



ESSENTIALS FOR AN EMERGENCY BOX

A separate box (or two) of non-perishable food and supplies that can see you through a week without power is essential; a two-week supply might make you the neighborhood hero if we're hard-hit. Today's laws require grocery stores and some other places to have emergency generators, but that doesn't ensure they'll have stock on their shelves. And there's no guarantee you will have places to put perishables, so don't rely on this plan.

FUEL SOURCES

- **A small source for boiling water and cooking.** If it's a grill or a small 2-burner propane stove like the chefs use or a camping stove, you can boil water and have a lot of options, including a hot cup of coffee in the morning. (See below about using these inside the house.)
- **Gas or charcoal for your grill.** Fill your tanks now, and buy a spare. If you have a gas grill, you can cook anything. Get out your cast iron skillet and a spatula there you have it: a total kitchen.
- **Charcoal – a warning –** don't use it in the house or even the garage without **total ventilation**. Same goes for propane – even the little stoves put out dangerous gasses that could be toxic in an enclosed area. It's best to cook under a cover outdoors if at all possible. If you need a wind break, do NOT make one out of cardboard – use metal baking pans to shield the sides of your stove from the wind.
- Remember to have a match or grill lighter in your box.

FOOD

- **Protein foods that provide energy and nutrition.** Shelf-stable proteins such as tuna and chicken in vacuum pouches, nut butters, canned fish such as sardines or other fish can be eaten without cooking. These are the first shelves to empty when a hurricane approaches, and they're non-perishable. Get them now. Shelf stable sausages, bacon or jerky should be used sparingly – they are salty, and in the heat, make you thirsty, but do add a lot of flavor to a bean salad or a scrapped together Ramen noodle dish. Beans have protein: many canned varieties aren't bad. Frozen ones can be used if they have NO sauce on them and are thawed but still cold. Buy plain ones but don't stock up on them.
- **Small boxes of shelf-stable milk.** You'll have ice at some point to keep leftovers, perhaps, but by using small boxes for cereal and thinning soups, you won't have much waste if ice isn't available. Milk is great for making the instant boxed mac n cheese for the kids to keep them satisfied at least for one meal.

- **Canned soups.** Gazpacho, vegetable and bean soups are not bad at room temp, but if you have the little stove, you can heat up stews, and make boil-in-bag rice or couscous to put with them for a decent meal. Conserve your fuel, however – more may be hard to come by if you are out of power for a lengthy time.
- **Salsa** is a terrific flavor-booster for several other foods. With tomatoes, peppers and onions, it's a vegetable drawer in a jar. Quick meal: Combine it with chicken from a pouch, and pour it over couscous and sprinkle a little box of raisins over it. Add a pinch of cinnamon, and you have a somewhat exotic meal. Layer salsa with canned refried beans mixed with a little cumin, and the pouched chicken, diced. Serve it with tortilla chips, or just as is with a fork.
- **Canned vegetables.** They're already cooked; toss 'em with some ramen noodles you've poured water over or rice from a boiling bag, and you'll have a and a jar of spicy pasta sauce, it's a meal that's better than canned spaghetti.
- **Canned fruits and shelf-stable pudding.** Pudding affords diners who've been without something creamy a way of satisfying that craving. Layer canned fruits, the pudding and crushed cookies for a "gourmet" parfait. It doesn't have to be cold to be good. Pick up some mangoes that blew down if you've got them.
- **Dried fruit.** Figs, apricots, dates and dried cranberries have nutrients that boost energy and help hydration, such as potassium.
- **Juices:** Buy vegetable juice for the vitamins. Try to find low-sodium types. Canned fruit juices are also good for vitamin benefits if they're not full of added sugar. Avoid giving too much fruit juice to kids and infants; it will cause diarrhea that can result in dehydration.
- **Instant potatoes and boxed mac-n-cheese.** Use your boxed milk and the grill or little stove to make these special treats that provide a taste of comfort.
- **Fresh fruits:** Apples, oranges, bananas, lemons and limes – all keep at room temperature for several days.
- **Pet food:** Remember pets! Have extra food and water for them.

FOODS TO AVOID

- **Salty and sweet snack foods, salty nuts.** It's easy to reach for a box of peanut butter crackers or chips and salsa, but the temps are going to be very high and you'll be thirsty. Water and ice are in short supply – try to avoid creating thirst.
- **Candy and sweets.** Sugar makes you thirsty, too. Eat a can of fruit or pudding if you want something sweet.
- **Sports or energy drinks.** Take care when drinking these – while they add potassium, they also contain sodium and huge amounts of sugar. Hydrate with water or vegetable juice with low-sodium.
- **Alcohol.** It's a well-known fact that most of the deaths from hurricanes occur not during one or as the result of winds, but from activities after a storm.

NON-FOOD ITEMS

- **Pack up the kitchen.** If you know you're in for a flood, or even suspect you'll have water pooling in the kitchen, bag up all your non-perishable foods and put items from the lower cabinets such as pots and portable appliances onto the countertops. Cover them with plastic tarps (a contractor-grade plastic bag – available at home warehouse stores. Just in case, use a **permanent marker** to write the names of the canned goods on the cans in case heat or water causes them to be lost. Date them at the same time. Before using them, if they've been wet, wash them in soapy water. If the can is bulged at all, toss it. The contents have been compromised.
- **Garbage bags.** Heavy-duty contractor bags are great non-square alternatives to tubs. Highly recommended for a variety of uses.
- **Paper plates, napkins, cups and plastic utensils.**
- **Wet naps, paper towels and waterless hand sanitizer.**
- **Flashlights, lanterns, and batteries.**
- **Battery-operated radio.**
- **Manual can opener.**
- **Propane lights.** The same canisters used to power the portable stoves can be screwed onto lamps that are bright enough for cooking. Use judiciously and with ventilation. Better to find battery-operated lights if possible.
- **Fuel for your gas grill – another reminder.** Tank up now, and buy an extra tank of gas to see you through the storm. Charcoal and matches.
- **Extra coolers.** You'll want to be able to get ice whenever you can find it after a storm, and keep it. These are a lifesaver for some.
- **Extra batteries and a charger that pulls from your car battery.** Flashlights and phones are useful in emergencies. Make sure you have batteries for the lights, and a way to charge your phone from your car. They also sell a charger that works with a 120-volt plug, so you could, in theory, plug in your toaster or coffeemaker to your car's lighter.
- **Cash.** If there are restaurants and other business open, there's a chance they can't take credit cards, and will therefore ask for cash payment.
- **Pet food.** Don't forget your furry friends! Stock additional pet food and secure extra medication if necessary.

WATER

Plan to have a week's worth of water per person. Stock your freezer with at least two 1-gallon jugs (leave headspace). These will be ice blocks. If you can do it before the storm hits, fill the freezer with them. Ice lasts longer in block form. Defrost and drink it. **Water is more essential than food.** If water lines are compromised (not typical, but can happen), you will need water.