

Hurricane Michael Impact Information for Consumers

Wednesday, Oct. 10, 2018 11 a.m.

Michael has strengthened to a Category 4 hurricane. It will likely be a Category 4 hurricane when it makes landfall in the Florida Panhandle this afternoon. A storm of this magnitude has never made landfall in the Florida Panhandle (dating back to 1851 when reliable records began); therefore, this is a storm of unprecedented strength and impact for the Florida Panhandle and Southwest Georgia.

Here in Georgia, a [State of Emergency](#) has been issued for 92 Georgia counties in advance of the storm's landfall. The storm will move across our state starting this afternoon in Southwest Georgia, through midday Thursday as it moves out of Georgia near Augusta.

Catastrophic impacts are expected in southwest area of our state, where a Hurricane Warning has been issued. Tropical Storm Warnings and Flash Flood Watches have been issued for most of Central and South Georgia. Dangerous tropical storm to hurricane force winds (gusts ranging from 40 to 60 mph) will extend inland, resulting in downed trees and power lines, causing widespread and long-lasting power outages as well as structural damage to homes and buildings. Heavy rainfall could produce life-threatening flash flooding and tornadoes are possible within the bands of Hurricane Michael as it moves through Georgia today. The latest weather information is available from the [National Hurricane Center](#).

The time to prepare is ending. Georgia residents should be prepared to shelter-in-place.

BEFORE THE STORM

1. Ensure you have a Family Safety Plan, which includes at least:
 - Emergency contact information for you & your family
 - Important documents (birth certificates, social security cards, driver's license, etc.)
 - Medical information and medications/prescriptions
 - Details for meeting places in case you are separated
 - Get additional tips at: <http://ready.ga.gov/make-a-plan>.
2. Have your Emergency Kit ready. A checklist is available at <http://ready.ga.gov/build-a-kit/>
3. Two human shelters have been opened so far in GA:
 - Shirley B. Winston Park, 5025 Steam Mill Rd., Columbus, GA 31907
 - South Bibb Recreation Center, 7035 Houston Rd., Macon, GA 31216
 - Pet shelters are open throughout the state, you can see an interactive map and [complete pet shelter list](#) on the GDA's Hurricane Website. There is also a [list of equine shelters](#) and [pet-friendly hotels in GA](#). Get more tips for keeping pets safe during a disaster [here](#).
4. Prepare your refrigerator and freezer and have plenty of ready-to-eat (shelf-stable) foods on hand, in the event you lose power for an extended period.
 - Your freezer should be at or below 0 °F; refrigerator should be at or below 40 °F.
 - Starting NOW, freeze containers of water for ice to help keep food cold.
 - Get coolers ready in case of a power outage. Consider dry ice if possible.

- Group foods together.

DURING & POST-STORM

1. DURING a power outage, keep the doors closed as much as possible to maintain cold temperatures. A full refrigerator will keep food safe for about 4 hours (or longer, if you have ice). A full freezer will keep food safe for 48 hours (or 24 hours if half full).
2. Once power is restored: If your freezer is at or below 40 °F (or food still contains ice crystals), food is safe and may be refrozen. If the refrigerator lost power for more than four hours, toss perishables.

FLOODING

1. Flooding may compromise the water supply. In that event, your water distributor (city/county) may issue a **Boil Water Advisory**. Follow the advisory's directions and/or use bottled water for drinking, washing dishes, brushing teeth, etc. If you are unsure how your water supply is being affected, use bottled water.
2. Do not eat food touched by flood water; discard any food or beverage that is not in a waterproof container if there is any chance it met flood water.
3. Discard any damaged cans, include those with swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, rusting, or denting severe enough to prevent opening with a manual, wheel-type can opener.
4. Thoroughly wash cooking utensils, pans, dishes, and countertops/food prep surfaces with soap and hot water. Rinse and then sanitize by applying a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water. Let air dry.

Please remember that once the storm hits, response and recovery activities do not begin for at least 48 to 72 hours after high winds have ended, to ensure responder and public safety. That means it could take several days before responders are safely able to reach an affected area.

Find all the latest about food safety, livestock, shelters, fuel and other important disaster-related information for Georgia at <http://agr.georgia.gov/gda-hurricane-response.aspx>, and follow us on [Twitter](#) @GeorgiaGrown and @GDAFoodSafety.

Visit the Georgia READY website, <https://ready.ga.gov>, for tips, checklists and other valuable information to assist with various types of disasters. Be mindful and take protective measures for you, your business, and your family to be prepared for this storm and the days following. The GEMA/HS website also has additional information: <http://www.gema.ga.gov>.