Preparing for Severe Weather

Unlike other parts of the U.S., New England has rarely had to brace for damaging tornadoes and hurricanes. But, when it comes to weather, the past is no longer an accurate prediction of the present. Climate change is worsening the frequency, intensity, and impacts of powerful storms, and we all must be more prepared.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has compiled detailed safety tips for residents on how to prepare for and respond after severe weather events. A condensed version of these best practices can be found below.

How to Prepare for a Severe Weather Event:

- Review your insurance policies to see if you have adequate coverage. If you are not sure if you have enough coverage, contact your agent or company.
- Prepare for power outages by ensuring your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors have fresh batteries. Consider purchasing a generator if possible.
- Know how to shut off the electricity, gas, and water in your house.
- Clear clogged rain gutters.
- Elevate items in your basement to avoid damage from potential flooding.
- Consider installing sump pumps in your basement or ensure the pumps you already have are functioning properly.
- As the storm approaches, make sure all of your devices (including phones and computers) are fully charged, set your refrigerator/freezer to their coldest settings, and unplug any important electronic equipment.
- Bring in outdoor objects (including patio furniture, trash cans, etc.) that could be swept away in a storm.
- If high winds are expected, cover your windows with storm shutters or plywood covers. If that's not possible, consider blocking the windows from the inside to prevent broken glass from being blown in.
- As the storm approaches, it is important to create an evacuation plan and gather emergency supplies should you need to seek shelter elsewhere.

If you live in a coastal region, review the Massachusetts Homeowners Handbook to Prepare for Coastal Hazards.

You can review and monitor active weather warnings and advisories on the National Weather Service website.

How to Stay Safe During a Severe Weather Event:

- Avoid driving or going outdoors.
- If you must go outside, do not walk through flowing water and do not drive through flooded roads.
- Monitor the media for the latest emergency information/storm updates.
- If advised to evacuate, do so immediately – take essential items and pets if the situation allows.
- If told to shelter in place, stay indoors and away from windows, and be prepared to evacuate to a shelter or neighbor's home if necessary.

Where to Seek Shelter Outside your Home:

- You can call 211 from any cell phone or landline to find your nearest shelter location. 211 is a 24/7 service for all Massachusetts residents.

Following a Severe Weather Event:

- Call 911 to report any emergencies (e.g., downed power lines, gas leaks).
- Call 211 to obtain shelter locations and other disaster information.
- Avoid downed utility wires, and always assume a downed power line is live.
- Stay out of damaged buildings and off of affected roads.
- Inspect your home for damage
- Don't touch electrical equipment while wet or standing in water.
- Have wells checked for contamination from bacteria and chemicals before using them
- Have damaged septic tanks or leaching systems repaired
- If you fear that there is a gas leak, exit your home immediately. If you turn off your gas, a licensed professional will need to turn it back on.
- If your home is damaged, take photos and videos of the damage and contact your insurance company.
- Report power outages to your utility company, and be sure to use generators and grills outdoors because their fumes often contain carbon monoxide that can kill you.

How to Sign Up for Emergency Alerts

AMESBURY – amesburyma.gov/AlertCenter.aspx
ANDOVER – andoverma.gov/198/CodeRED-Notifications
BEDFORD – bedfordma.gov/list.aspx
BEVERLY – beverlyma.gov/AlertCenter.aspx
BILLERICA – town.billerica.ma.us/AlertCenter.aspx
BOXFORD – town.boxford.ma.us/subscribe
BURLINGTON – burlington.org/AlertCenter.aspx
DANVERS – danversma.gov/AlertCenter.aspx
ESSEX – essexma.org/subscribe
GEORGETOWN – georgetownma.gov/subscribe
GLOUCESTER – gloucester-ma.gov/384/Emergency-Alerting
GROVELAND – public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/6E8290CFCD90
HAMILTON – hamiltonma.gov/hamilton-mobile-alerts/
IPSWICH – ipswichma.gov/130/Notification-Sign-Up
LYNN – lynnma.gov/departments/emergencymanagement.shtml
LYNNFIELD – town.lynnfield.ma.us/lynnfield-police/pages/code-red-emergency-
      notification-system
MANCHESTER-BY-THE-SEA – smart911.com/smart911/ref/reg.action?pa=
      manchesterma
MARBLEHEAD – public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/FF7A74D708C0
MERRIMAC – merrimacfire.org/fire-prevention/code-red/
MIDDLETON – middletonma.gov/AlertCenter.aspx?CID=1,2
NAHANT – nahant.org/emergency-management/stayalert/
NEWBURY – townofnewbury.org/police-department/faq/what- codered-alert
NEWBURYPORT – public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/A4C107CCF3B3
NORTH ANDOVER – northandoverma.gov/emergency-management
NORTH READING – northreadingfire.org/codered/
PEABODY – public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/BF74555495B1
READING – readingma.gov/AlertCenter.aspx
ROCKPORT – rockportma.gov/…/pages/emergency-preparedness
ROWLEY – townofrowley.net/home/pages/notification-sign
SALEM – salemma.gov/subscribe
SALISBURY – public.coderedweb.com/CNE/en-US/ADE8E3D523BE
SAUGUS – saugus-ma.gov/subscribe
SWAMPSCOTT – swampscottma.gov/subscribe
TEWKSBURY – tewksbury-ma.gov/AlertCenter.aspx
TOPSFIELD – topsfield-ma.gov/home/pages/sign-emergency-alerts
WAKEFIELD – wakefield.ma.us/codered
WENHAM – wenhamma.gov/residents/code_red_emergency_notifications.php
WEST NEWBURY – wnewbury.org/subscribe
WILMINGTON – wilmingtonma.gov/subscribe