



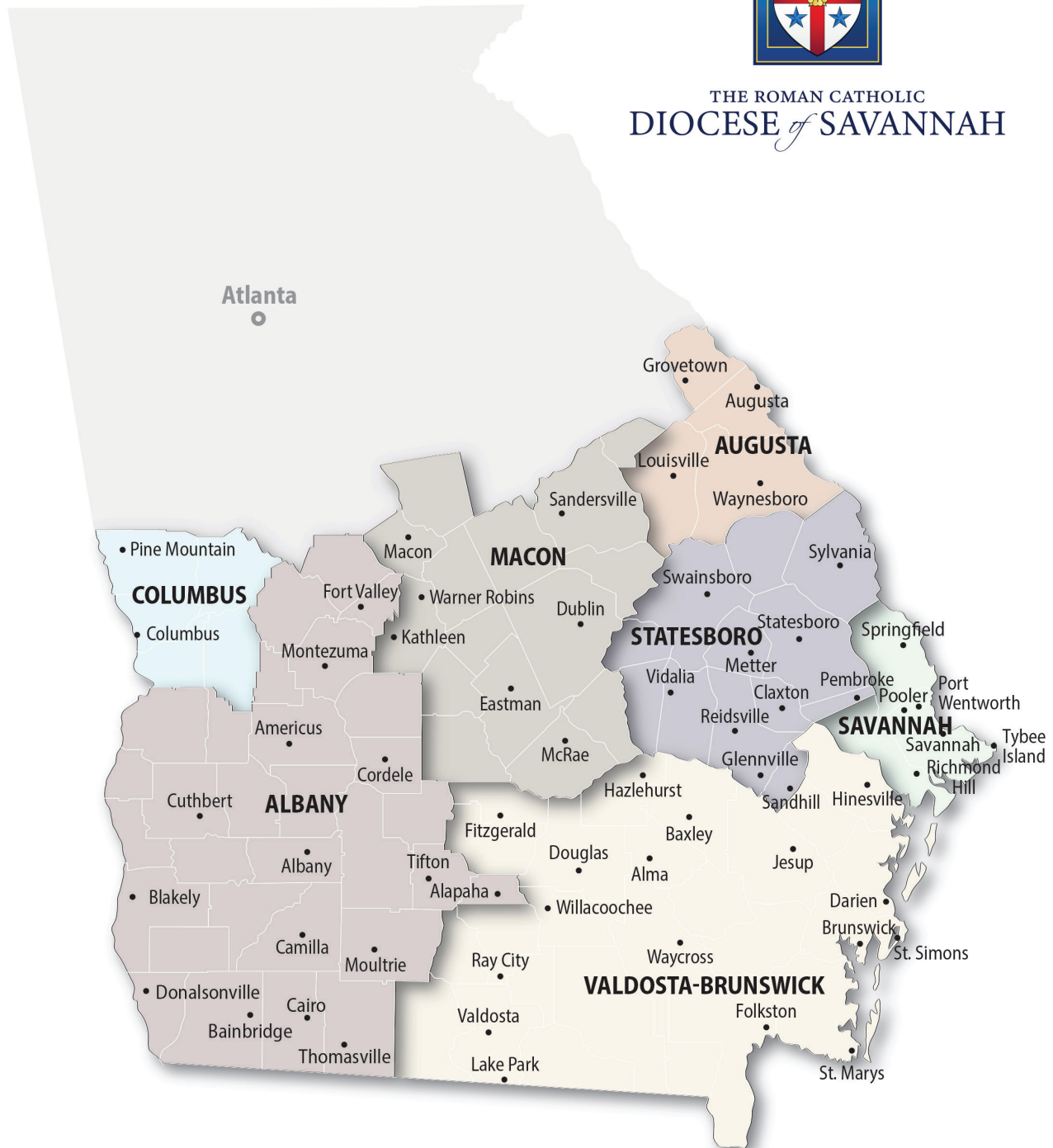
**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SAVANNAH**

**HURRICANE  
PREPAREDNESS  
GUIDE**

**UPDATED MARCH 2023**



THE ROMAN CATHOLIC  
**DIOCESE of SAVANNAH**



**PUBLISHED BY THE OFFICE OF CONSTRUCTION AND PROPERTY SERVICES**

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# COMMUNICATION IN AN EMERGENCY

## OFFICIAL NOTIFICATIONS

When a hurricane threat is imminent, you need to monitor all announcements from your local emergency management offices. The announcements are usually broadcast over your local media channels. The county emergency management office will make decisions regarding evacuation status, evacuation routes, and other important information. Please follow the directives issued by Georgia Emergency Management Administration (GEMA).

## DIOCESAN COMMUNICATION

A blank **Hurricane/Emergency Contact Form** (see page 14) is included in this guide. The Diocese requests that you provide the Pastor's contact information as well as the name, position, and two telephone numbers for two other entity personnel that the Diocese can contact in the event the Pastor cannot be reached during or after a hurricane or emergency situation. Since we may experience telephone outages, the Diocese needs two telephone numbers (cellular and landline) for each person. **Please e-mail the completed form to Heather Anderson (HAnderson@diosav.org) or complete the online form at <http://diosav.org/emergency-contact>.**

This information will only be used by the Diocesan personnel listed on the **Hurricane/Emergency Contact List** (see page 13). Entities that are forced to evacuate must notify someone on the Diocesan contact list as soon as possible.

## PARISH/SCHOOL STAFF COMMUNICATION

You need to maintain an updated and easily accessible list of your current staff—the list will prove valuable in the event of a disaster.

Assign each staff member the names of two or three other staff members that they are responsible for calling in the event of an emergency. Make sure that each staff member has access at all times to an employee roster as well as a copy of the phone tree. A call from the Pastor, Principal, or Disaster Coordinator initiates the phone-calling process.

Instructions should be precise and limited to simple and straightforward information.

Each parish/school should have at least one cellular telephone. Each parish/school should have a telephone jack that does not depend on electrical power.

## POST-HURRICANE COMMUNICATION

During the aftermath of a hurricane, it may be necessary for **insurance adjusters** and **risk management** to contact entity personnel to gain entrance to damaged facilities.

## BEFORE THE STORM

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Parishes/schools need to secure all buildings and their contents at least **48 hours** before a hurricane is due and/or as directed by the Diocese.

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- Please place special emphasis on the safety of the **Blessed Sacrament** and the Church vessels.
- Prepare an **emergency contact list** (see the blank form on page 13).
- **Diocesan buildings do not meet the criteria for shelters and should not be offered as shelters.** However, after the storm—if the Construction & Properties Director determines that the building is structurally sound—it may be used for distribution of food and other supplies by either the Red Cross or the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- We recommend that, if possible, at least one **emergency generator** is available for use in the Priest's residence. This generator should have sufficient power to provide essential service while the electrical power is off. It is imperative that a licensed electrician installed the generator. The generator needs to be operated only outdoors or in a properly ventilated area because generators emit dangerous gases, including carbon monoxide.
- All **roof vents** (excluding plumbing vents) must be sealed to prevent water from coming into the building.
- Adequate preparation time should be allowed for the installation of available **protective covers, plywood, shutters**, etc.
- Keep **cash reserves** in a safe place. ATMs and bank computers may be down for two or three weeks, depending on availability of power. Also, Pastors must consider loss of offertory income due to parishioners experiencing the same problems.
- Be aware of **shelter locations** if evacuation is required. This information can be obtained on the County's website or by contacting the County prior to a storm event.
- All employees should be instructed to **contact the parish/school/entity** as quickly as possible after the storm. It is the employee's responsibility to report and not wait to be called. Update employee addresses and telephone numbers.
- **Top off cars and store gas** for generators, mowers, etc. in a properly secured, ventilated area.
- **Take photos and/or video** to document the important features of your buildings and contents.

## AFTER THE STORM

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The Director of Construction & Property Services will visit the affected areas within 48 hours (unless there is a curfew in effect) or when it is safe to travel. He will assist the parish/school with the recovery process.

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- **Report the loss to John Grim (912-677-3734) or Heather Anderson (912-201-4044) as soon as possible.**
- As soon as safely possible, **take photos and/or videos** to document all of the damage. The post-storm photos and videos can be compared to your latest comprehensive contents inventory.
- Take all of the necessary steps (e.g., installing tarps) that can be performed safely to prevent/minimize further damage. **Do not make any permanent repairs without first obtaining approval from the Construction & Property Services Director.**
- **Start the clean-up immediately.** Work in small areas, clean up, move on, and show progress daily.
- **Keep receipts for all expenses incurred.** Obtain detailed estimates for all permanent repairs. Obtaining and maintaining good documentation is extremely critical because it will be required for all insurance claims.
- **No structures can be made available for use** until after the Director of Construction & Property Services determines that they are structurally sound.
- **Debris should be removed from entrance ways** to provide a safe atmosphere. Beware of fallen power lines and other hazards when removing debris.
- Keep in mind that if the parish/school opens before water can be used for drinking, you **must provide bottled water** for the employees and students.

# PRIEST'S RESIDENCE

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Be aware of shelter locations if evacuation is required. Have an evacuation plan in place.

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## FOOD AND SUPPLIES

**Before the Storm:** Pastors and Parochial Vicars should make sure that they have the following supplies on hand: spare eyeglasses, adequate supply of prescription medications, hearing aids and spare batteries, flashlights, batteries, radio, digital camera, and cash.

Make sure that enough food is on site. Canned foods are the easiest to stock due to their extended shelf life and easy storage. Be aware that they must be rotated out at least once annually. Identify storage dates and replace every 6 months. Check expiration dates on cans or other products.

Stock ready-to-eat canned meat, fruits, and vegetables. Also, stock canned or dried juice mixes, powdered or canned milk, and high-energy foods (peanut butter, jelly, crackers, unsalted nuts, trail mixes, cereals, and rice). Do not forget comfort foods such as cookies, hard candies, instant coffee, and tea bags. Be sure to include a manual can opener, cooking and eating utensils, and basic food seasoning (salt, pepper, sugar, etc.). Alternative cooking sources should be considered (for example, a sterno stove or camp stove with propane cylinders). Disposable products such as paper plates and cups and plastic eating utensils should be stored. Water may be too contaminated to use for dishwashing. An adequate supply of paper towels, toilet tissue, and Kleenex, should be stored.

## WATER

**Before the Storm:** Plan to store enough water to supply each Priest's residence for three days. The standard recommendation is one gallon per person per day; this will provide adequate supplies for drinking, cooking, and washing. Date the water containers and replace them every 6 months. Drinking water should be purchased in plastic jugs.

Be sure to have at least six buckets (3-gallon or 5-gallon in size) that can be used both to fill with water for flushing toilets and then for necessary cleaning. Note that after a storm, water may be contaminated. Purification tablet kits are available and easy to store. A camper's stove or other portable stove is a good purchase for cooking and boiling water. Check with the local government to find out if the water can be used for drinking, cooking and dishwashing.

## CREATE A DISASTER SUPPLY KIT

Use the kit if you are evacuating or staying in place during a disaster. When preparing for a disaster, use the "15-minute rule." This rule states that any essential things you need to evacuate or prepare for a disaster should take you 15 minutes or less to pull together. To make sure that items are readily accessible:

- Assemble the supplies (including prescription medications) in easy-to-carry containers like backpacks and duffle bags.
- Have important papers already packed in waterproof containers.
- Have plastic sheeting easily available, if needed.



## ESTABLISHING A DISASTER COMMITTEE

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During the first few days after a disaster, there will likely be much confusion in the public sector. Therefore, you need to be prepared to solve your own problems.

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To prepare for future storms, assemble (in advance) a volunteer network of people experienced in insurance claims, roofing, electrical and construction work, etc. to assist in promptly and accurately assessing the damage and reporting it to the Director of Construction & Property Services.

If employees and/or volunteers assist with the clean-up, proceed very cautiously – do not ask them to perform (or allow them to perform) tasks for which they are not qualified. Lifting should be done with care to prevent back injuries and not by those with back problems. Remember, you are also exposed to Workers' Compensation claims. Use contractors for specialized and high hazard jobs.

The Red Cross may request to survey suitable parish halls to use after the storm for relief, registrations, distribution of food, supplies, etc. **No Diocese of Savannah buildings meet the criteria for shelters at this time and should not be offered for such use.**

# SHUTTING OFF UTILITIES & VENTILATION SYSTEMS

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Before, during, or immediately after an emergency, it may be necessary to shut down water, power, and/or gas lines before utility company representatives or other emergency services personnel can arrive at the site.

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## UTILITY CONNECTIONS

**Knowing the location of the utility connections (e.g., isolation switches and shut-off valves) and how to operate each of them may save lives and diminish the risks of property damage.** Therefore, personnel who are responsible for preparing the facility for a disaster need to know in advance which utility lines should be shut off to prevent damage.

Under extreme conditions such as a hurricane or tornado, it is more likely that electrical power will fail over a wide area. Water and gas lines are generally buried and are not as vulnerable unless a building is damaged.

During hurricane preparation, disconnect all electrical equipment.

## UNDERSTANDING THE HVAC SYSTEM

It is important to pay special attention to the ventilation systems (air, heat, fans, etc.) that may transmit toxic emissions in the event of a fire or hazardous materials spill. Every system has some means of shutdown. Be sure to learn in advance how to shut down all ventilation systems **and how to return them to normal operation when it is safe to do so.**

# ROUTINE MAINTENANCE

## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Routine, preventive maintenance can help to minimize greater damage to a parish/facility during a disaster. Many insurance claims are denied because maintenance issues that are allowed to go unresolved create, in effect, a “pre-existing condition.” It is imperative that the buildings and grounds be routinely checked for maintenance issues and that problems are fixed as soon as possible.

For example, it is critically important to **maintain roofs in good condition**. If the parish/facility were already aware of specific roof deficiencies (e.g., the roof was already leaking, and/or the roof was approaching or had already exceeded its life expectancy) and took no action to maintain/repair/replace the roof before the hurricane or other disaster occurred, the parish/facility will likely receive no insurance funds (or a significantly discounted amount) to repair/replace the roof.

**Outside clean-up** of all loose objects, fruit, tree trimmings, etc. should be completed periodically. If this action is taken at the last minute, trash pick-ups will not be available; and these objects could become a hazard.

**As part of the Diocesan disaster preparedness and response plan, routine maintenance is a mandatory requirement.** Please assign a member of your staff the task of completing a maintenance checklist on an annual basis. A sample *routine maintenance list* and a sample *beyond routine maintenance list* are included in this guide.

## STORING AND PROTECTING PARISH/SCHOOL RECORDS

Inactive records should be stored in filing cabinets (preferred) or in boxes (on shelves high up above the floor, if possible). Do not loosely pile documents on a shelf as this increases the risk of fire or other potential loss. These records should be stored in clean, dry, well-lit and ventilated areas that are free from pests and high above the floor. The storage area should contain fire extinguishers and, if possible, have a fire-suppression system. Smoking, eating, and drinking should be prohibited in the area. Access to storage areas should be tightly controlled. The sacramental records books and marriage packets should be stored in a fireproof cabinet.

## PROTECTING COMPUTER HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

Electronic information is a vital part of our organizations. As such, parishes/schools should take the following steps in order to protect these resources in the event of a disaster.

- Identify the functions performed by your computer systems and develop procedures and practices to accomplish those tasks manually (for example, publishing the parish bulletin and newsletters, and maintaining pastoral records).
- Know your software applications. Create a list of all the software used at your location.
- Perform daily data backups as well as separate weekly and monthly backups. These backups also should be stored at a secure off-site facility. Use a backup schedule chart to track your activities.
- If severe weather is imminent, unplug and move electronic equipment away from windows and doors to locations above floor level where possible.

## **SAMPLE ROUTINE MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST**

- ☐ Monitor use of candles and open flames.
- ☐ Assign someone to be in charge of knowing when these will be used.
- ☐ Test smoke detectors annually. If the alarms are battery operated, replace the batteries.
- ☐ Inspect HVAC equipment annually. If HVAC needs maintenance, schedule for repair.
- ☐ Have an electrician inspect the wiring, power connection, and circuit boxes annually.
- ☐ Inspect water heaters annually.
- ☐ Provide backups and surge protection for all power sources.
- ☐ Clean out gutters and drains annually.
- ☐ Maintain grounds and fences.
- ☐ Trim all trees away from the rooflines annually.
- ☐ Check the security of canopies and covered walks on a regular basis.
- ☐ Ensure vehicles have updated preventive maintenance.
- ☐ Ensure jumper cables are on hand.

## **SAMPLE BEYOND-ROUTINE MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST**

- ☐ Close blinds and curtains to minimize damage from broken windows.
- ☐ If possible, position computers and other electronic equipment away from windows.
- ☐ File and secure all papers, books, and archival materials.
- ☐ Cover computers and furniture with heavy plastic to prevent wind and rain damage from broken windows. Elevate computer towers off floor if computers are located on ground floor.
- ☐ If high winds are anticipated, install hurricane shutters or board vulnerable windows.
- ☐ If high winds are anticipated, remove outside furniture and store inside.
- ☐ If high winds are anticipated, remove satellite rooftop dishes.
- ☐ If high winds are anticipated, remove all turbine roof vents and cap-off the opening.
- ☐ Check the integrity of storage sheds; close and lock the doors.
- ☐ Check the security of all doors.
- ☐ Check attic spaces and windows for leaking after every storm.
- ☐ Contact John Grim or Heather Anderson if the parish facility has sustained damage as a result of the storm.

# MANAGING A HURRICANE LOSS

## BEFORE THE HURRICANE

Follow the preparatory steps found in the guide.

Take a copy of this guide with you when you leave your office due to a hurricane.

## IMMEDIATE AFTER THE HURRICANE – DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF YOUR LOSS

**Scene Safety** – Before entering the grounds and structure, make sure that there are no fallen power lines or other debris that may cause injury. Debris should be removed from entrances to provide a safe atmosphere. Beware of fallen power lines and other hazards when removing debris.

**Assess Your Damage** – Determine the extent of damage, number of damaged structures, and their locations, etc. Try to triage to identify the most significantly damaged locations. Take photos and/or videos of the damaged locations. Save the photos and/or videos on a flash drive or disc for future claims processing.

If extra expenses are incurred (security guards, additional labor, etc.), save the receipts to submit as part of your claim. Set up a separate financial report to capture hurricane expenses.

## REPORT YOUR LOSS

**Contact John Grim or Heather Anderson to report your damage/loss.**

John Grim, Director of Construction & Property Services  
912-201-4066 (office) or 912-677-3734 (cell) | [jgrim@diosav.org](mailto:jgrim@diosav.org)

or

Heather Anderson, Cemetery & Property Administrator  
912-201-4044 | [handerson@diosav.org](mailto:handerson@diosav.org)

## HURRICANE-RELATED WARNINGS AND CAUTIONS

- Hurricanes spiral counterclockwise around a relatively calm center known as the eye of the storm. Hurricane-force winds and torrential rains border this calm. Additional winds, rains, etc. will follow the calming of the storm once the eye has passed. Remain indoors until experts advise that the storm has passed.
- Hurricane winds do much damage, but huge waves can raise tides 15 feet or more. These waves often come rapidly and produce flooding and flash floods. Drowning is the greatest cause of hurricane deaths.
- Vertical evacuation (moving to second or third floor) is not safe. Storm surges can wipe out the foundation and/or the first floor, destroying the upper floors in the process.
- Board up windows instead of taping them. Broken windows can allow hurricane winds to enter a building and blow off the roof. Hurricane shutters or boarding up windows where strong winds are expected is a safer method to protect the roof, the interior, and the overall structure of the property and prevent flying glass.
- Officials may advise that all utilities be shut off to homes and other property. Locate shut off valves in advance and know how to use them safely. Write down step-by-step instructions and make sure more than one person knows how to use them.
- When storm conditions arrive, secure all outside items (such as lawn furniture) so they do not become airborne.
- Important records should be placed in a waterproof container and stored in a safe place.
- Stay in the room or area most central to the structure, preferably without windows.
- When flooding accompanies a hurricane, snakes and rodents can become a hazard. Stray dogs and cats can cause problems also. Pets can become hostile once they have endured the effects of a serious storm.
- Disruption of garbage and trash pickup can pose a problem. Food that cannot be used or saved after a storm should be buried rather than left outside to attract animals.
- Check with local emergency management agencies before using any water after a flood. Water sources may be contaminated. If your facility is serviced by a well, water must be tested before use.

## DEFINITIONS

**Tropical Depression** – A storm consisting of an organized cluster of thunderclouds over tropical seas with a center of low pressure detectable at the storm's surface. The highest wind speed of a tropical depression is 38 miles per hour.

**Tropical Storm** – A tropical depression that has developed wind speeds of 39 to 73 miles per hour. When a storm reaches Tropical Storm strength, it is assigned a name. Severe flooding may occur with a tropical storm.

**Hurricane** – A tropical storm that has developed wind speeds of 74 miles per hour or more. Hurricanes are rated on a scale called the Saffir-Simpson scale. Ratings are based on wind speeds and the expected height of the storm surge.

**Storm Surge** – A rise in tide caused by a hurricane as it moves over or near the coastline. The rise in tides along with the devastating waves can cause catastrophic damage to entire buildings. Millions of fish are killed by the crash of the storm surge against the coastline and many people drown in the strong current produced by the surge.

**Hurricane Watch** – Issued when hurricane conditions pose a potential threat to an area within 36 hours. Landfall is possible.

**Hurricane Warning** – Issued when a hurricane is expected to strike within 24 hours. Landfall is imminent.

**Hurricane Belt** – The area along the Atlantic Coast from Virginia to Key West, Florida, and along the Gulf of Mexico from Key West to Texas.

**Hurricane Season** – The time of year from June 1 through November 30 when ocean temperatures are favorable to the formation of hurricanes. It is possible for hurricanes to form earlier or later than these dates.

**Rating Hurricanes:** Hurricanes vary in power and speed. The Saffir-Simpson scale breaks them into the following categories according to wind speeds:

- Category 1: 74-95 MPH
- Category 2: 96-110 MPH
- Category 3: 111-130 MPH
- Category 4: 131-155 MPH
- Category 5: 156+ MPH

**Categories 1 & 2** – Expect minor damage to stable structures, major damage to mobile homes, vegetation and piers. Some coastal flooding.

**Category 3** – Expect structural damage to small residences and utility buildings. Mobile homes are destroyed. Terrain continuously lower than 5 feet above sea level may be flooded inland 8 miles or more.

**Categories 4 & 5** – Expect most deadly and destructive consequences, can result in roof failure and building collapse.



# EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

	PRIMARY PHONE	SECONDARY PHONE	EMAIL
<b>CLERGY</b>			

<b>SCHOOL</b>			

<b>DIOCESE</b>		<b>REPORT ALL HURRICANE CLAIMS TO JOHN GRIM OR HEATHER ANDERSON</b>	
John Grim Dir, Const & Properties	912-201-4066	912-677-3734	jgrim@diosav.org
Heather Anderson Cemetery & Prop Admin	912-201-4044		handerson@diosav.org
Karla Aldridge Controller	912-201-4065		kcaldridge@diosav.org
Susan Beke Dir, Parish Fin Svcs	912-201-4123	912-944-7784	sbeke@diosav.org

<b>EMERGENCY</b>			
Police			
Fire			
Sheriff's Department			
Red Cross			
Emergency Mgmt			
Nearby Shelters			

<b>VENDORS</b>			

# DIOCESE OF SAVANNAH

## HURRICANE/EMERGENCY LIST

Please email the completed form to Heather Anderson (handerson@diosav.org) or complete the online form at <http://diosav.org/emergency-contact>.

### PARISH/ENTITY

NAME
PHYSICAL ADDRESS

### PASTOR/PRINCIPAL/AGENCY HEAD

NAME	
CELL	LANDLINE

### ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY CONTACTS

PLEASE LIST THE NAMES AND CONTACT INFORMATION FOR TWO ADDITIONAL PEOPLE THE DIOCESE SHOULD ATTEMPT TO CONTACT IF THE PASTOR CANNOT BE REACHED DURING OR AFTER A HURRICANE OR OTHER EMERGENCY.

1	NAME	POSITION
	CELL	LANDLINE
2	NAME	POSITION
	CELL	LANDLINE

### EVACUATION STATUS

ARE YOU IN A FORCED EVACUATION AREA? ☐ YES ☐ NO

IF YES, PLEASE CONTACT: **JOHN GRIM, DIRECTOR OF CONSTRUCTION & PROPERTY SERVICES**  
912-201-4066 (OFFICE) OR 912-677-3734 (CELL)

OR

**HEATHER ANDERSON, CEMETERY & PROPERTY ADMINISTRATOR**  
912-201-4044



ST. MEDARD, PRAY FOR US!

**CONSTRUCTION & PROPERTY SERVICES  
CATHOLIC PASTORAL CENTER  
2170 E. VICTORY DR.  
SAVANNAH, GA 31404-3918  
912-201-4100**

**DIRECTOR  
912-201-4066**

**CEMETERY & PROPERTY ADMINISTRATOR  
912-201-4044**

**<https://diosav.org/emergency-contact>**