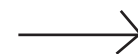


Brenes Family Sandy Story

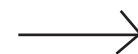


The normal



I was well aware of the storm approaching that Thursday morning. All news channels were on alert. Like every other morning, I cooked breakfast for my family. The school bus was right on schedule. My husband and I were on the 8:05 red light. The few clients that showed up to my working station had something different to say about Sandy. Some were careless, others concerned, but I was completely distraught as they went on and on. You never know what to expect with natural disasters. My 7 and 12 year old will have a fright and all they will need and want is my husband and I so I had to be fearless. I bought groceries, things that I thought we could possibly need before it was all gone.

Our house



Although there was an immediate evacuation for our area I knew our house would be able to withstand a flood of 6' high. The house sits on 6' reinforced concrete columns. Not only does the wood panels that sit on the facade helps the home keep cool during hot summer but would also help the windows against wind forces. All that was left to do was to cover 2 or 3 windows and the doors of course. The House was very durable so my hopes were high.

Our community



We love our community. It's been getting a lot of media coverage in recent months for its hip restaurants and shops. The entire neighborhood is in Zone A which unfortunately required immediate evacuation by a certain time. All I could think of was the hurricane approaching and our community. I got home faster than ever that day. I packed a few bags right before the kids arrived from school. My husband then came home and the four of us helped our neighbors secure their doors and windows as long as we could and fast. If the news casters were right about the gravity of Sandy it would cost major flood damages. Red Hook is near the water and flat. We were on the road sooner than expected. Nevertheless getting out of Red Hook was a nightmare. Many panicked and others were still careless. I figured it was due to last year's panic and no damage was made. As we got closer to the major streets we noticed the traffic lights were not working. Chaos!

Sandy



It took hours before we got to my sister's home. She lives on Zone C so it appeared convenient to settle there for the meantime. The east coast was on hold; no school, no work, no lights, no water. There was absolutely no damage in my sisters perimeter at least not yet. We gathered in the living room uncertain of what to do. We made sure all electronic devices were fully charged. We were ready for the worse. That night was calm at least in our area. Later that next day we witness extreme wind forces. It felt like the roof was going to rip off. The lights flickered a few times, and the trees swayed. It was terrifying. Luckily there were no enormous trees in the surrounding area. It was for sure nothing we've ever experienced. Zone A had to be dreadful. I could not begin to imagine Red Hook; the children's school, their music studio, our favorite café, Grunilda's bakery in the corner, the shops, the elderly lady that refused to leave her home, the huge Whole Foods market two blocks down, and the flood damages.

Aftermath

My expectations of our homes could not have been more accurate. Our family was certainly ecstatic and relieved. On the other hand the neighborhood was chaotic. There were appliances lined up, an endless of garbage bags and tons of families devastated. We quickly unloaded and helped our neighbors.