



## **Diocese of St. Petersburg Safety Announcement**

This announcement is due to incoming Hurricane Irma, which has the potential to make landfall within the state of Florida. Per the Florida Division of Emergency Management, “current forecast models have Florida in Irma’s path. Governor Rick Scott has declared the a state of emergency for all 67 counties, allowing for ample time to prepare”. In an effort to advise you of what measures to take, please read the following recommended actions to protect yourself and your families:

### **Attending Mass:**

The Catholic faithful are reminded to exercise prudence as they seek to fulfill their Mass obligation. Diocesan officials have already been in contact with parish staffs about the steps that can be taken to prevent building damage and accidents during the storm. The Office of the Bishop urges all Catholics to heed the travel advisories of their cities and towns, and to stay off the roads during the peak hours of the storm. The faithful are encouraged to use good judgment when planning to travel to Mass. In the event that roadways are not clear for travel, the faithful are reminded that the obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not apply when there is grave difficulty in fulfilling this obligation. (See Code of Canon Law, Canon 1248 §2)

### **WBVM, Diocesan Radio Station, 90.5**

If storm does threaten our area, in addition to watching the local news, please listen to Spirit FM and watch the Diocese of St. Petersburg website for updates.

### **Plan & Take Action**

Everyone needs to be prepared for the unexpected. Your friends and family may not be together when disaster strikes. If that occurs, how will you find each other? Will you know if your children or parents are safe? You may have to evacuate or be confined to your home. What will you do if water, gas, electricity or phone services are shut off?

### **Supplies Kit**

Put together a basic disaster supplies kit and consider storage locations for different situations. Help community members do the same.

### **Emergency Plans**

Develop and document plans for your specific risks.

- Protect yourself, home and family with a Family Emergency Plan.
- Be sure to plan for locations away from home.
- Business owners and site locations should create Workplace Plans.
- Make sure your children’s schools and daycares have School Emergency Plans.
- Pet owners should have plans to care for their animals. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention offer information on animal health impacts in evacuation shelters.
- Prepare your boat and be aware of marine safety if you are on or near the water.

## Health & Environment

Follow guidelines to guard your health and protect the environment during and after the storm.

- Review the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) health considerations before, during, and after a storm.
- Remember to follow the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) food and water safety guidelines during disasters.
- Review the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggestions for health and environmental safety in disaster preparedness.

## Evacuation

- Review the FEMA Evacuation Guidelines to allow for enough time to pack and inform friends and family if you need to leave your home. FOLLOW instructions issued by local officials. Leave immediately if ordered!
- Consider your protection options to decide whether to stay or evacuate your home if you are not ordered to evacuate.

**When waiting out a storm be careful, the danger may not be over yet...**

Be alert for:

- Tornadoes – they are often spawned by hurricanes.
- The calm "eye" of the storm – it may seem like the storm is over, but after the eye passes, the winds will change direction and quickly return to hurricane force.

## Recover

- Wait until an area is declared safe before returning home.
- Remember that recovering from a disaster is usually a gradual process.

## In closing....

Remember to pray for the safety of all people affected by the storm. Our Bishop is keeping the faithful and the state of Florida uppermost in his prayers at this critical time.

## Resources

- Florida Department of Emergency Management: <http://www.floridadisaster.org/index.asp>
- Pinellas County Emergency Management: <http://www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/>
- Hillsborough County Emergency Management: <http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/index.aspx?NID=115>
- Pasco County Emergency Management: <http://www.pascocountyfl.net/Index.aspx?NID=365>
- Hernando County Emergency Management: <http://www.hernandocounty.us/em/>
- Citrus County Emergency Management: <http://www.sheriffcitrus.org/emergency-management.php>