approximately 24-36 hours from landfall, install your hurricane panels and if needed, make arrangements to move to your shelter location.

NOTE: Due to the nature of our mission, many of our VA employees are considered critical unless instructed otherwise. That means you may be expected to report for duty. During a Hurricane Watch period, you should be making preparations for your home, family, and pets in the event you are required to work during the storm.

West Palm Beach VA Employee Hotline

The medical center has established an employee hotline which will be used leading up to and during a hurricane. This hotline provides report to work information for staff and the operating status of the main medical center and all outlying clinics. The employee hotline may be reached at **561-422-8200**.

VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center: 24/7 Toll Free Information Line for Employees and Patients

The VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center is a regional contact center that Veterans can call to get first contact resolution on a wide range of health questions and concerns 24/7. In the event of a storm, patients may call to receive information through this line on facility status changes, report health concerns and employees may report their status if normal communications are down. The center may be reached at **1-877-741-3400**. If you are having a medical emergency, please go to the nearest open emergency room.



Hurricane Warning

What to Do

At this time, all preparations should be finalized. If you are scheduled to work during the storm, all your home and family preparations should be completed by now. You should be ready to come to work to continue performing your mission. Pack your bag with items you may need at work if you are required to spend multiple days on the job.

Storm Staffing & VA Employees

As VA employees, we are expected to make arrangements to report for duty when a disaster strikes.

Caring for patients in our VA Medical Centers and clinics requires well-staffed facilities. Each Service is responsible for developing staffing plans that allow us to operate without interruption for several days.

When preparing to report for duty during or after a storm, you'll need to have some essential items:

- PIV card
- change of clothes
- sleeping bag
- personal toiletries
- prescription medications
- three day supply of food and water
- cash

It's important to maintain mental alertness during stressful situations, especially a hurricane. To ensure proper rest, respite hours and areas may be designated for employees who are required to remain at the facility during the storm for extended periods of time. If you need help identifying these areas, check with your supervisor.

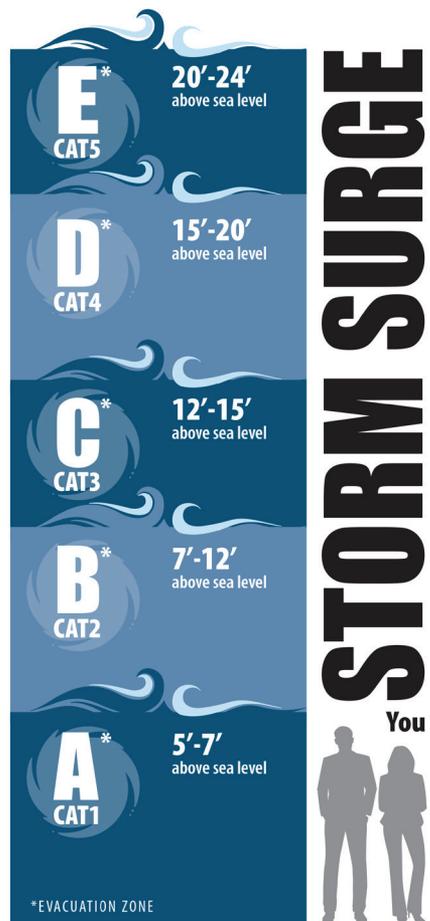
Live Process

Live Process is the emergency notification system used by the Department of Veterans Affairs. If you are a new employee or transfer, within the next two weeks of your orientation, you should be receiving a confirmation email asking you to change your password and look over your information. Please confirm your contact information along with your family support information. If you do not receive an email notification from Live Process or require assistance with the use of Live Process, please contact your supervisor. As an existing employee, you will receive periodic requests from Live Process asking you to once again reconfirm your information. Please check all tabs in the system and save your updates.

During the Hurricane

What to Do

- If you are at work, remain indoors.
- Observe patients frequently.
- Look for window damage or water entering patient or work areas and report incidents to incident command.
- Take immediate action to move patients to safety. Be familiar with your Service's Emergency Plan and how to report any damage or move.



Personal Preparedness Checklist Items

- **Water** – 1/2 gallon for drinking and 2 gallons for bathing per person per day
- **Food** – Ready-to-eat canned food, juices, milk, soup
- **Snacks** – cookies, cereals, soft drinks, instant coffee, tea
- **OTC Medicine and Supplies** – first aid kit that contains aspirin, non-aspirin pain reliever, antacid, antiseptic, scissors, insect repellent
- **Personal Hygiene/Care Items** – toilet paper, towels, soap, shampoo, denture needs, eyeglasses, sun protection.
- **Other supplies** – battery-operated radio; flashlight and batteries; non-electric can opener; portable cooler and ice; plastic trash bags; tarp or sheet plastic; duct tape; cleaning supplies such as bleach; paper napkins, plates and cups; pillows and blankets.
- Keep a record of scheduled appointments for follow-up visits, lab work and specialty care services.



Prescription Medications

- Keep a list of all medications in your personal preparedness kit.
- Keep a 15-day supply of medication and supplies on hand. Do not allow your supply to go below 15 days.
- For medications requiring refrigeration: make sure you have a small portable cooler or ice chest ready for easy transport.

Storm Communication

Communication is key to effective emergency preparedness and response. Your supervisor should communicate your responsibilities to you during an emergency or disaster. Make sure you provide your emergency contact information to your supervisor and that all your information within Live Process is up-to-date so it can be included on our cascade call list. If you are told to evacuate or must leave your home unexpectedly, be sure to call your supervisor as soon as possible. If you are experiencing difficulties reaching your supervisor, call the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center at **1-877-741-3400** or the VA Employee Helpline at **1-866-233-0152**. West Palm Beach VA Medical Center will maintain special hurricane pages on both the Intranet and Internet and provide updates via social media—check often for updates.



Pets

Only registered service animals are allowed to be present at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center before, during, or after an all-hazard event (hurricane, tornado etc.). Each service animal owner must provide:

- Proof of current shots and identification tags
- Bowls, food, water, and any medications for at least three days
- Pets must be fed and walked on a leash by owner
- If needed, one crate for each animal and equipment to clean it with. Cat litter if needed and bags to remove waste.

Family Support Program

Activation of the Family Support Program is at the discretion of the Medical Center Director and must be in line with the safety requirements for the incident and the facility. Each employee should review and assess

their family preparedness plan which should include consideration for where the safest place for your family may be in the event of a natural disaster. Each event is different, and the facility may not be the most suitable place for family members. Additionally, the facility may not be capable of supporting additional visitors during an emergency event due to ongoing operations. Your personal family plan should not be dependent on the activation of the Medical Center Family Support Plan.

You must inform your supervisor at your earliest convenience if you believe there may be occasion that your family plan may impact your ability to work during an emergency.

If the Medical Center Director activates the Family Support Program:

- In general, employees must preregister all family members in advance so they may be accounted for should the Family Support Program be activated by the Medical Center Director. This will aid the medical center with tracking of any family members throughout the event while at the facility.
- You are responsible for the family members you bring to the Support Center/Facility—including a 2 to 3-day supply of food, water, clean bedding, clothing, entertainment options, toiletries, and medications.
- Each child under the age of 18 must have an adult other than the essential employee accompany them throughout their stay in the facility. As an essential employee, you will likely not be in the same area as your family.
- Notify your supervisor when you have family members in the Support Center/Facility and ask for permission to make periodic visits to check on them.



- The facility's Incident Commander or Director shall determine how long the Family Support Center/Program can remain open.
- The Family Support Program is intended only for immediate family, and domestic partners.

***NOTE:** Only essential employees (determined by service chief or designee) with an exception, who live in a surge zone (an evacuation zip code) or have immediate family members who are unable to care for themselves, will be authorized to house family members at the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center if the Family Support Program is activated by the Medical Center Director.*

After the Hurricane — Important Steps

1. Please call West Palm Beach VA Medical Center Employee Hotline at **561-422-8200** for report to work or operational status updates. If you are unable to report for duty, you must contact your supervisor.
2. If your facility's telephone system is out of service, please contact the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center at **1-877-741-3400** or the National Veterans Helpline at **1-800-507-4571**.
3. If you worked during the storm and are unable to return home due to impassable roads or no public transportation, you may be able to remain in the Medical Center. The Incident Command Center will provide you with information on where to make your sleeping arrangements. Any other issues should be directed to your supervisor.
4. Pay attention to alerts issued through the local media outlets regarding impassable roads, drinking water advisories, and other public health and safety information. Use caution when venturing outdoors; look for down power lines and other hazardous conditions.
5. Exercise caution when using power tools (i.e. chainsaws) and generators. Keep yourself and your family safe.



Information and Assistance Resources

Veterans Administration (VA)

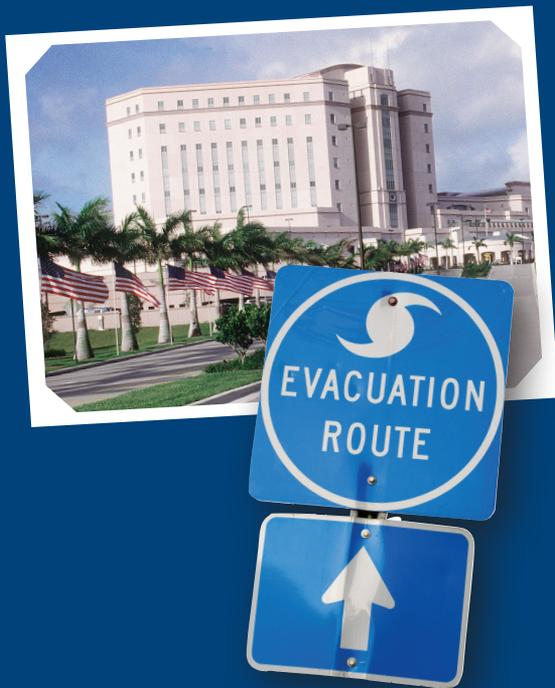
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| VA Employee Hotline | 866-233-0152 |
| National Veterans Helpline | 800-507-4571 |
| VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center (24/7) | 877-741-3400 |

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

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| WPB Internet | www.westpalmbeach.va.gov |
| Emergency Emergency Updates | www.westpalmbeach.va.gov/emergency/employee_emergency.asp |
| Employee Hotline | 561-422-8200 |
| Facebook | www.facebook.com/VAWestPalmBeach |
| Hurricane Information Hotline | 561-422-6597 |
| Intranet | vaww.westpalmbeach.va.gov |

Other Emergency Resources

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| VISN 8 Hurricane Tips | www.visn8.va.gov/hurricane_tips.asp |
| Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ... | www.fema.gov |
| Florida Disaster | www.floridadisaster.org |
| National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service | www.nhc.noaa.gov |
| Red Cross | www.redcross.org |



**Veterans
Crisis Line**

1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**



LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH ONLINE
FIND US @VAWESTPALMBEACH

WEST PALM BEACH VA MEDICAL CENTER

7305 N. Military Trail • West Palm Beach, Florida 33410
www.myhealth.va.gov www.westpalmbeach.va.gov

Local VA Connect: 1-561-422-6838

Toll Free VA Connect: 1-866-383-9036

VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center: 1-877-741-3400