



Hurricane Florence Frequently Asked Questions

What can I do to prepare for the storm?

Have a [hurricane preparedness plan](#) in place. And don't be without water: store one gallon of water per person per day, for 3 to 7 days, with your [emergency preparedness](#) kit. Consider storing more water for children, nursing mothers, sick people, and pets. Options for [emergency water supplies](#) include purchasing commercially bottled water, or, preparing your own containers of water at home. If the latter, thoroughly clean the containers – water that is not commercially bottled should be replaced every six months.

Is it safe to drink tap water during the storm, even if the power goes out?

Yes. If your water service has not been disrupted, it is safe to drink the tap water as usual, even if the power is out.

However, if there is a water service disruption, you will be notified when service is restored and may be advised to boil your water for a 24-hour period or more.

Knowing that communications options may be limited during the storm, if there is a water disruption, OWASA will share updates in multiple ways: by email to affected customers for whom we have email addresses, with local media, on www.owasa.org, on Twitter @OWASA1, and when safe to do so, with notices to customer's homes.

Do you think there will be any water outages?

Depending on the severity of the storm, it is possible that water and wastewater services may be disrupted; for example, if an uprooted tree hits a water pipe. OWASA encourages community members to be prepared. Have a [hurricane plan](#) in place and don't be without water: store one gallon of water per person per day, for 3 to 7 days, with your [emergency preparedness](#) kit. Consider storing more water for children, nursing mothers, sick people, and pets.

What is OWASA doing to prepare for the storm?

OWASA is preparing to mitigate hurricane impacts on the community's water and wastewater system. For example, we are clearing paths to critical pumps and manholes in case we require immediate access to such sites, and storing extra fuel for generators at treatment plants in case of a power outage. In case water or wastewater service is affected due to infrastructure damage or other circumstances, OWASA will work in emergency operations mode.

If my water service is not working, how long will it take OWASA to fix it?

OWASA will work to restore service promptly but staff and community safety is our top priority. Heavy flooding, downed trees, road closures or other barriers may prevent us from accessing some areas we serve. As soon as it's safe to do so, we will restore service and notify customers as quickly as possible.

If my water is not working, can I send water down my sink?

Yes, you can send water down the sink.

If my water is not working, can I flush my toilet?

In the event of a water outage, if you flush your toilet, the existing water that was in the tank behind the toilet seat will not refill. A toilet can only be flushed if there is water in the tank for flushing. You might consider having extra water available, for example, by filling your bathtub, and refilling the back of your toilet tank with water each time you want to flush.

What if I see a broken water main or manhole overflowing?

If you see a broken water main or overflowing manhole in the street, avoid the area and report the emergency by calling 911.

I'm scheduled to move this week; will OWASA be connecting my new water/sewer account on the scheduled date?

The safety of our staff and community is our priority. If travel conditions are not safe, our staff may not be available to start an account on a date scheduled for this week.

I'm scheduled to pay my bill this week. What happens during the hurricane?

Depending on the trajectory of the hurricane, OWASA may begin to operate in emergency operations mode on Thursday or Friday morning. If we revert to this mode, regular customer services such as bill payments and system hook-ups will be suspended until we return to normal operations. During the emergency event, no customers will have their water service turned off due to non-payment of an outstanding bill.

Will my auto draft take place on schedule? What about leak notifications and site visits?

Scheduled auto-drafts will continue if conditions permit. Leak notifications and troubleshooting site visits will be suspended during the emergency.

I live in an apartment that does not have the water account in my name, how can I receive alerts?

All community members are encouraged to sign up for [Orange County's emergency alerts](#).

How can I receive updates from OWASA?

OWASA will share updates regularly about our operations status and any service interruptions by email to affected customers for whom we have email addresses, with local media, on our website at www.owasa.org, and on Twitter [@OWASA1](https://twitter.com/OWASA1). Community members are also encouraged to sign up for [Orange County's emergency alerts](#).