



# THE BOTTOM LINE

## Hurricane Preparedness and Recovery: Hire a State-Licensed Contractor



After the series of dangerous storms in 2017, preparing for the upcoming hurricane season is critical. Homes and properties that sustained damage last year are the most vulnerable to impending storms. Overlooking or disregarding a needed repair can increase the risk of minor damage becoming sizable and costly. Now is the time to make calls and schedule renovations to ensure your home or property is storm ready.

The Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) reminds consumers that certain projects require a Florida state-licensed professional. Hiring a state-licensed professional offers personal and financial protection to consumers. State-licensed professionals are required to comply with building codes and can be covered by homeowner's insurance.

Unfortunately, some individuals pose as licensed professionals to take advantage of consumers. Before hiring a contractor, ask for their license number and verify it by calling the DBPR Customer Contact Center at 850.487.1395 or visiting [www.myfloridalicense.com](http://www.myfloridalicense.com).

Per Florida Statute, contractors must have their license number on all advertising, including their business cards. Out-of-state contractors must also be licensed by the State of Florida to legally perform services.

Before hiring a contractor, DBPR recommends obtaining several cost estimates to ensure you receive a fair assessment. Here are other tips to consider:

**Check references and reviews** for each contractor or construction business you're interested in hiring.

**Be cautious when signing a contract and paying for services.** Don't commit to a contract, make a payment or provide personal or financial information to a contractor on the spot. Typical contracting scams are committed by individuals who pressure consumers into making a quick decision by greatly reducing the price.

**Get everything in writing**, including a thorough description of work to be completed, the total cost of the repairs and a completion date.

## DBPR, BBB offer Disaster Preparedness Resources

DBPR and the Better Business Bureau joined forces to provide a one-stop resource page to help Floridians prepare for hurricane season. To access the page, visit the BBB website [here](#).



Additionally, DBPR recently released a comprehensive hurricane guide that covers hurricane preparedness, what to do as a storm approaches, disaster recovery and other helpful hurricane-related resources.

Read the guide [here](#).

## Hurricane Season Begins Next Month

Florida Department of Emergency Management

The 2018 Atlantic Hurricane Season begins Friday, June 1 and ends Friday, November 30. Do you know the difference between a hurricane watch and a hurricane warning?



### Watch

Issued 48 hours before the anticipated onset of tropical storm-force winds.

Hurricane conditions are possible in the watch area.

It's time to trigger your family's disaster plan and secure your home and belongings.

### Warning

Issued 36 hours before the anticipated onset of tropical storm-force winds.

Hurricane conditions are expected in the warning area.

Complete proactive steps now and determine the safest place to wait out the storm.

## When a License Is Required...It Pays to Know

Before entering into a contract or working with a professional, ask to see their license or license number – then verify it at [www.myfloridalicense.com](http://www.myfloridalicense.com) or on the free DBPR mobile app, available on iTunes and Google Play.

Please report suspected unlicensed activity to DBPR. Call 866.532.1440, email [ULA@myfloridalicense.com](mailto:ULA@myfloridalicense.com) or use the DBPR mobile app.



| Requires a License (For compensation)   | Does Not Require a License (Regardless of compensation)  |
|---|--|
| Build a carport or sunroom  | Install a driveway or install pavers/tile walkways   |
| Construct a roof  | Install awnings that do not become a fixed part of the structure   |
| Install a dishwasher (requires connecting to drinking water) or replace a hot-water heater  | Add a water filter onto a faucet   |
| Install a central air-conditioning unit (requires structural work and wiring)   | Insert a plug-in A/C window unit   |
| Clean central air and heat ducts (requires partial disassembly of the system, such as removal of air grills)  | Change an A/C filter or cleaning ducts that do not require removal of the air grills   |
| Repair or replace swimming pool pumps   | Clean swimming pool  |
| Perform plumbing work or irrigation installation that requires the contractor to connect lines to potable (drinking) water                                    | Install an above-ground pool<br>Install or repair irrigation systems that have a back/low preventer connected to a potable (drinking) water supply                                     |
| Build a barn, metal building or detached garage   | Install prefabricated tool shed less than 250 sq. ft. in size. <i>The shed may be up to 400 sq. ft. if it bears the insignia of approval from the Department of Community Affairs.</i> |
| Remodel a home that requires alteration or replacement of a load-bearing wall   | Paint, install cabinets, wood or tile flooring and insulation  |
| Installation or replacement of drywall if the contract also includes work on the load-bearing part of the wall, plumbing, electrical or air conditioning work | Installation or replacement of drywall if the contract does not include other work on the load-bearing part of the wall or any plumbing, electrical or air conditioning work           |



The 2018 Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday will take place June 1-7. During the holiday, the following items are exempt from the state sales tax and county discretionary sales surtaxes:

- Packages of AA-cell, AAA-cell, C-cell, D-cell, 6-volt or 9-volt batteries, excluding automobile and boat batteries, selling for \$30 or less
- Nonelectric food storage coolers selling for \$30 or less
- Portable generators used to provide light or communications or preserve food in the event of a power outage selling for \$750 or less
- Reusable ice selling for \$10 or less
- Portable self-powered light sources selling for \$20 or less
- Portable self-powered radios, two-way radios or weather band radios selling for \$50 or less
- Tarpaulins or other flexible waterproof sheeting selling for \$50 or less
- Ground anchor systems or tie-down kits selling for \$50 or less
- Gas or diesel fuel tanks selling for \$25 or less

## Related Information and Resources

### Florida Division of Emergency Management

[www.floridadisaster.org](http://www.floridadisaster.org)  
[www.facebook.com/FloridaSERT](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaSERT)  
[twitter.com/flsert](https://twitter.com/flsert)

### Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

### American Red Cross

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

### Federal Alliance for Safe Homes

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

### Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry

[www.freshfromflorida.com/divisions-offices/animal-industry](http://www.freshfromflorida.com/divisions-offices/animal-industry)



## Build Your Bucket Event

This summer, DBPR will partner with the Red Cross in an annual hurricane-preparation event – “Build Your Bucket.” The event will be held June 2 from 9 a.m. to noon at the North Florida Fairgrounds in Tallahassee. Consumers are invited to visit vendor booths providing hurricane supplies and fill their buckets with free items.



## Florida Ranks No. 1 for Building Code Strength

*Office of Governor Rick Scott*

Governor Rick Scott recently announced that the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS) has released the new edition of its Rating the States report, ranking Florida No. 1 for strengthening residential building-code systems. The state-by-state assessment, previously issued in 2012 and 2015, ranks 18 states most vulnerable to catastrophic hurricanes along the Atlantic Coast and Gulf of Mexico. The report is intended to focus attention on the need for strong, statewide building codes and identify steps states can take to improve their building codes.

Governor Scott said, “In Florida, we know how important it is to be prepared for hurricanes while doing everything possible to keep families safe. Florida’s building codes have consistently ranked among the strongest in the nation and I’m proud that we have now been ranked first for building code strength by the Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety.”

Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation Secretary Jonathan Zachem said, “As reflected in the IBHS report, the importance of effective, well-enforced building codes was demonstrated in our state during the 2017 hurricane season. I’m extremely pleased that the state of Florida was ranked first on this landmark report.”

IBHS CEO and President Julie Rochman said, “States with strong, updated codes saw stunning proof this year in Florida that updated, well-enforced building codes have led to the construction of homes and buildings that can stand up to fierce hurricane winds. It can’t be any clearer: these codes work.”