



## Tropical Storm Hilary Safety Update

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From your friends at MySafe:LA

[www.mysafela.org](http://www.mysafela.org)

Los Angeles has just received its “first ever” tropical storm watch. That type of warning means that significant storm conditions will be possible for the coming 48 hours. Note that storm watches may be extended, if required.

The storm in question is called Hilary, currently a category 4 hurricane moving up the coast in the Pacific Ocean from Mexico. While experts believe Hilary will diminish to a tropical storm by the time it reaches Los Angeles, it can still be dangerous, with up to six inches of rain in parts of the city, and sustained winds of 39 miles per hour or so.

### Why is this dangerous?

Overall, there are serious issues related to flooding. That much water, in such a short period of time, may have no place to go - not into the ground as is typical from a “normal” single rainstorm. The National Hurricane Center noted that “rare and dangerous flooding may be possible.” If there is flooding, there can be landslides and other challenges.

Other dangers include the possible loss of power, of Internet connectivity, and of television and/or cable access. “It’s been 84 years since [a hurricane] came ashore, so it’s a once-in-a-lifetime event,” said Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn. “This is really an all-hands on deck effort.”

### How to prepare:

Simple preparations include signing up for alerts from the City of Los Angeles. That means registering with Notify L.A., the city based disaster notification system that sends messages to smartphones and similar devices. If you live in the county, check the Ready L.A. County website.

Next, sign up for alerts from your local utility providers. There are outage websites and you can bookmark those in your web browser to see where outages may be taking place. One example is the outage map from Southern California Edison. It’s sometimes a bit slow to be updated, but we’d guess they are ready to go in the event of outages this weekend and early next week. There is also a smartphone app, which you can find in the appropriate app store. Pacific Gas and Electric also have an outage map and an alerting system.

Take the same steps you would in the event of a wildfire. Be prepared to leave if told to do so by authorities, but also plan to stay home until such an order is given. That means having food, lots of water, battery powered lights, a first aid kit, and other basic necessities.

## Do you have a plan?

MySafe:LA has for more than a decade advocated for every family and person living in Los Angeles to make a plan. What does a plan include?

- ☒ family phone numbers (yes, separate from your contact list in your phone)
- ☒ Medical phone numbers - doctors, pharmacist, etc.
- ☒ Family food supplies (including for small children, etc.)
- ☒ Family pet supplies, including food, pet toys, blanket, transport crate
- ☒ Smartphone batteries (external USB chargers)
- ☒ Supplies for those with special needs (mobility, vision, hearing, etc.)
- ☒ Evacuation options (where will you go?)
- ☒ A full tank of gas in your vehicle
- ☒ Proper rain protection (boots, raincoat, umbrella, etc.)

## Is your emergency kit ready?

Every family should have at least one emergency kit. You may have created one based on readiness for earthquakes. This storm is a good time to check it out, update it if required, and have it at the ready. Key components include:

- ☒ Energy bars or similar long-lasting food
- ☒ At least three gallons of water per person
- ☒ A week's worth of any medications you may take
- ☒ Pet food
- ☒ Phone chargers
- ☒ Flashlights
- ☒ Duct tape
- ☒ Gloves
- ☒ Whistles
- ☒ Face masks (N-95 if possible)
- ☒ A paper map of your area
- ☒ A first aid kit
- ☒ A hand-crank NOAA radio (if there is no power)

Some of the additional things you may wish to consider (the list can get long) include:

- ☒ Canned and packaged foods
- ☒ Fire extinguisher
- ☒ Hard-soled shoes
- ☒ Extra glasses/contact lenses
- ☒ Hand-crank NOAA radio
- ☒ Batteries for flashlights
- ☒ Hard hat or helmet
- ☒ Goggles
- ☒ Wrench (for managing utility shut off valves)

- ✓ Heavy-duty plastic garbage bags (for waste, rain ponchos, etc.)
- ✓ Blankets
- ✓ Sleeping bags
- ✓ Extra clothing for a variety of weather
- ✓ Portable cooking appliance, such as a propane camp stove
- ✓ Utensils
- ✓ Hand operated can opener
- ✓ Copies of important documents, such as passports, driver's licenses, insurance policies
- ✓ Diapers, formula and medication for small children

## Prepare Your Home

If you live in a home, or are on the ground floor of a multi-occupancy building, there are some steps to consider relative to flooding. These include:

- ✓ Clear your gutters - remove debris
- ✓ Check storm drains and make certain they are clear
- ✓ Make sure drains are not covered and are available for pooling water
- ✓ Bring umbrellas, cushions, and plastic furniture indoors
- ✓ Tie down wood furniture if possible
- ✓ Secure trash cans or put them in a garage, if possible
- ✓ Move valuable items to a 2nd floor, if possible
- ✓ Protect access points with sandbags (all 106 LAFD fire stations have sand)

## Stay Connected

Most major broadcasters have back-up power and related capabilities that will allow them to continue operating, even in a significant storm. It's important for you to stay connected so you can get up-to-the-minute information, if required. Good local options include:

KNXT Radio - 97.1 FM  
 KTLA Local TV - <https://ktla.com/>

## During the Storm

For most people, simply staying inside is the best advice. If there are no evacuation orders, then we suggest staying at home. Don't venture out unless it's absolutely necessary. Other things to consider during the storm include:

## If you need to leave the house

Make certain your vehicle is filled with fuel. Bring some water, a phone charger, and a first aid kit. It's also worthwhile to put a blanket in the car, in case you become stranded.

## Avoid flooded streets

Vehicles can be "washed away" in just two feet of water - and six inches of moving water can knock an adult off their feet. People often think they can "drive through" what they think are shallow rivers of water. Don't do it. We've all seen the pictures on TV and the videos on YouTube. Even if you have a "honking" SUV, two feet of water can turn it into a runaway boat.

## **If water enters your home**

In the event your home begins to flood, go up to the 2nd floor if you have one. If you need to get on the roof, do that. Don't go into the flood zone around your home unless you have no other option.

## **Be safe at home**

Don't bring a BBQ into your home. Don't bring gasoline powered devices into the home. If you use any gas devices, make certain there is adequate ventilation (in the garage, for example). Don't use flame driven candles.

## **After the Storm**

When the storm passes, the dangers are not gone - they're different. The first thing to do is to ensure all of your family members (including pets) are accounted for. There are other things to consider in Los Angeles as well.

## **Is your home damaged?**

Check the exterior of your home for damage. If there are fallen trees, or flood waters, take photographs, but don't try to "fix" the problem when you see it. If you need to report damage, use the city's 311 line, not the emergency line 911.

## **Let people know you're okay**

You may wish to mark yourself "okay" if you have a Facebook account. More importantly, this is a good time to check in with family members, especially those who live out of the area. Use texting if possible, as mobile service may be impacted.

## **Stay away from downed power lines**

And stay away from any pooled water around power lines, as electricity loves to travel through water.

## **Avoid the local beaches**

The sunsets may be amazing. The surf may look spectacular. But don't do it. The ocean is likely going to be contaminated for at least a few days following a storm.

## **Refill used items in your emergency kit**

Your emergency kit is designed for use when in the midst of a pending natural disaster like a tropical storm. When the storm passes, make certain you refill your kit with anything you've used. It's also a good time to evaluate if anything is nearing an expiration date (water is typically good for up to five years, as one example).

## **What is the difference between a hurricane and a typhoon?**

The terms "hurricane" and "typhoon" are regional names for **tropical cyclones**. All tropical cyclones are alike in that they draw heat from warm water at the ocean's surface to power horizontal, rotating wind. Although similar in size, tropical cyclones have a different energy source than synoptic cyclones, which are storm systems that draw their energy from weather fronts and jet streams.

Over the Atlantic and East Pacific, tropical cyclones are commonly called "hurricanes." The common term is "typhoon" for a tropical cyclone that forms in the West Pacific. Tropical cyclones are called just "cyclones" in the Indian Ocean and near Australia.

## **Additional Information**

If you need additional information, check these websites:

### **Los Angeles City Fire Department**

[www.lafd.org](http://www.lafd.org)

### **Los Angeles Emergency Management Department**

[emergency.lacity.gov](http://emergency.lacity.gov)

### **Los Angeles Police Department**

[www.lapdonline.org](http://www.lapdonline.org)

### **Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks**

[www.laparks.org/](http://www.laparks.org/)

### **Los Angeles Department of Animal Services**

[www.laanimalservices.com/](http://www.laanimalservices.com/)

### **Los Angeles Department of Aging**

[aging.lacity.org/](http://aging.lacity.org/)

### **Bureau of Street Services**

<https://streetsla.lacity.org/>

### **MySafe:LA**

[www.mysafela.org](http://www.mysafela.org)