

# HOSPITALITY HEROES®

## DISASTER PREPAREDNESS GUIDE

# Hurricanes

A practical guide for short-term rental (STR) operators to prepare, respond, and recover from hurricane events.



### PREPARE

Before the Event

- Create your plan
- Train your team
- Share Process with Owners
- Inspect systems
- Verify insurance coverage



### RESPOND

During the Event

- Activate your written plan
- Communicate with guests and owners
- Coordinate local contacts
- Document in real time



### RECOVER

After the Event

- Support your teams
- Assess all properties
- Send owner damage report
- File Business Interruption Ins.
- Update your written plan

## WHY THIS MATTERS



*Hurricane Ian's 2022 impact on Sanibel became one of the clearest examples of why preparedness, owner communication, and business interruption insurance matter for STR operators. This one storm led to a 92% collapse in inventory, a 96% drop in tourism one year later, and years of recovery for businesses and communities alike. As of mid-2025, Sanibel's recovery was still only 74% complete according to the Sanibel Recovery Dashboard.*



## BEFORE THE EVENT - PREPARE NOW



### Distribute Your Hurricane Preparedness & Evacuation Plan Before March 1

Your written Hurricane Preparedness & Evacuation Plan should be shared with your entire team and all property owners before March 1 each year. The plan should clearly outline evacuation zones for every property, storm-specific property protection procedures, guest communication timelines, and owner communication expectations before, during, and after an event.



### Conduct a Pre-Season Owner Briefing

Every March, provide property owners with a pre-season hurricane briefing, either live or in writing. Cover each property's evacuation zone and storm risk, your guest cancellation and closure procedures, property protection protocols, and how communication will be handled throughout preparation, response, and recovery.



### Help Your Team Prepare at Home

Make sure every team member knows their evacuation zone and has time to prepare their own home and family before a storm threatens your market. Teams who are personally prepared are better able to support guests, owners, and operations when conditions change quickly.





## BEFORE THE EVENT

### PREPARE NOW

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#### Confirm Evacuation Routes & Emergency Contacts

Verify evacuation zones, routes, and local emergency management resources for every market you operate in. Share current evacuation information with your team and include emergency contact information in guest communications and property materials.



#### Prepare Guest & Owner Communication Templates

Create ready-to-send templates for every storm severity level, including tropical storm watches, hurricane warnings, evacuation orders, post-storm updates, and continued closures. Maintain separate communication templates for current guests, incoming guests, and property owners. (*View our Guest & Owner Communication Templates*)



#### Create a Property Protection Checklist for Every Home

Every property should have a documented pre-storm protection checklist covering shutters or boarding procedures, water and electrical shut-offs, propane shut-offs, securing outdoor furniture, elevating vulnerable contents, and photo documentation. Your checklist should be executable by local team members if leadership cannot reach the market.



## DURING THE EVENT

### RESPOND NOW

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1

#### Begin Guest Communications Early

When a named storm enters your forecast cone, begin guest communication immediately; do not wait for an official watch or warning. Early communication builds trust and gives guests time to make informed decisions.

2

#### Maintain Owner Updates Every 24 Hours

Once a storm threatens your area, provide owners with updates at least every 24 hours. Consider including storm timing, guest occupancy status, completed protection measures, operational decisions, and expected evacuation or closure timelines. Consistent communication helps reduce confusion and builds long-term owner confidence.

3

#### Mandatory Evacuation

Evacuations should always be treated as a safety priority. Once mandatory evacuation orders are issued, immediately facilitate guest departures.

4

#### Communicate the Risks

Storm surge causes the majority of hurricane-related fatalities and should never be underestimated. Storm category alone does not determine surge severity. Inland flooding, rip currents, tornadoes, and prolonged power outages can all create serious safety risks before and after landfall. Post evacuation information and local emergency resources in every property, and communicate risk updates clearly to guests throughout the event.



## Designate Out-of-Area Communications Hub:

Assign a team member or an answering service outside the projected impact zone to manage guest and owner communication during the storm. They should monitor emergency updates, document communications, and support operational coordination while local teams focus on safety and property protection.



## AFTER THE EVENT LEAD YOUR RECOVERY



### Check on Your Team

Connect with every team member after the storm passes. Many hospitality professionals will be managing personal loss while helping properties and guests recover at the same time. Support, flexibility, and clear communication matter during this stage of recovery.



### Wait for Official Re-Entry Clearance

Do not send team members or guests back into impacted areas until local emergency management officials authorize re-entry. Roads, bridges, power infrastructure, and buildings may still be unsafe even after conditions appear calm.



### Conduct Property Assessments ASAP

Complete physical assessments of every property as soon as possible. Inspect roofs, structures, windows, flooding, mold exposure, utilities, and contents. Thoroughly document all damage with photos and video.



### Guest Relocation and Communication

Reach out to displaced guests within 24 hours whenever possible. For guests directly impacted during their stay, personal phone calls often create more trust and reassurance than email alone. Clear communication during a crisis can strengthen long-term guest loyalty.



### Report Owner Damage Within 24 Hours

Provide owners with a complete damage report within 24 hours of assessment. Include photos, current guest impacts, recommended next steps, contractor information, and insurance guidance. Timely, organized communication reinforces owner confidence during difficult situations.



### File Business Interruption Insurance Immediately

Document all lost revenue, refunded reservations, emergency expenses, and repair costs as early as possible. In large-scale disasters, insurance adjusters become overwhelmed quickly, and delayed filings can significantly slow recovery timelines.



# EMERGENCY RESOURCES

## QUICK REFERENCE



### HURRICANE TRACKING

#### National Hurricane Center

NOAA provides official hurricane forecasts, watches, warnings, and storm tracking information for coastal communities across the United States.

[Nhc.noaa.gov](https://www.nhc.noaa.gov)



### HURRICANE MONITORING

#### The Weather Channel

The Weather Channel provides national and local forecasts, radar coverage, storm tracking, and severe weather updates.

[Weather.com](https://www.weather.com)



### GUEST COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

- ✓ Make first guest contact early
- ✓ Update every 12 hours during threats
- ✓ Share closures & evacuation steps
- ✓ Send post-storm updates quickly
- ✓ Personally contact impacted guests



### EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Emergency **911** \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department \_\_\_\_\_

Poison Control \_\_\_\_\_

Utility Provider \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance \_\_\_\_\_



### INSURANCE & FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- Contact your insurance provider immediately after the event
- FEMA Disaster Assistance: [disasterassistance.gov](https://www.fema.gov/disasterassistance)
- SBA Disaster Loans: [sba.gov/disaster](https://www.sba.gov/disaster)



### STRONGER TOGETHER

Hospitality Heroes is a registered non-profit 501(c)(3) dedicated to equipping hospitality professionals with the skills, systems, and community connections they need to navigate disasters or crises and recover stronger.

