

Preparing for Hurricanes

When preparing for hurricane season and potential emergencies, the needs of all members of a household should be considered. If a household includes a young child, senior citizen or a person with a disability or severe illness, special steps to assist them may be necessary and should be incorporated into all emergency planning. Pets require special handling. Pet owners should research pet boarding facilities now within a certain radius of where they may evacuate, since animals may not be welcome in all shelters or hotels.

Equally important, businesses should be prepared with emergency plans in place to stay afloat. Putting a disaster plan in motion will improve the likelihood that your company may recovery from a disaster. Ready Business (www.ready.gov/business) outlines measures business owners and managers can take now to start getting *ready*.

The start of hurricane season is also the time to consider flood insurance coverage - most homeowners insurance does not cover flood damage. Not only are homes and businesses in hurricane-prone states at risk for flooding, but inland flooding is common in nearby states. To assess flood risk for a home or find a local agent selling national flood insurance, visit www.floodsmart.gov or call toll-free at 1-888-379-9531.

As the season kicks off, knowing the four terms that meteorologists use when forecasting tropical weather may also help you navigate to safety.

- A **hurricane watch** is an announcement that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are possible within the specified coastal area. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane watch is issued 48 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.
- A **hurricane warning** is an announcement that hurricane conditions (sustained winds of 74 mph or higher) are expected somewhere within the specified coastal area. Because hurricane preparedness activities become difficult once winds reach tropical storm force, the hurricane warning is issued 36 hours in advance of the anticipated onset of tropical-storm-force winds.
- A **tropical storm watch** is an announcement that tropical storm conditions (sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph) are possible within the specified coastal area within 48 hours.
- A **tropical storm warning** is an announcement that tropical storm conditions (sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph) are expected somewhere within the specified coastal area within 36 hours.

With the ongoing recovery efforts from the tornadoes and response to areas with flooding, we are reminded that everyone should be prepared to address all hazards, including hurricanes, tornadoes and inland flooding.

For more preparedness information, please visit www.fema.gov and www.Ready.gov. For the latest information on weather, <http://www.noaawatch.gov/themes/tropical.php>