

Precautions for a home owner facing a natural disaster

by Dave Barry

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As you are probably aware, especially if you are one of those people whose major appliances are still up in trees, South Florida recently experienced a bad hurricane. So today, as a South Florida homeowner, I want to review some of the lessons that I believe can be useful not only in hurricanes, but in other natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes and children's birthday parties.

The most important precaution, for a homeowner facing a natural disaster, is:

1. SELL YOUR HOUSE BEFORE THE NATURAL DISASTER OCCURS.

Trust me, this simple step will save you a LOT of trouble. My wife, Beth, and I are still kicking ourselves for not doing it. When we heard that Hurricane Andrew was headed directly at us, we rushed around doing things like putting patio furniture inside, securing doors, etc. What a pair of morons. We should have used that time to sell the house to somebody, and let HIM worry about the patio furniture.

Granted, at that point there probably was not a large pool

of qualified buyers available, so we might not have gotten absolute top dollar:

Us: So, do we have a deal here?

Prospective Buyer: Let me get this straight. I get your house, and you get...my BIKE?

Us (driving a hard bargain): AND your skateboard.

Prospective Buyer: I have to ask my mom.

If you're foolish enough to keep your home, you should definitely:

2. SEARCH THE HOME FOR WORKING DRUM SETS AND DESTROY THEM WITH AN AX.

We weathered the hurricane in the home of some friends who are normally sane people, but who had allowed their 11-year-old son, Trey, to purchase a used drum set THE DAY BEFORE THE HURRICANE. Here's the thing about drums: They don't need electricity. They are designed to function perfectly during a natural disaster. This meant that at 2 a.m., when the power went out and the night was black and the wind was shrieking and the eye was approaching and we were sitting in the darkness, rigid with tension, terrified about what was about to happen, fearful that the house might BANG BANG BANG BANG WHAMMA WHAMMA WHAMMA OH MIGOD

WHAT'S HAPPEN -NING?!?!?

Ha ha! It was only young Trey, sensing somehow that this was a superb time to practice. So we all had a good laugh, and there is a strong chance that some of our hearts will eventually resume beating.

3. DESTROY YOUR GARDEN HOSE.

Few people realize how dangerous a garden hose can be. I found out while attempt-ing



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to siphon gasoline into a chain saw so I could locate our house, which was somewhere

inside a mass of fallen trees approximately the size of Cambodia.

We had obtained the chain saw from these men who sprang up all over the place, mushroom-like, immediately after the storm. They were selling truckloads of power-ful, potentially lethal chain saws to South Florida home-owners whose experience with dangerous tools was pretty much limited to corkscrews. I watched a TV reporter ask one of the chain-saw sellers if he had any Safety Tips for the viewing audience. The man thought for a second, then said, quote: "Chain saw don't know the difference between a LAIG and a LAWG."

Bearing that Safety Tip in mind, I unpacked my new chain saw and determined, using mechanical aptitude, that you had to put gasoline in it. I decided to siphon some out of my wife's car. My wife's car is her pride and joy, and it spent the hurricane inside the garage; a tree landed on the garage, but the car was undamaged. So I cut off a length of garden hose, and I stuck it down the car's gas pipe, and -- I bet this NEVER happens to criminals -- it got stuck in there. When I tried to pull it back out, it broke. Which meant there was four feet of alien garden hose somewhere deep inside my wife's car. And you just

KNOW the mechanic is going to tell me that the only way to fix it is to replace the engine, perhaps several times.

This is why you need Nation Guard troops in disaster areas. I needed a National Guard troop to come into my garage right then and shoot me in the head. That would have spared me from having to go into the house to tell my wife that on this day -- a day when our trees had been knocked down and our roof damaged and our other car bashed up by roof tiles and our entire neighborhood strewn with debris and our roads blocked and our power knocked out for what looked like several weeks-- that on this day, the first thing I had done, the first step on the long road to recovery, was to screw up her car.

When I explain this to the mechanic, he'd better not laugh at me. I'm going to have the chain saw running by then.

XXX

I want to stress that my family and I are fine. But a lot of people in South Florida aren't. If you want to do something, please send a check to the National Disaster Relief Fund. You can mail it to your local Red Cross Chapter, or P.O. Box 37243, Washington, D.C. 20013. Or call (800) 842-2200 and put it on your credit card. People down her really need you help. I'm not making this up.

Being a Freshman: 'The College Experience

by Alicia Hartman

The Collegian

Here we are--COLLEGE. Away from small hick towns or the fast lane of the city. Freedom from high school and the 'rules' of home. We're living on our own now--INDEPENDENCE.

So is college everything you thought it would be? Remember the day you moved into the DORM? How about that two hour workout going up and down twenty-nine flights of stairs to get everything up to your room? (If you had a very BIG room at home, you probably feel like you're living in a closet now.) Then you meet 'the roommate.' Not only do you have to live in a closet now, but you have to get to know that 'other' person. I hope everything is working out well and you're getting along.

Living in a dorm is definitely an experience. I swear, some people NEVER sleep! Hopefully, everyone on your floor has their allotted shower-time down. It's difficult to maintain a daily cleansing routine when there are more people waiting than showers available. The late night 'bonding' sessions are the best. Maybe we should start them a little earlier though, so we can get to bed.

Okay. Now that we have all of

our belongings hanging out the window because we can't find a place to put them, it's time to attend ORIEN-TATION activities. (I hope you all attended sessions that were beneficial to you.) Play Fair was the best. Where else could you meet people born on the same day as you, form a big circle sitting on each other's knees, and 'back-dance?' It only happens once a year and can be found at

classes, because she didn't know where she was going. Come on, admit it. I KNOW there're a few of you out there. I even had to give you directions! Isn't it hard to remember if your teachers have a 'prof' or 'doctor' in front of their name? You don't want to insult anyone. Heck, I can't even remember my teachers' last names.

Has everyone been able to open their MAILBOXES? The

Mom and Dad having to drag them out of bed. Is the 'college experience' the social life? Some people associate college with education and some people associate college with parties. Interesting. Is the experience living on our own? Literally, we are living on our own without parental guid-ance. Technically, however, we are living by ourselves, supported by our parents' money. Isn't being

freshman. Reported on location from Penn State-Behrend, "the small college with the BIG degree." Sorry, I couldn't help it.

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"Exactly what is the college experience? I think for some people it's the ability to get up in time to make their 8:00 a.m. class, without Mom and Dad having to drag them out of bed."

Erie Hall. A round of hard, hand-slapping applause to our orientation leaders. (If you upperclass-men wouldn't have been so excited and clapped so much, your hands wouldn't have hurt Sunday morning.) I want a standing ovation!!

CLASSES--what an adventure. I hope I wasn't the only stupid one who had to carry a map with her the first week of

combination is easy to remember, but I didn't realize you needed a college degree to open the box itself. For those of you who still can't get yours open, keep practicing; you'll get the feel of it.

There's just one last thing I'd like to comment on. Exactly what is the 'college experience?' I think for some people, it's the ability to get up in time to make their 8:00 a.m. class, without

'independent' easy? The day we are 'independent' we won't need Mom and Dad's money. I don't know about you, but I on the other hand, don't foresee independence in my future for at least a good four or five years. If anyone finds the 'college experience,' please let me know where I can make an appointment.

That's the scoop on college life from the perspective of a college

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