

# Hurricane Preparedness Guide for Dementia Caregivers

Hurricane season can be stressful for anyone, but it presents unique challenges for dementia caregivers. Keeping your partner safe, calm, and well-cared-for during a natural disaster demands thoughtful preparation and planning. Since hurricanes can strike at any moment during the season, here are actionable steps to help you prepare effectively.

## 1. Create an Emergency Plan

**Key Action:** Document your plan clearly, either by writing it down or printing it out, and share it with family, friends, and trusted neighbors. Make sure to include a backup plan (Plan B) for each element of your strategy to ensure you're prepared for any unexpected situations.

- **Assess Individual Needs:** Evaluate your partner's specific needs, preferences, and any medical requirements. Consider their mobility, communication style, and any support they may need during emergencies.
- **Develop a Communication Plan:** Identify key contacts, including family members, friends, trusted neighbors and healthcare providers. Ensure that everyone is informed about the plan and knows how to reach each other during an emergency.
- **Establish a Safe Location:** Identify a designated safe area in your home, away from windows, where you and your partner can stay during the storm. Determine a safe place to evacuate to, such as a friend or family member's home or a designated shelter. Check if the location is dementia-friendly and can accommodate any special needs. Be aware of evacuation routes and alternatives.

## 2. Special Considerations for Evacuation

**Key Action:** Make a plan for transportation and shelter accommodations if you need to evacuate.

- **Locate Shelters:** Call ahead to ensure the shelter is equipped to handle people with dementia and to confirm if they allow service animals or comfort pets, if necessary.
- **Use Medical Alert Devices:** Consider using medical alert devices or GPS trackers in case your partner becomes disoriented or wanders.

- **Keep Identification Handy:** Ensure your partner has identification at all times, such as a bracelet, necklace, or clothing label that includes their name and emergency contact information.

**Tip:** If traveling or evacuating, bring familiar items from home to help your partner feel more comfortable in an unfamiliar environment.

### 3. Pack a Ready-to-Go Emergency Kit

**Key Action:** Keep a waterproof bag of essential items prepared in case you need to evacuate quickly.

Include:

- **Medications:** Include at least a 7-day supply and a list of current prescriptions.
- **Identification:** Medical ID bracelets, a copy of their diagnosis, and emergency contact information.
- **Comfort Items:** Such as a favorite blanket, familiar objects, or a battery-operated music player to help calm anxiety.
- **Food and Water:** At least a three-day supply of non-perishable food and water. Including a nutritional drink like Ensure can be a practical option, as it provides essential nutrients and can serve as a meal replacement during emergencies.
- **Important Documents:** Copies of insurance policies and legal documents like power of attorney (place in waterproof document holder).
- **Incontinence Supplies and Sanitation Items:** Briefs, pads, ointments/creams, wipes, hand sanitizer, gloves, and masks.
- **First Aid Kit:** Include basic items like bandages, antiseptic wipes, and any other necessary medical supplies for you and your partner.
- **Life Jackets:** In case of flash flooding or rising water, life jackets provide essential safety for you and your partner, especially in unfamiliar or chaotic conditions. You may want to practice putting the life jacket on your partner to help them feel more comfortable with the process. [Type 1 Life Jackets](#) are typically recommended for hurricane conditions and rough waters.
- **Disposable Rain Ponchos:** Lightweight and easy to pack, disposable rain ponchos can help keep both you and your partner dry during unexpected downpours and high winds. Ensure they are accessible in your emergency bag for quick access when needed.
- **Change of Clothes & Toiletries:** Pack several changes of clothes along with essential toiletries for both you and your partner. Staying dry and warm is crucial, as wet clothing can lead to discomfort and increase the risk of illness. Consider including a pack of [body wipes](#) to help you both stay clean and refreshed in case running water is unavailable. It's also advised to learn how to

change your partner's incontinence wear without taking off their pants and shoes—learn [here](#).

- **Cash on Hand:** Keep some cash in the bag in case of power outages, as stores may not be able to accept card payments during emergencies.

## 4. Prepare the Home for the Storm

**Key Action:** Secure your living space and plan for power outages.

- **Backup Power:** Invest in backup power options, such as power banks, a generator, or solar powered devices, to maintain electricity for critical devices and communication. Keep lanterns or flashlights and batteries on hand.
- **Clear Your Yard:** Remove or secure any outdoor furniture, plants, or debris that could become projectiles. Keep trees and shrubs trimmed to avoid them from falling onto your home.
- **Seal Windows and Doors:** Install storm shutters or plywood over windows to protect against flying debris. Consider placing sandbags or weather stripping at the base of doors to decrease chances of water intrusion.
- **Stock Up:** Have at least a week's worth of supplies, including non-perishable food, water, medications, and hygiene items including incontinence supplies, to avoid panic buying or price increases in the days leading up to the storm.

## 5. Monitor the Hurricane Radar & Evacuate if Necessary

**Key Action:** Stay informed about the hurricane's path and follow evacuation orders promptly.

- **Check the Hurricane Radar:** Stay updated with local news or use hurricane tracking apps to monitor the storm's movement and potential impact.
- **Evacuate if in a Mandatory Zone:** If local authorities issue an evacuation order for your area, evacuate immediately. Even if it seems safe, hurricanes can rapidly change course, creating dangerous conditions like storm surges, flash flooding, and damaging winds.
- **Take Flash Flooding Seriously:** Hurricanes often bring heavy rains that can cause flash floods. If your area is prone to flooding, don't wait for water to rise—move to higher ground as soon as possible.

**Tip:** Check road conditions with the help of the [National Weather Service](#) and social media before leaving, and be prepared for potential delays. Always have extra fuel and an alternate route in mind.

## 6. Stay Calm and Keep Routine Disruptions Minimal

**Key Action:** Focus on maintaining a sense of routine and calm for your partner during the hurricane.

- **Use Reassuring Language:** Explain what's happening with simple, calming phrases, such as "We're safe, and everything is okay. We're just going to wait here for the storm to pass."
- **Engage in Familiar Activities:** Involve your partner in calming activities, like looking at photos, engaging in a simple board or card game, listening to music, performing light stretches, or participating in a favorite hobby that doesn't involve too much stimulation.
- **Limit News Coverage:** Avoid sharing constant news coverage, as it can raise anxiety. Instead, provide updates in a controlled, calm manner as necessary.
- **Maintain Routines:** Stick to regular meal times, hygiene routines, and sleep schedules as much as possible. Familiarity will help reduce anxiety and confusion.

**Tip:** Keep your partner in a calm area of the home or shelter, away from windows, as the storm approaches to minimize confusion or fear.

### Conclusion

Preparation is the best way to ensure you and your partner stay safe and calm during a hurricane. By taking these proactive steps, you'll have peace of mind knowing you're as ready as you can be for whatever the storm brings. Remember, it's never too early to prepare – even if a hurricane doesn't materialize, being ready can prevent unnecessary stress. Stay safe, and if you need further support, don't hesitate to reach out to your community or local dementia care resources.

**For a detailed Hurricane Preparedness Checklist from the American Red Cross, click [here](#).**