

## Hurricane Prep: the Ultimate Checklist to Keep Your Firm Safe

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No law firm, regardless of size, practice area, or longevity, is immune from all of the negative ramifications of inclement weather. Unfortunately, the strength of your history in advocacy has minimal bearing on the likelihood that your firm will emerge from a hurricane or natural disaster unscathed and unaffected in any way. There are [an array of precautions](#) that any entrepreneur should take in order to protect their business from hurricanes, earthquakes, and the like, and there's no doubt that certain measures are more effective at securing your data and records than others. As a business set in South Florida, an area that spends an approximate quarter of its year on a perpetual hurricane watch, we've collected a Storm Survival Guide of sorts for attorneys and entrepreneurs alike.

### Ethically speaking

As a business owner, the first step to take in preparing for inclement weather is to ensure that your preparative process is undertaken with all of your ethical obligations in mind. Luckily, the American Bar Association has provided various [resources for legal entrepreneurs](#) to reference as they gear up to temporarily close down or equip their firm in the face of an upcoming [hurricane or another natural disaster](#). This is done to make sure that you set the appropriate structures and procedures in place to best accommodate both your employees and the future of your firm.

### Protect your infrastructure

Despite the increased reliance on online spaces for legal businesses to operate, physical offices are a primordial component of many law practices. For this reason, it is imperative to take measures to ensure that your firm's physical location is as protected as possible.

1. Those of us who reside in storm-heavy areas are all-too familiar with this step, but it's crucial enough to be worth mentioning: check your local news station's website to determine where plywood will be available in your area. Make sure you have enough in stock to cover all of your firm's windows. This is absolutely essential in order to protect the inside of your firm should the storm cause your windows to shatter.
2. If your firm's entrances open directly to the outdoors, invest in sandbags to place behind each door. This will prevent flooding and help to keep your door upright should winds be strong enough to knock it awry.
3. This is an under-used but altogether valuable tip: visit your local home improvement store to pick up some wall studs, and use them to anchor down any large furniture that could be destructive should it collapse.
4. In the same vein, ensure that all electronic devices are secured and stored in elevated areas and away from windows, if possible, to minimize the likelihood of water damage.
5. Turn off, unplug, and store away your coffee maker, toaster oven, microwave, and other utilities.
6. In the case that a hurricane or comparable natural disaster should strike last-minute, always keep enough



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emergency supplies on-site for yourself and your employees. This should include: three-day supplies of canned goods and water, a comprehensive First-Aid kit and basic tool kit, a battery-operated radio and flashlights with extra batteries, and (if possible and within your budget) a spare generator.

## **Secure your data**

Your law firm is entrusted with various crucial pieces of client information. Of course, it is imperative that you take every measure to protect it – particularly in inclement weather. Even beyond your due diligence to clients, it is crucial that you maintain the integrity of your records by ensuring that every piece of data is accounted for. Luckily, there are certain game-changing steps you can take to ensure that your data is protected.

1. If your firm has a wide array of paper files and insufficient time to digitize the information prior to the hurricane or natural disaster, your best bet is to store all files in waterproof containers.
2. Any duplicate paper documents should ideally be stored in waterproof containers at an offsite location to minimize the likelihood that any information is permanently lost due to water damage.
3. We've saved the best, most crucial step for last: be proactive and transfer your firm's information to cloud-based [practice management software](#). If your firm is still relying on paper documentation or servers exclusively, we strongly advise you to look into [cloud-based options](#).

## **Be ready and stay safe**

Time periods consisting of heightened inclement weather risks should not be approached with wishful thinking: of course, we all hope for the best, and chances are that your firm will either be untouched or unscathed by a hurricane or other natural disaster. However, no one has ever been sorry for being safe, and there are various firm-saving steps you can take to ensure that your practice, employees, and data are fully equipped to withstand a storm.

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