

Severe Weather/Hurricane FAA FACT SHEET

The Federal Aviation Administration closely monitors forecasted hurricanes and severe weather events and prepares FAA facilities and equipment to withstand storm damage. We prepare and protect air traffic control facilities along the projected storm path so we can quickly resume operations after the hurricane passes. Enabling flights to resume quickly is critical to support disaster relief efforts.

Air carriers make decisions about their flight schedules. The FAA does not direct or advise air carriers about cancelling flights.

Airports in the area of potential impact make decisions about their facilities. The FAA does not direct or advise airports to open or close.

The air carriers and military evacuate their aircraft from the projected hurricane path well before the hurricane makes landfall or winds reach hurricane strength. General aviation aircraft owners decide how to handle their aircraft, and generally stop flying before winds get too strong.

FAA control towers in hurricane-prone areas are designed and built to sustain hurricane force winds. Each control tower has a maximum wind sustainability. When the winds approach that level, controllers evacuate the tower cabs. They may remain in the building on duty in secure lower level, and are ready to go back to work as soon as the storm passes.

Typically, flights stop long before the winds reach hurricane force. However, we maintain air traffic control radar coverage and provide service to flights as long as possible.

After the storm, we assess damage to FAA facilities and navigational aids. We set priorities to quickly re-establish critical equipment. If local employees are not available, teams of technicians and engineers from other locations travel to the affected areas to assess damage and begin restoring equipment and facilities.

We protect communications equipment and navigational aids to the greatest extent possible. As the storm approaches, we disable airport surveillance radar antennas to allow them to spin freely, minimizing potential wind damage. This limits damage to the antenna motors and allows radar coverage to resume quickly after the storm passes.

We cover equipment inside air traffic control towers to prevent damage if windows or roofs leak. Long range air traffic radars and radios are designed to withstand extreme weather conditions.

FAA technicians test engine generators and ensure they are fully fueled so they can power equipment and facilities if commercial power fails. We frequently switch to engine generator power before the storm in anticipation of commercial power failures.

FAA employees are given the opportunity to protect their families and property. Employees remain on duty on a volunteer basis, and we schedule shifts to allow employees time to protect and prepare their families and property.