

Hurricane Preparation Tips for Construction Sites

Just as you prepare your home and family for an impending hurricane, it's important to prepare construction job sites. Planning ahead now can make a big difference in how well construction sites fair during the storm.

Local emergency operations officials and the National Weather Service will provide hurricane landfall probabilities. Approximately 60 to 48 hours before the hurricane is expected to make landfall, consider canceling the delivery of building materials to all job sites except any materials needed to secure the building site from storm damage.

While contractors generally don't want to stop or delay construction activities, the 48 to 24 hour window before landfall is the suggested time to stop all construction activity. It's important to note that most local building departments generally stop field inspections, except for those related to pouring columns, tie beams, wet decks, floors and similar structural items, during this time as well.

Contractors are encouraged to activate their hurricane job site plan during this window of time. Notify subcontractors to help secure the building site. Helpful hints for site protection include:

- Secure all job sites, giving priority attention to those located in the most populated areas,
- Clean up all construction debris,
- Tie or band together all loose plywood and lumber. Secure other loose building supplies,
- Remove permit board and all job site signage,
- Locate and turn off electricity, water and gas.

Also, secure all portable toilets. Portable toilets can also be anchored adjacent to L-shaped walls of the home under construction, and they can be weighted down with concrete blocks or sand.

After the site is secure, advise subcontractors to leave and not return until the hurricane threat has passed. Make sure to have contact numbers for all subcontractors stored in a secure and dry place, and that they know who will contact them after the hurricane passes.

During the last 24 hours before the hurricane makes landfall, go home and take care of your family and personal property.

Other sensible precautions include ensuring batteries are reliable in all important tools – including cell phones. The construction industry depends on cell phones and other wireless communication devices to coordinate hurricane preparations and clean up after the hurricane passes. Reliable batteries are vital for getting back to normal on the job. Make sure to fill up gas tanks in all vehicles and equipment that might be needed to secure or escape job sites. If there are valuable items that must remain at the site, take photographs for insurance purposes before leaving.