

It's that time of year again: hurricane season. The season officially opens on May 15th. That is when the [National Hurricane Center \(NHC\)](#) starts sending out public advisories about hurricanes.

After experiencing four hurricanes in southern Baja, I have come to be an expert on how to prepare. And also having grown up in New Jersey where hurricanes come every year like clock work, I take every hurricane warning seriously. And I have perfected my preparations to make sure that the high-maintenance Diva that I am remains comfortable.

We lived through hurricanes Juliette, Ignacio and Marty in our old house two blocks back from the beach. We were on vacation for Ignacio (a non-starter).

Two years ago over Labor Day, hurricane John wailed through. We had been in our new house right on the beach only nine months. Built to the standards of California for earthquakes, and Florida for hurricanes, we were confident the house would sail through unscathed, and it did. But we still lost power.

What I learned about hurricanes in Mexico:

They are just as unpredictable, and dangerous as anywhere else. But the damage they do to infrastructure is immense, and far-reaching. And being without electricity can be a five-day ordeal. We all forget how much we depend on electricity. After hurricane Juliette in September of 2001, I have learned a few things that served me well last year.

As soon as you get the warnings:

1. Charge up your tooth brush
2. Make bread
3. Make a chocolate cake or brownies
4. Grind a week's worth of coffee
5. Make sure the Itty Bitty Book Light has fresh batteries
6. Buy butane candle lighters to light the stove and grill

Just before Juliette hit, I was baking a birthday cake for my beloved. Not too long afterward the power went off, and stayed that way for FIVE days. We still had propane. So every morning we had freshly brewed coffee and chocolate mint cake. It takes the sting out of being without a shower, and air conditioning. And of course the calories don't count. It was a weather emergency. We boiled water on the stove and poured it directly into the basket of the coffee maker, a little slow, but we had dark, rich Italian roast every morning. We actually hand-squeezed the grapefruits using the electric juicer parts and elbow grease. Needless to say I was exhausted by the ordeal of five days without electricity.

Oh yes, you should as soon as you start getting weather warnings:

1. Buy extra water for drinking and cooking.
2. Get ice, candles and batteries
3. Fill the car with gas.
4. Buy an old fashioned phone that needs no electricity
5. Make sure your flashlights work
6. Fill important prescriptions
7. And visit the ATM

Usually the grocery stores and restaurants will get power and you will need cash to buy things, the ATMs, and credit card machines, needing internet lines, were down for the entire time we were without power.

After watching the disaster of Katrina I have done this:

1. scanned our passports and residency visas and emailed them to my kids
2. scanned other important docs and credit cards and emailed those as well
3. charged the cell phones and camera and sealed them in plastic
4. sent emails to family with emergency numbers and likely places we would end up if we had to flee the house

I also made a survival pack. I packed all of the important documents in Ziploc baggies.

Gathered sneakers, medicines, bottled water some dog food, doggies collar and leash, some clean undies for me, nylon windbreakers, flashlights, keys and our wallets, and put them all in a canvas bag at the bedside. Now that we are on the beach, we may have to cut and run in a flash. I wanted to have our life in a bag at hand.

After Juliette. We went to town in search of working phones or Internet service so we could reassure our family that we were safe. Juliette was a category 5 hurricane. Because it was a few weeks after the September 11th

attacks, no other events made the news in the U.S. When friends and family contacted my daughter saying they hadn't heard from us, she assumed we had gone away for the weekend since it was my beloved's birthday).

That is why we now inform them in advance of impending hurricanes. So they will worry appropriately and search for us if we don't make contact.

We have a nice saltwater pool, gas stove and lots of friends. Our house became the hub in the days following the hurricane. A little bit of a party atmosphere prevailed.

Friends would come for a shower. They could fill a bucket or two and stand in the pool house shower and wash their hair and douse themselves from the bucket. And of course by having a pool we had the luxury of using the "bucket flush" method to flush the toilets.

And we could spend hours neck deep in the pool tepid Margaritas in hand.

After the shame of Katrina, the world watched, and Mexico, especially La Paz, learned about emergency preparedness. CFE (electric company) and TELMEX (telephone trucks) with cherry pickers and other emergency equipment were gassed up and deployed along the highways for easy access to damaged areas.

The first area to get power back is downtown. Next comes the poorer neighborhoods, then the rest of us. This makes sense. Once the restaurants are open, those of us with cars and cash can go have a good meal at lunch time and a cold drink. We have the wherewithal to take care of ourselves. The poorer areas need the government assistance.

We would head into town every day to do just that, have a meal, sit in air conditioned comfort, have a cracklin' cold beer, buy more emergency Tuna...ok, we did grill steaks.

But, for a day or two after a big downpour we can be cut off from town, by floods, so we live on what we can boil or grill, and tuna.

The funny part of the last few hurricanes is that our cranky Internet service stayed up throughout the storm until we lost power. My friend Melanie that lives an hour south of here right on the Pacific beach and I kept giving each other updates, she was describing the storm as it passed her before it hit us. Melanie and I shared recipes, and discussed what we were serving the hurricane party crowd.

Last year we had a hurricane that was more like a giant thunderstorm, it came in the daytime. I pulled a nice chair into my luxurious bathroom with the best view of the beach and watched our normally flat bay, have real surf. Great fun!

When it all got too much, the hand juicing, no hair dryer, no internet, more tuna for dinner, I would simply remember a few of my favorite things...oh, that's Julie Andrews. What I would do was remind myself that this would end soon, and I would think of the women of Afghanistan and feel truly blessed.

Hurricane season, National Hurricane Center, Southern Baja, Mexico, Baja, La Paz, Todos Santos, Mexico Real Estate, La Paz Real Estate, Todos Santos Real Estate, Southern Baja, Baby Boomers, Boomers in Mexico, Living in Mexico, Mexico Retirement, Retirement Destinations