

Prepare Your House

There are many ways you can better prepare your house to withstand the effects of a natural disaster.

BEFORE A HURRICANE

- Long before storm season approaches install permanent protection for windows and doors with glazing.
- If your house does not have permanent shutters, plan to protect your windows and doors with glazing with the low-cost alternative of plywood panels. Install permanent fasteners long before storm warnings, so panels can be put in place quickly. Long before storm season approaches, cut 7/16 minimum thickness exterior grade plywood to fit each window and doors with glazing. Store the panels where you can easily access them during an emergency. Clearly mark each panel so you can quickly determine which window or door it covers. Visit www.flash.org for detailed instructions on how to use plywood for emergency board up.
- The roof of your house is very vulnerable to hurricane winds. Reinforce the connection between the roof and walls with hurricane straps and bracing to resist a hurricane's uplift.
- Reinforce double-entry front doors as well as garage doors.
- Clear away dead or weak tree branches that may break off and damage your house in high winds.
- Remove all outdoor furniture, lawn items, planters and other materials that could be picked up by high winds. These items can produce wind-borne debris that can break windows and sometimes tear openings into your house, letting in damaging rain and wind.

BEFORE A FLOOD

- Stock up on building materials such as plywood, plastic sheeting, hammer, nails, saw, pry bar, shovels and sandbags. In the case of an emergency, you will be better off already having these items on hand.

- Prevent electrical damage by raising the level of electrical components (fuse and circuit breaker boxes, meters, switches and outlets). This can save you from the expense of replacing a flood-damaged system, and it will help prevent fires caused by short circuits. Remember that a licensed contractor should do this work.



BEFORE AN EARTHQUAKE

- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Repair any defective electrical or gas connections.
- Secure your water heater by strapping it to wall studs or bolting it to the floor (this can prevent a possible gas leak and provide a convenient source of clean water after an earthquake).
- Also, other large appliances that are connected to water and /or gaslines should be secured.
- Repair cracks in foundations and ceilings.
- Bolt your house to its foundation.

BEFORE A WILDFIRE

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your house, in every bedroom, and in hallways leading to bedrooms.
- Use fire-resistant materials when building or renovating. Most importantly, use tile or flame-retardant shingles on your roof.
 - Keep vegetation, yard debris and any other combustible materials at least 30 feet away from your house.
 - Plant trees away from your house at a distance greater than their mature height. If you do have trees close to your home, trim them to a height of 8 to 10 feet and keep them free of dead or dying wood.
 - Use stone walls, swimming pools or patios to create a shield safety zone between vegetation and your house.
 - Avoid planting shrubs near your house. Instead, try alternatives like a fountain or rock garden.
 - Clear rain gutters of dead limbs, needles and other debris.

Support Building Safety!

For more information about building safety codes and local requirements, contact the New Castle County Department of Land Use.



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LandUse.NewCastleDE.gov



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