

# FEMA Urges People in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands to Prepare Ahead of Tropical Storm Ernesto

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WASHINGTON -- In anticipation of Tropical Storm Ernesto headed towards Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, FEMA is encouraging people and travelers in the storm's path to take steps to prepare today.

"We want to remind everyone in our communities that taking all necessary steps and having emergency plans in place is critical at this time," said FEMA Region 2 Administrator David Warrington. "Prepare your family, property and don't forget your pets. Connect with your community and discuss with your neighbors how you can help each other before and after a disaster. Sharing information and joining efforts can ease the recovery process. It is time to be ready."

People in the potentially affected areas should be prepared for power outages by gathering emergency supplies like flashlights, batteries and non-perishable food. FEMA encourages everyone to take time to identify today the items they rely on for electricity and plan for alternative power sources like batteries and a portable power charger or power bank. Additionally, it's important to store potable drinking water, secure outdoor furniture and other loose items.

## FEMA Encourages People in the Storm's Path to Follow These Tips to Stay Safe

**Prepare for power outages.** In addition to flooding, this storm may cause power outages. If the power goes out, use only flashlights or battery-powered lanterns for emergency lighting. NEVER use candles during a blackout or power outage due to extreme risk of fire. If you have medications that need refrigeration or rely on medical equipment that requires power, make immediate plans on where you can go to stay safe and healthy.



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**Use generators safely.** If you lose power and use a generator, always use it outdoors and at least 20 feet from windows, doors and attached garages. Make sure to keep the generator dry and protected from rain or flooding.

**Keep food safe during a power outage.** Keep freezers and refrigerators closed. If the power goes out, the refrigerator will keep food cold for about four hours, a full freezer will keep its temperature for about 48 hours. Use coolers with ice if necessary. Monitor temperatures with a thermometer and throw out food if the temperature is 40 degrees or higher.

**Have a plan.** Know how you will keep yourself, your family and your pets safe if this tropical system is forecast to affect your area. Make sure you consider your family's unique needs, including anyone who needs medicine or medical equipment. Know how you'll contact one another and reconnect if you aren't together when the storm hits. [Visit. Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) or [Listo.gov](https://www.listo.gov) in Spanish language for more information on how to stay safe before, during and after power outages.

**Stay safe during flooding.** Do not walk, swim or drive through flood waters water as it may be contaminated and contain dangerous debris. Additionally, underground or downed power lines can electrically charge the water. Turn Around, Don't Drown! Remember, just 6 inches of moving water can knock you down and one foot of moving water can sweep your vehicle away. Stay off bridges over fast-moving water. Never drive around barricades. Local responders use them to safely direct traffic out of flooded areas.

**Be ready to evacuate.** Excessive rainfall may cause waters to rise rapidly, so you may need to evacuate with little notice. Have an evacuation plan in place and avoid unnecessary travel, particularly on roads that may become flooded or damaged. Residents and visitors should pay attention to local officials and heed any guidance, warnings or instructions as risk of flooding continues over the coming days.

**Keep important documents safe.** Having your financial and medical records and important contact information will be crucial to help you start the recovery process quickly. Keep important documents in a waterproof container on a high shelf or upper level of your home. Create password-protected digital copies and move valuables to higher levels.



You can find more information on how to prepare for the incoming storm and how to stay safe at [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) or [Listo.gov](https://www.listo.gov) in Spanish language. You can also [download the free FEMA App](#) both in English and Spanish languages to locate open shelters and receive alerts for up to five locations.



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