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Virginia Homeowners Handbook: Helping Homeowners Prepare for Hurricanes and other Natural Hazards

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Virginia Homeowners Handbook: Helping Homeowners Prepare for Hurricanes and other Natural Hazards

By [Jon Cawley \(jcawley@odu.edu\)](mailto:jcawley@odu.edu)

With hurricane season in full swing — and major storms currently barreling across the Atlantic Ocean — the threat is palpable to communities from Florida north along the eastern seaboard.

Hampton Roads has weathered many storms, but the 2017 hurricane season has reached far beyond the norm with the destruction wrought in southeast Texas by Hurricane Harvey, the catastrophic impact felt in the Caribbean islands by Hurricane Irma — the strongest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded - and now by Hurricane Maria, even as Hurricane Jose churns up the Atlantic coast toward New England.

And with just less than half of September remaining, the theoretical high point of hurricane season, there is likely more to come. In fact, a storm crossing the eastern Atlantic this week was just upgraded to hurricane status and may make U.S. landfall early next week.

To help homeowners understand the threat, how best to mitigate damage and what to do after the storm passes, researchers from Old Dominion University's Resilience Collaborative prepared the Virginia Homeowners Handbook.

The handbook's creation was supported by the University, the Virginia Sea Grant and the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. It was authored by former graduate student Kaitlin Giles under the supervision of Michelle Covi, an assistant professor of practice in the Ocean, Earth and Atmospheric Sciences Department at Old Dominion University and a Virginia Sea Grant extension partner; and Wie Yusuf, an associate professor in the School of Public Service at Old Dominion University. Yusuf is chair of the ODU Resilience Collaborative steering committee and leads a university-wide, interdisciplinary initiative pursuing engaged research and practice in the area of resilience.

Virginia homeowners are introduced, through the handbook, to natural hazards, and provided information needed to prepare for these events. The handbook describes hazards such as hurricanes, nor'easters, floods, and tornadoes, and includes information that will allow homeowner's to protect themselves, their families, and their property through the preparation, mitigation, evacuation, insurance, and recovery processes.

Given the current storm threat, two of the most pertinent handbook sections cover "Protecting Yourself and Your Family" and "Protecting Your Property."

The "Protecting Your Property Section" includes sections on creating wind and rain resistance, window and door coverings, trees, property drainage, safe rooms, electrical and power issues, flooded basements, alternate power sources, licensed contractors and hazard mitigation assistance program.



Wie Yusuf



Michelle Covi

Read more [here](https://sites.wp.odu.edu/VAHH/protecting-your-property/) (https://sites.wp.odu.edu/VAHH/protecting-your-property/).

The "Protecting Yourself and Your Family" section covers: emergency supplies; evacuation kit components; evacuation planning; emergency notification systems; preparations before a coastal storm; evacuation procedures for hurricanes and other storm events; preparedness, safety and evacuation procedures for a flood; preparedness and safety procedures for a tornado; and after the disaster guidance. Read more [here](https://sites.wp.odu.edu/VAHH/protecting-yourself-and-your-family/) (https://sites.wp.odu.edu/VAHH/protecting-yourself-and-your-family/).

"While it is never possible to eliminate all damage from a natural disaster, you as a homeowner can take action and implement many small and cost-effective steps that could significantly lower your risk," the handbook states. "Mother Nature can be intense. Your family and home deserve the protection that only you can provide."

The full handbook may be accessed at the [Virginia Homeowner's Handbook for Natural Hazards website](https://sites.wp.odu.edu/VAHH/protecting-yourself-and-your-family/) (https://sites.wp.odu.edu/VAHH/protecting-yourself-and-your-family/).

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