

PRESS RELEASE

SMART PLANNING FOR HURRICANE SEASON

Richmond, May 24, 2009: Hurricane season officially began June 1 and continues through November 30. Start planning early to protect your families and property. If you live in an area threatened by storm surge – an EVACUATION ZONE – discuss evacuation plans with your family. Check with city or county officials to find out if your home is in an evacuation zone.

When making a family plan for any hazard, choose a place to call and a place to meet. Give all family members the name and phone number of someone outside your city or state. Anyone separated from the group should call that number to let others know where they are. Learn to use the American Red Cross "Safe and Well" Web site: disastersafe.redcross.org

Put an emergency supply kit together now. Refill and re-check supplies AFTER EVERY STORM. After the storm hits, you may be able to return home in a matter of days. But re-entry may take much longer, depending on storm damage. Because hurricanes are extremely dangerous and unpredictable, officials plan for storms to be one category worse than predicted. So should you.

- Learn evacuation routes BEFORE storm season. If possible, practice driving the route out of town ahead of time. Make sure you have a full tank of gas before you leave. Expect delays and longer drive-times than normal. **Just like any rush hour, traffic congestion in an evacuation is unavoidable.**
- An emergency supply kit includes: NOAA weather radio and batteries, flashlight and batteries, extra eye glasses, bottled water, non-perishable food, dry clothes, bedding, medications and copies of prescriptions, special products for babies, elderly and medically fragile family members, cash, credit cards, photo IDs, important documents and records, proof of residence and information your agent will require to process insurance claims.
- Make a checklist of preparations to be made before an evacuation and go over it with your family. Review it again when a storm is in the Gulf of Mexico.
- If you plan to stay in a hotel or motel, make reservations and confirm your reservations before you leave. If you plan to stay in a shelter, bring what you need to be comfortable, including bedding and toys for kids. Shelters will vary in what they offer evacuees.
- Prepare an emergency kit for your pets and a plan for how to care for them when you are on the road and in a shelter or motel. Do not leave your pets behind.

For more information on Hurricane Preparedness Week, see:

<http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/intro.shtml> or
http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/espanol/intro_espanol.shtml
www.Ready.gov and www.redcross.org.