

Hurricane Safety Tips

With hurricane season running through Nov. 30, there are several tips that apartment managers and residents should keep in mind in case violent weather strikes the area.

- Check with your apartment's management to find out whether it puts up shutters or lays down sandbags. If it doesn't, find out whether you can.
- If you live in an apartment, buy renters insurance. At the outset of the hurricane season, take digital images or videotape your dwelling and its contents to help you prepare your insurance claim if damage occurs.
- Move balcony furniture indoors when a hurricane threatens or before you leave your apartment for an extended period during hurricane season.
- Be aware that winds are stronger at higher elevations. If you're not in an evacuation area and you plan to remain in your building, consider staying with someone on a lower floor.
- Stay in an interior room without windows. Bathrooms and closets are often good bets. Interior hallways and stairwells may be good options, too.
- Know the route to the nearest exit stairs. Elevators fail when the power goes out.
- If the government orders you to evacuate, leave.
- If you evacuate, keep a binder that has all of your important information: credit card numbers, health insurance cards, mortgage information, personal identification, financial information, driver's license number and other information you may need.
- If you evacuate and leave behind a pet, be aware you may not be able to get back in when you want. If there's damage to the building, for instance, you'll have to wait for emergency officials to clear it for re-entry.
- Put your valuables in the safest part of your residence. Take them with you if you leave.

Sources: Nena Gang, Executive Vice President for the Bay Area Apartment Association; Larry Gispert, Director of Emergency Management for Hillsborough County (Fla.); and John McMillan, Attorney for the Bay Area Apartment Association.