



GREATER NAPLES FIRE RESCUE

AMERICAN RED CROSS DISASTER RELIEF & RECOVERY SERVICES

PUBLIC EDUCATION ISSUE 6

RED CROSS RESOURCES

services to aid in disaster relief & recovery

STAYING SAFE

IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF A DISASTER

- Check the area around you for safety
- Have injuries treated by a medical professional.
- Wash small wounds with soap and water. To help prevent infection of small wounds, use bandages and replace them if they become soiled, damaged or waterlogged.
- Some natural hazards may recur in the form of new storms or aftershocks over the next several days. Take all safety precautions if the hazard strikes again.
- Avoid using the telephone (cellular or landlines) if a large number of homes in your area have been affected by a disaster.
- During the immediate post-disaster time period, only use the telephone to report life-threatening conditions and call your out-of-town emergency contact.
- Remain calm. Pace yourself. You may find yourself in the position of taking charge of other people.
- Listen carefully to what people are telling you, and deal patiently with urgent situations first



First responder in New Orleans helping a man evacuate out of flood waters during Hurricane Katrina.



Remaining calm in the aftermath of a disaster is crucial to the recovery and relief from the damage.

- If you had to leave your home, return only when local authorities advise that it is safe to do so.
- Be sure to have photo identification available, because sometimes local authorities will only permit people who own property in a disaster-affected area back into the area.
- Except in extreme emergencies or unless told to do so by emergency officials, avoid driving during the immediate post-disaster period.
- Keep roads clear for rescue and emergency vehicles. If you must drive, do not drive on roads covered with water. They could be damaged or eroded.
- If the disaster was widespread, listen to your radio or television station for instructions from local authorities.
- Information may change rapidly after a widespread disaster, so continue to listen regularly for updates.
- If the area was flooded and children are present, warn them to stay away from storm drains, culverts and ditches. Children can get caught and injured in these areas.

To learn more about how you and your family can prepare for common emergencies and natural disasters, visit the following pages brought to you by the American Red Cross:

[Chemical Emergency Preparedness](#)
[Coronavirus Safety Tips](#)
[Drought Preparedness & Water Conservation](#)
[Earthquake Safety](#)
[Home Fire Safety](#)
[Flood Safety](#)
[Flu Safety](#)
[Food Safety During an Emergency](#)
[Heat Wave Safety](#)
[Highway Safety](#)
[Hurricane Safety](#)

[Landslide Safety](#)
[Nuclear Explosion & Radiation Emergencies](#)
[Poisoning Safety & First Aid](#)
[Power Outage Safety](#)
[Terrorism](#)
[Thunderstorm Safety](#)
[Tornado Safety](#)
[Tsunami Preparedness](#)
[Volcano Preparedness](#)
[Water Safety](#)
[Wildfire Safety](#)
[Winter Storm Safety](#)



CHECK YOUR HOME

MAKE A CAREFUL AND THOROUGH INSPECTION OF YOUR HOME'S STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS



- Check the outside of your home before you enter. Look for loose power lines, broken or damaged gas lines, foundation cracks, missing support beams or other damage.
- Damage on the outside can indicate a serious problem inside. Ask a building inspector or contractor to check the structure before you enter.
- If the door is jammed, don't force it open – it may be providing support to the rest of your home. Find another way to get inside.
- Sniff for gas. If you detect natural or propane gas, or hear a hissing noise, leave the property immediately and get far away from it. Call the fire department after you reach safety.
- If you have a propane tank system, turn off all valves and contact a propane supplier to check the system out before you use it again.
- Beware of animals, such as rodents, snakes, spiders and insects, that may have entered your home. As you inspect your home, tap loudly and often on the floor with a stick to give notice that you are there.
- Damaged objects, such as furniture or stairs, may be unstable. Be very cautious when moving near them. Avoid holding, pushing or leaning against damaged building parts.
- Is your ceiling sagging? That means it got wet – which makes it heavy and dangerous. It will have to be replaced, so you can try to knock it down.
- Is the floor sagging? It could collapse under your weight, so don't walk there!
- If the weather is dry, open windows and doors to ventilate and/or dry your home.
- If power is out, use a flashlight. Do not use any open flame, including candles, to inspect for damage or serve as alternate lighting.
- Make temporary repairs such as covering holes, bracing walls, and removing debris. Save all receipts.
- Take photographs of the damage. You may need these to substantiate insurance claims later.



It is important to assess the damage outside your home prior to entering. Damage on the outside can indicate a serious problem on the inside.



CHECK YOUR UTILITIES

ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING, & HEATING SYSTEMS

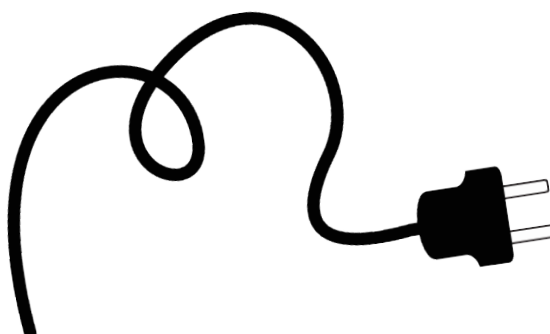
- If you see sparks, broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker.
- If there is a pool of water on the floor between you and the fuse box or circuit breaker panel, use a dry wooden stick to try to reach to turn off the main fuse or breaker, but do not step or stand in water to do that. If you cannot reach the fuse box or breaker panel, call a qualified electrician for assistance.
- Inspect the panel box for any breakers that may have tripped. A tripped breaker may indicate damaged wiring inside your home. Do not turn them on. Call an electrician.
- Use a flashlight to inspect fuses. Replace broken fuses with exactly the same amperage rating and never use an object such as a coin or strip of metal to bypass the protection that fuses provide.
- If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using sinks, showers or toilets and call a plumber.
- If water pipes are damaged, turn off the water at the main valve. Call a plumber for assistance.
- If you have a heating oil tank system, turn off all valves and contact a professional specializing in maintenance of such equipment before using it again.

TELEPHONES

- Check each telephone to see if it is still on the hook. Hang up any phones that aren't. Wait a few minutes, and then pick up one phone to listen for a dial tone to know whether you have working telephone service.
- If you don't have a dial tone, try unplugging all the phones. Plug in one at a time and listen for dial tone. This will help you determine if the phone itself is broken or the service is completely out. If it is, contact the telephone company to report the problem and request repair.

OTHER HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

- Normal household items, such as cleaning products, can cause toxic fumes and other hazards if they mix. See the American Red Cross [chemical emergency safety tips](#).
- Spilled chemicals that don't pose a health risk must still be carefully cleaned up. Wear rubber gloves and discard spilled chemicals and rags used for cleaning according to the advice of local authorities.
- Throw away food, beverages and medicine exposed to heat, smoke or soot. Food that was in the freezer can be used if it still has ice crystals on it. If not, discard it.
- Disconnect and check all appliances for damage before using them.





ECOVERING EMOTIONALLY

To reach out for free 24/7 counseling or support, contact the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746.

Disasters are upsetting experiences for everyone involved. Children, senior citizens, people with disabilities and people for whom English is not their first language are especially at risk and are likely to need extra care and help. But everyone, even the people that others look up to for guidance and assistance, is entitled to their feelings and deserves support throughout the recovery process.



EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

When we experience a disaster or other stressful life event, we can have a variety of reactions, all of which can be common responses to difficult situations.

These reactions can include:

- Feeling physically and mentally drained
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics
- Becoming easily frustrated on a more frequent basis
- Arguing more with family and friends
- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns

Most of these reactions are temporary and will go away over time. Try to accept whatever reactions you may have. Look for ways to take one step at a time and focus on taking care of your disaster-related needs and those of your family.

Keep a particularly close eye on the children in your family. When disaster strikes, a child's view of the world as a safe and predictable place is temporarily lost. Children of different ages react in different ways to trauma, but how parents and other adults react following any traumatic event can help children recover more quickly and more completely. [Your local Red Cross](#) can give you information about helping children cope with disaster and trauma.



RECOVERY TAKES TIME

Getting ourselves and our lives back in a routine that is comfortable for us takes time.

- Take care of your safety. Find a safe place to stay and make sure your physical health needs and those of your family are addressed. Seek medical attention if necessary.
- Limit your exposure to the sights and sounds of disaster, especially on television, the radio and in the newspapers.
- Eat healthy. During times of stress, it is important that you maintain a balanced diet and drink plenty of water.
- Get some rest. With so much to do, it may be difficult to have enough time to rest or get adequate sleep. Giving your body and mind a break can boost your ability to cope with the stress you may be experiencing.
- Stay connected with family and friends. Giving and getting support is one of the most important things you can do. Try to do something as a family that you have all enjoyed in the past.
- Be patient with yourself and with those around you. Recognize that everyone is stressed and may need some time to put their feelings and thoughts in order. That includes you!
- Set priorities. Tackle tasks in small steps.
- Gather information about assistance and resources that will help you and your family members meet your disaster-related needs.
- Stay positive. Remind yourself of how you’ve successfully gotten through difficult times in the past. Reach out when you need support, and help others when they need it.

For more information & resources regarding disaster relief & recovery visit
<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services.html>

