

# Evacuating Your Home During a Natural Disaster or Emergency

1/3



## What Does Evacuation Mean?

An evacuation happens when people are asked to leave a dangerous place where a natural disaster is expected to happen or has already happened. Emergency management officials use a **mandatory evacuation order** to protect you and the lives of first responders in your area.

If an official government source advises you to evacuate, leave as quickly as possible. Always be prepared for evacuations by making a plan for “before” the evacuation, “during” the evacuation, and “after” the evacuation.

## Before an Evacuation:

- Learn what kinds of disasters are likely to happen in your area.
- Research local emergency, evacuation, and shelter plans for each type of disaster.
- Plan how you'll leave, who will help you, and where you'll go if asked to evacuate.
- Identify places you could go to in an emergency, such as a friend's home or motel.
- If needed, identify a place to stay that accepts pets. Most public shelters only allow service animals.
- Be familiar with alternate roads and other means of transportation out of your area.
- Follow instructions from local officials (police and fire stations); Consider your evacuation route may involve walking.
- Create a family plan to stay in touch, and have a designated meeting place.
- Prepare a “go-bag” to carry when evacuating on foot or public transportation, and supplies for traveling longer distances by car.
- If you have a car:
  - Keep a full tank of gas if an evacuation seems likely. Keep a half tank at all times in case of an unexpected emergency. Gas stations may be closed and unable to pump gas.
  - Carry a portable emergency kit in the car.

## Before an Evacuation (cont.):

- The Coronavirus may have changed your community's plans for where you can go to be safe.
- If you evacuate to a community shelter with lots of people, protect yourself and your family from possible exposure:
  - Anyone over 2-years-old should use a cloth mask while at these facilities.
  - Take cleaning items with you like cloth masks, soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes, or general household cleaning supplies.
  - Keep at least 6 feet of space between yourself and people who aren't your immediate family.

## During an Evacuation:

- Download the FEMA app for a list of open shelters during a disaster in your area.
- Listen to a battery-powered radio and follow local evacuation instructions.
- Take your emergency supply kit.
- Leave early enough to get out of your home safely.
- Take pets with you, but understand that only service animals may be allowed in public shelters.
- If you have time:
  - Call or email your family's designated contact and tell them where you're going.
  - Secure your home by closing and locking all doors and windows.
  - Unplug electrical equipment such as radios, televisions, and small appliances.
  - Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding.
  - If you're instructed to do so, shut off water, gas and electricity before leaving.
  - Leave a note telling others when you left and where you're going.
  - Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and a hat.
  - Check with neighbors who may need a ride.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.
- Be alert for road hazards such as washed-out roads, bridges, and downed power lines.
- Don't drive into flooded areas.

## After an Evacuation:

- Before you travel, check with local officials where you're staying, as well as those back home.
- If you're returning to disaster-affected areas, be prepared for disruptions to your daily activities.
- Returning home before debris is cleared can be dangerous.
- Alert friends and family before you leave the shelter, as well as when you arrive home.
- Charge phones, tablets, and other communication devices. Consider getting back-up batteries.
- Fill up your gas tank and check for roads that might be blocked along your route.
- Bring supplies, such as water and food, that won't spoil.
- Avoid downed power or utility lines. Report them immediately to local power or utility companies.

Source: <https://www.ready.gov/evacuation>