

# AFTER THE STORM

After major hurricanes like Charley, Frances, Ivan, Jeanne, Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, our lives can change drastically. These disasters affect everyone to some extent. Relief supplies and other aid will be arriving as quickly as possible, but it may take several days. Try to remain calm, patient and understanding. Your attitude affects you and everyone around you. Remember that the longest and hardest part of dealing with a hurricane is the recovery.



There may be residual flooding and roads may be blocked for days or weeks, making damaged areas inaccessible. This may mean that you will not be allowed back to your home for days, or possibly weeks. Emergency workers want your return home to be as safe as possible and need time to clear safe access and secure hazards. Listen to

local media for reentry information and do not go into unsafe areas. Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges. Do not go sight seeing.

If you evacuated out of the area, consider staying away for a few extra days. Before you decide to return, consider the following. Even in the best of conditions, it is possible, if not probable, that:

- Power will be out for an undetermined period of time. This means no air conditioning, no lights, no refrigeration, no water pump and in

many cases no stove.

- Telephone service will be out or limited. This includes calling 911. Lack of power and damaged facilities will affect both landline telephones and cellular telephone service. Even if your phone works, use it only for emergencies.

- Municipal water supplies may be unsafe to drink without boiling or chemical treatment. Treat all water as unsafe until you are notified that it is safe.



- Sewer lift stations will not work, meaning toilets will not flush and sinks not drain, and they may backup into your home or property.

When you do return, some damage may not be readily apparent, so here are some things to keep in mind for your safety. **Inspect your home for damage.** Check for water and sewer line damage. Check the electrical system. Turn off the main breaker until you are sure the system is safe. Check for natural gas and/or bottled gas leaks. Do not enter or stay in a structure if you smell gas.



- Be careful when you go outside and pay attention to where you walk and stand. Avoid any downed wires or standing water. Report downed wires to your utility company or to emergency services.
- Check above you for low hanging objects or loose things that could fall.
- Beware of wild animals that might be dangerous. Fire ants, bees, wasps, snakes, rodents and wild animals will be seeking high ground. They can create health and safety hazards.
- Be careful of domestic animals, even ones you know. They may be frightened or injured and more dangerous than you expect.
- Do not connect generators to your house wiring! Service personnel can be killed, or fires started elsewhere. Use your generator only in a well-ventilated area and shut it down during re-fueling.



**REMEMBER: Insurance companies** will send special disaster assistance teams, as will the state and federal governments. Still, it may be more than a week before those teams are able to get into operation.

Take pictures **of the damage, both to the house and its contents for insurance claims.**

Have all your insurance documents ready and be patient!



**When help does arrive, some may be in the form of the unscrupulous fortune seekers.** Do not sign repair contracts until you have checked out the contractor. Do not pay for any services until the work has been completed. Ask for a valid county contractor's license. Is the contractor bonded? Does the price seem fair? Are high-pressure tactics being used? Report the suspicious contractor to authorities to be checked out! If you see unfairly high prices being charged, report it! Local authorities want to help our residents by requiring competence and fairness.

## REVIVING YOUR POOL

Without electricity to filter and vacuum pools, that shimmering lagoon in your back yard can turn into a fetid mosquito haven.



To maintain reasonable water quality while you wait for the power to be restored or for pool maintenance personnel to fix damage to pumps or filtration systems, follow these steps:

- Remove all debris from the pool bottom. A device called a leaf master might help. It probably won't be much help if there are large amounts of mud, sand or sludge in the pool.
- Add a chlorinator, as in the form of the 10% sodium hypochlorite granules commonly known as shock.
- Super chlorinate the pool according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Maintain the water in its super chlorinated state until the power is restored.
- Do **NOT** allow anyone in the water while it is highly chlorinated.
- If your pool needs structural repairs, choose a contractor carefully. You can find out if your contractor is licensed by contacting your local occupational licensing office.
- Get estimates from several contractors and verify references.