

Storm Surge Planning Zones – Frequently Asked Questions

I used to live in an evacuation zone and now I am in a storm surge planning zone, what is the difference?

A Storm Surge Planning Zone is an area within Miami-Dade County that could potentially be impacted with storm surge of 1.5 feet or higher for a hurricane. The Storm Surge Planning Zones identify the residents who may have to evacuate or shelter-in-place (like others in the County) and should develop contingency plans for either scenario. An Evacuation Zone is an area that will be required to move under an evacuation order for an impending storm and will be a portion, if not all of, the defined Storm Surge Planning Zones.

For example, if a Category 2 Hurricane is forecasted to make landfall in Miami-Dade County residents in Storm Surge Planning Zones A and B will be advised to make preparations for evacuation. As the storm gets closer and better information becomes available for where the hurricane may make landfall the County may order all of Zone A and all or portions of Zone B to evacuate. Always follow the County's evacuation order.

How Do Flood Zones and Storm Surge Planning Zones Differ?

Storm Surge Planning Zones are quite different from the FEMA 100-Year Flood Insurance Maps. 100-year flood maps are extremely conservative in comparison to hurricane tidal surge maps. If you are vulnerable to hurricane tidal surge flooding and/or 100-year flood events, you should consider purchasing flood insurance. You do not have to be within the 100-year flood plain to be impacted by hurricane tidal surge flooding!

Flood zones are areas mapped by FEMA for use in the National Flood Insurance Program. Each flood zone designation, represented by a letter or letters, tells homeowners exactly what the risk is for flooding at their property over a period of years, regardless of the cause. By law, all homes in high-risk zones carrying a mortgage must be covered by flood insurance.

For more information on flood zones visit: <http://www.floodsmart.gov>

Storm Surge Planning Zones, on the other hand, are based on hurricane storm surge determined by the National Hurricane Center using ground elevation and the area's vulnerability to water from lakes/oceans being pushed over land by a hurricane. The storm surge planning zones are marked from A through E.

The flood zones and the Storm Surge Planning Zones are determined by different methods and have different purposes. A home may not be located in a storm surge planning zone, yet still be located in a flood zone based on a property's base flood elevation. Residents must check both zones.

An important thing to remember is that flood losses are not covered by homeowner insurance policies. The National Flood Insurance Program makes federally backed flood insurance available to residents and business owners. Any flooding damage covered under the policy – whether or not a federal disaster declaration is made – will be reimbursed per the policy limits, which can include structural damage or the loss of contents.

Will this affect my flood insurance ratings?

No, how Miami-Dade County designates storm surge planning zones has no bearing on insurance rates. The change to your storm surge planning zones has NO impact on flood zones or flood insurance, which are determined and managed through FEMA and the National Flood Insurance program.

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How do I find out my Storm Surge Planning Zone?

1. www.miamidade.gov (Services Near You) – Storm Surge Planning Zones
2. Call 3-1-1
3. Hurricane Guide (available at your commission office, City Hall (municipal), County Libraries)
4. Call Miami-Dade Emergency Management 305-468-5400

My property is fairly elevated and couldn't possibly be touched by storm surge. Why do I have to evacuate?

Emergency Management officials work to prevent putting residents in situations where they would become isolated by water - creating an island. Therefore, some parcels with higher elevations are assigned the evacuation level of surrounding parcels

I have lived in Miami-Dade County my whole life and I have never had to evacuate before. Why now?

Emergency Management officials have recently completed a study utilizing new technology to determine with more accuracy the potential impact of storm surge. The result of the study showed more areas of Miami-Dade- County at risk for storm surge. We have redefined areas in the County that should plan for evacuation and property protection. It is very important to note that the exact areas to be evacuated for an approaching hurricane will depend on the strength of the storm, where it is coming from, and the forward speed. Each storm is different and the zones under an evacuation order may be adjusted. There is no single storm that would threaten entire areas; but each area in the surge zones is at risk from at least 1 possible storm scenario.

The reason we evacuate certain areas is to get people away from places where storm surge ocean flooding will occur. There also may be a need to evacuate flood prone or low lying areas on or near standing or moving waterways, canals, or other bodies of water.

I live in a mobile home, but we're in a non-evacuation zone. Do we have to evacuate?

Yes, all mobile home residents are required to evacuate when any evacuation order is issued, regardless of their storm surge planning zone. This has not changed from past years. Mobile homes are considered unsafe to weather even a Category 1 hurricane.

So just how accurate are these maps?

The maps are as correct and as accurate as current technology can make them. As the storm surge model data is updated and refined in the future, the County incorporates those changes to continue to improve the process of determining Storm Surge Planning Zones.

What should I do to prepare for a hurricane?

Finalize your family's hurricane preparedness plan now. Know your planning zone and be prepared to leave if an evacuation is required.

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Who will order an evacuation?

The Miami-Dade County Mayor will order an evacuation based on expected conditions and recommendations from public safety personnel.

If my planning zone is being evacuated, how and when will I be notified?

We plan on using the complete spectrum of media and notification means. For example, radio and TV stations will broadcast emergency information. You can register for emergency notifications via the County's emergency notification system (Miami-Dade Alerts).

I have a disability and do not drive. How will I evacuate if I am told to evacuate? Will the County provide transportation for me?

Yes, the Miami-Dade County Emergency Evacuation Assistance Program (EEAP) provides evacuation assistance to those residents who live in an evacuation zone and that may require specialized transportation assistance or whose medical needs prevent them from evacuating on their own.

Will the County provide me with transportation to evacuate?

Yes, Miami-Dade Transit will provide evacuation assistance utilizing designated existing bus stops. Evacuation pick-up points can be identified by the posted evacuation signs.

A list of all evacuation pick-up points can be found at:

<http://www.miamidade.gov/fire/evacuations.asp>.



Does Miami-Dade County have shelters if we have to evacuate or relocate?

Yes, Miami-Dade County Emergency Management partners with Miami-Dade Public Schools and the American Red Cross to operate Hurricane Evacuation Centers. These Hurricane Evacuation Centers provide a refuge of last resort for those individuals who need to evacuate and are unable to make their own evacuation arrangements. A list of potential evacuation centers can be found at: <http://www.miamidade.gov/fire/evacuations.asp>. Not every site will open for every evacuation! Please monitor the local radio or television, or dial 3-1-1 (TDD (305) 468-5402) to find out which centers are open when an evacuation order is announced.

If an evacuation is ordered, what do I do with my pet?

You may evacuate with your pet to one of the designated Pet-Friendly Hurricane Evacuation Centers located within the County. The opening of Pet-Friendly Hurricane Evacuation Centers will be determined at the time an evacuation is ordered. More information about Pet-Friendly Hurricane Evacuation Centers can be found at: <http://www.miamidade.gov/animals/disaster-preparedness.asp>.

Are evacuation routes identified with signs?

No, since it is impossible to determine which route would be a safe evacuation route prior to an incident, permanent signs are not in place. Information as to safe routes to use would be given along with the evacuation order from the Mayor.