



For Immediate Release

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Hurricane Season 2019

Make Plans NOW to Save Lives and Property

(PORTSMOUTH, VA – May 30, 2019) – The 2019 Atlantic Hurricane Season is off to yet another early start, but weather officials in the U.S. are saying it should be a normal year. Hurricane Season begins June 1 with the peak coming in September. Hurricanes are severe tropical storms, massive storm systems that form over the open water. Threats from hurricanes include high winds, heavy rainfall, storm surge, coastal and inland flooding, rip currents and tornadoes. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration last week predicted nine to 15 named storms. Four to eight major hurricanes with 111 mph winds or higher.

Hurricane Background:

A hurricane is a severe tropical storm that forms in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico or eastern Pacific Ocean. Hurricanes are classified into five categories, based on wind speed and potential to cause damage:

- Category One – Winds 74-95 mph
- Category Two – Winds 96-110 mph
- Category Three – Winds 111-129 mph
- Category Four – Winds 130-156 mph
- Category Five – Winds greater than 157 mph

Familiarize yourself with the different types of storms and the terminology associated with these extreme weather events. Monitor local news television and radio stations for storm updates and directions provided by local emergency management officials.

Are you ready if a hurricane strikes our coast? According to emergency management officials with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and local officials, residents should be preparing for hurricanes now. In addition to putting together a hurricane emergency kit, experts recommend that you inventory everything in your home so that you will have accurate records in case you have to file an insurance claim. Resources are readily available to help residents prepare for these serious storms. Find assistance on making a family emergency plan and how to prepare for a hurricane on the City of Portsmouth website at <http://www.portsmouthva.gov/247/Emergency-Management> and the VDEM website at <http://www.vaemergency.gov/>.

Planning and preparing before a hurricane strikes can help you manage the impact of high winds and floodwaters. VDEM recommends you take the following steps to keep you and your family safe while protecting your home and property:

Bring loose, lightweight objects indoors
Trim or remove damaged trees and limbs
Clear clogged areas of debris to prevent water damage
Keep portable generators outside, 20 ft. away from house

Anchor objects like grills and propane tanks
Secure loose rain gutters and downspouts
Purchase a portable generator
Document the condition of your home before the storm

Floods are the most common natural hazards. Anywhere it can rain, it can flood. And the area's rainfalls have become more intense and frequent over the past four decades. It doesn't have to be raining for flooding to occur. Flooding can come from storm surge, high tides, and wind direction. Know your flood zone before the storm arrives. Visit <https://www.vaemergency.gov/hurricane-evacuation-zone-lookup/> to locate your community.

Before the Storm – Interior Preparations:

- Verify that vital records are in a safe storage area. Files, records and storage cabinets might be wrapped in plastic for moisture protection. If necessary, temporarily relocate records to a safe storage facility off-site.
- Inventory hurricane emergency supplies and restock if necessary.
- Clear all desk and table tops of small loose items.
- Secure first floor doorways with sandbags, duct tape or heavy plastic to protect interior from possible flooding.
- Disconnect all electrical appliances and equipment.
- Box or place any loose papers, books, hanging plants, etc., in desk drawers or storage cabinets.
- Close and lock all windows. Draw the blinds or drapes.
- Secure adequate cash to operate for several days.
- If you are advised to evacuate, lock the doors when you leave.

Exterior Preparations:

- Secure your property. Install hurricane shutters over glass doors and windows or install protective material such as plywood (at least ½ inch thick). Make sure the plywood is flush against the wall and tight – gaps will allow wind to enter.
- Tie down or bring indoors any objects that might be blown around by hurricane winds (outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans, display racks, signs and any other loose objects that are normally left outside).
- Remove all outdoor signs, particularly those that swing or might cause damage during strong winds.
- Secure all items that cannot be brought inside.
- Remove antennas and loose objects from the roof.
- Keep trees and shrubs well-trimmed.
- Ensure that all vehicles are serviced and fueled. Determine where they can be stored during the storm.

After the Storm:

After a hurricane or tropical storm, stay alert for extended rainfall and flooding, even after the hurricane or tropical storm has weakened.

- Stay away from flood water. Drive only if absolutely necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges.
- Do not return to your home until local authorities say it is safe. After the hurricane and after flood waters recede, roads could be weakened and could collapse.
- Examine the exterior of the building and walls, floors, doors, staircases and windows to make sure that the building is not in danger of collapsing.
- Begin clean-up, document damages, and contact your insurance agent.

- Check for gas leaks. If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and get everyone outside quickly. Turn off the gas, using the outside main valve if you can, and call the gas company. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.
- If someone needs to be rescued, call professionals with the right equipment to help. Many people have been killed or injured trying to rescue others in flooded areas.
- Stay away from loose or downed power lines. Immediately report them to the power company, police or fire department.
- Use battery-powered lanterns or flashlights when examining buildings.
- Check for sewer and water pipe damage. If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and call a plumber. If water pipes are damaged, contact the water company and avoid using water from the tap.
- Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out. More information on food safety is available from the [American Red Cross](#).
- Open doors and windows to ventilate and dry the building.*

For more information on hurricane preparedness and other types of emergencies, visit <http://www.vaemergency.gov/> where you find downloadable forms, checklists, links to flood insurance information and more. Know the dangers of flooding. For details, visit www.GetFloodFluent.org

*Source: The Virginia Department of Emergency Management

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