



Topic: Evacuation, Getting Out

Pay attention to an order to 'evacuate.' Hundreds of people lost their lives by not heeding evacuation warnings issued prior to the arrival of Hurricane Katrina.

Here's how to get out alive

Ships sink and buildings burn. Hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods take their toll. When first it happens, however, people refuse to believe the seriousness of the situation. They waste time before evacuating and risk their lives.

After the 9/11 attacks, many survivors waited six minutes before attempting to leave the buildings. When people are told to leave before a hurricane or flood, most waste valuable time checking with four or more sources before deciding what to do, according to a 2001 study.

People caught in disasters tend to fall into three categories: 10 percent to 15 percent are calm and act quickly and effectively. About 15 percent weep, scream, or otherwise impede evacuation. The rest do almost nothing. They are “stunned and bewildered” say psychologists quoted in *Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine*.



- ✚ Mental rehearsal vastly improves people's responses to disasters, according to the *National Institute of Standards and Technology*.
- ✚ People who obey fire drills and read safety diagrams on airplanes have programmed their brains to escape. They should also mentally rehearse.
- ✚ In a skyscraper, move toward the best exit immediately in an emergency. Keep flat shoes on hand, move quickly and calmly.
- ✚ In airplane evacuation, don't stop for your carry-on. Leave immediately.
- ✚ In an office building or factory, know your emergency exit plan. Don't check with the boss first, get out.