



2026 Storm Season Tips & Information

Preparation

- Hurricane and storm shutters must be approved by the Lake Ashton ARC.
- Historically the Florida Legislature approves of a tax holiday for hurricane preparation items such as generators, batteries, and flashlights. For 2026 the dates will be May 28 through June 6.
- **Lake Ashton is not in an evacuation zone** and is not scheduled for evacuation during any storm. In addition, the Clubhouse and HFC are not approved shelters.
- Consider a safe deposit box or waterproof safe for deeds, titles, stock certificates, wills, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, divorce decrees, military and adoption records, credit card and bank account numbers, insurance policies, etc.
- Review your insurance coverage including extent of coverage, damage coverage, deductibles; take photographs and video of your home (inside and outside including pictures of the inside of your refrigerator – if the power is off for any length of time and you lose food, you can prove what was in the refrigerator at the time) in case you need them for insurance settlements.
- If you have pets, plan also for their safety.
- Have a list of important phone numbers near your telephone and take the list with you if you decide to evacuate. Remember to charge your cellular phone and take your charger/cords with you when you evacuate.
- Trim trees to reduce the effects of wind and remove weak or dead branches.
- Stockpile enough water in clean plastic containers to provide each person in your home with a gallon a day for a week.
- Store a week's supply of non-perishable food and be sure to include food for pets. Be sure to have a non-electric can opener on hand. Keep a first aid kit with bandages, antiseptic, pain medicine, anti-diarrheal medication, sunscreen, baby wipes, and bug repellent.
- Have plastic tarps, hammer, nails, towels, mop, bucket, bleach, and plastic trash bags on hand.
- Have two coolers: one for ice, the other for perishable food.
- Consider a non-electric telephone that connects directly to a wall jack or a cellular phone for communication.
- Consider using battery powered lights as a light source in the event of power outage.
- Also note that during an emergency, ATMs at banks may not be working. Therefore, it is suggested that you keep cash on hand.
- Visit the official site for Florida emergency preparation at www.floridadisaster.org.
- Go to www.alertpolk.com to register your contact information for the Alert Polk telephone and email notification system. Polk County officials use this system to inform county residents of situations that may affect their health, safety, and welfare, including severe weather alerts.

If A Storm Threatens

- Know the difference between a hurricane watch and warning. A hurricane **watch** is issued when there is a threat within 24-36 hours. A hurricane **warning** is issued when hurricane conditions are expected within 24 hours or less.
- Have cash on hand as well as enough prescription medication to last a week.
- Charge your cell phones, tablets, and portable power banks.
- Fill your vehicles with gas, as well as the tank of your propane gas grill.

- Move garbage cans, furniture, bird feeders, potted plants, gas grill and lawn ornaments indoors.
- Super-chlorinate your pool.
- A lightning detection system is in place at Lake Ashton. A high-pitched siren sounds, and strobe lights turn on and stay on when lightning is in the area. These strobe lights are at various locations including on top of the Clubhouse and the backside of the HFC. When the danger of lightning has passed, a low-pitched horn will sound the all clear and the strobe lights will turn off. Be safe and remember that lightning strikes may occur far away from a visible storm. Get out of pools, do not stand under trees, and go indoors when the siren sounds. Please remember that golf carts are not safe from lightning.

Safety Tips for Using Portable Generators

- Never use generators in the house, garage, crawl spaces or other enclosed or partially enclosed areas even with ventilation.
- Keep generators positioned outside and at least 15 feet way from open windows so exhaust does not enter your home or a neighboring home.
- Keep the generator dry. Operate your generator on a dry surface on an open structure and make sure your hands are dry before touching the generator.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator. If you must use an extension cord, use a heavy-duty outdoor extension cord with 2 prongs, particularly a grounding pin.
- Make sure in advance that you have gas for your generator as gas stations may be out of gas and may not be able to accept anything but cash since their computers/credit card machines may be down.

After A Storm

- Severe storm damage may result in Lake Ashton CERT being activated to perform as first responders until professionals arrive on the scene. Please comply with all CERT members' instructions.
- Drive only when necessary and avoid flooded roads and standing water. You can end up stranded and rescue crews may not be available. Traffic lights may not be functioning properly.
- In case of damage: photograph any damage and then make temporary repairs. Keep all receipts for temporary repairs, temporary housing, and food. Contact your insurance company as soon as possible.
- Frozen Food Guidelines:
 - Discard frozen meat, casseroles, convenience foods, fish, baked goods and dairy if they have thawed and stood at 40 degrees for over two (2) hours. Discard frozen vegetables if they defrost and stand at 50 degrees for eight (8) hours.
- Refrigerated Food Guidelines:
 - Discard milk, yogurt, cream products, meats, casseroles, leftovers, refrigerator baked goods, mayonnaise, tartar sauce, horseradish, eggs, soft cheese, cottage cheese, and cooked vegetables after they have stood above 40 degrees for over two (2) hours.
 - It is okay to keep butter, margarine, hard & processed cheese, breads, jelly, relish, ketchup, mustard, and fresh uncooked fruits and vegetables.
- There may be a boil water advisory issued from the City of Lake Wales or the City of Winter Haven. Call your city emergency management to check on the status of city water. If there is a boil water advisory, there are three (3) acceptable purification methods:
 - Bring water to a rolling boil for ten (10) minutes.
 - Add eight (8) drops of plain chlorine bleach per gallon of water and let stand for thirty (30) minutes.
 - Use water purification tablets per the directions on the label.

Keep Informed About the Approaching Storm

TV Stations

- WFLA-TV Tampa Channel 8
- BayNews9-TV Tampa Channel 9
- WTSP-TV Tampa Channel 10
- WTVT-TV Tampa Channel 13

Radio Stations

- WPCV Winter Haven 97.5 FM
- WONN Lakeland 1230 AM/107.1 FM
- WLKF Lakeland 1430 AM/96.7

Websites

- Lakeland Ledger www.theledger.com
- National Hurricane Center www.nhc.noaa.gov
- Polk County Emergency. Mgmt. <https://www.polk-county.net/public-safety/emergency-management/>
- Polk County Sheriff's Office <https://www.polksheriff.org>
- Tampa Bay's 8 News <https://www.wfla.com>
- Tampa Bay's 10 News Tampa Bay Online <https://www.wtsp.com>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) <https://www.fema.gov>
- www.weather.gov
- www.polk-county.net

Important Telephone Numbers

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| • Polk County Citizens Information Line* | 863-401-2234 |
| • Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Helpline | 800-462-9029 |
| • Polk County Emergency Management | 863-534-5600 |
| • Polk County Animal Services | 863-499-2600 |
| • Polk County Communications Center | 863-534-0360 |

(*) Available ONLY during Polk County or Florida emergency activation

Categories & Winds

- Tropical Storm: 39-73 mph
- Category 1: 74-95 mph
- Category 2: 96-110 mph
- Category 3: 111-130 mph
- Category 4: 131-155 mph
- Category 5: 156+ mph

Names for Tropical Storms 2026

Arthur, Bertha, Cristobal, Dolly, Edouard, Fay, Gonzalo, Hanna, Isaias, Josephine, Kyle, Leah, Marco, Nana, Omar Paulette, Rene, Sally, Teddy, Vicky, Wilfred.

These tips are compiled from many different resources. If you have any suggestions or corrections, please contact Office Manager, Sheila Moreland, at 863.324.5457 or smoreland@calmfla.com.