Preparedness essential during Japan's typhoon season

Story and photo by Joe Schmitt, CFAY Public Affairs

Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) is preparing for typhoon season, which occurs in Japan from spring to fall. Typhoon season officially runs from June 1 through November 30.

Regardless of the season, everyday, the Sailors who work at the Naval Oceanography Antisubmarine Warfare Center (NOAC), Yokosuka are watching the forecast.

"We provide weather forecast services for CFAY and CFAS (Commander Fleet Activities Sasebo), and we also provide oceanography support to ships within the 7th Fleet AOR (area of responsibility)," said Aerographer's Mate 1st Class Travis Muth, NOAC public affairs officer.

When a typhoon starts to form, the Sailors at NOAC are some of the first people to see it.

"We provide a local weather forecast and also, based on how fast the storm is moving, we will provide TCCOR (Tropical Cyclone Condition of Readiness) recommendations for CFAY to set," said Muth. "We start at TCCOR IV and work our way down from III, II and I as the storm approaches Yokosuka."

There are four TCCOR levels and five other advisories. The highest level is TCCOR I with a threat of destructive winds of 50 knots or greater within 12 hours. TCCOR I advises residents to move fragile items away from all windows or cover them with plastic and tape windows. TCCOR II warns of destructive winds of 50 knots or greater within 24 hours. TCCOR III anticipates the same destructive winds within 48 hours, and TCCOR IV predicts destructive winds within 72 hours. Once TCCOR IV is declared, each command is responsible for completing a checklist to ensure that all relevant personnel are notified. TCCOR All Clear indicates that a threat of severe weather is over.

Tropical cyclones are more commonly called typhoons in the Pacific Ocean. Local weather information can be found via the Commander Fleet Activities website at www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka, or by tuning in to base informational channel 15 or weather channel 16.

"Destructive winds are sustained wind speeds of 50 knots or more and are one of the major concerns when a typhoon is forecast for the CFAY area. When TCCOR IV is announced that's when you want to start preparing," said CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. David Owen. "That's when you want to start tying down items that are outside that could get blown away. That's when you want to start getting supplies in case you don't have everything. Usually, a good rule of thumb is make sure you have enough to sustain yourself for 48 hours."

In a typical year, the Yokosuka area could be threatened by 8 to 10 typhoons, though not all those storms pass over the immediate area and they vary in strength. Service members and families are advised to be prepared for potential weather emergencies.

According to Commander Navy Installations Command (CNIC), To fully prepare, create one or more emergency kits that include enough supplies for at least three days. There are six basic items that should be included: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and items for medical conditions. Have one gallon of water per person, per day and non-perishable food.

Local maps, a family emergency plan and an all-hazards weather radio enable residents to respond to an emergency more quickly. Other essentials are dust masks, personal sanitation supplies such as moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties, according to the CNIC website.

According to the American Red Cross, the items should be stored in an easy-to carry container and kept in an area where they are easily accessible in the event of an emergency.

Possible containers include a large, covered trash container, a camping backpack or a duffle bag. Make sure every member of the family knows where the kit is. It is important to regularly evaluate the kit and its relevance to the threats in the area. Throw away and replace any expired or damaged medications, food or water.

According to Muth, excessive rain or a high sea state can also cause destruction during a typhoon.

"The winds from the storm drive the seas and can cause a high storm surge," said Muth. "A storm surge is a large wave or series of waves that are caused by large storms like typhoons. The waves and rain can cause flooding so that is also a concern during a storm."

Rain is the other major concern during typhoons. Cities are mostly paved with little area for rain water to seep into and spread out. This can cause flooding in well drained areas or places where it might not seem like water could accumulate.

The best way to be ready for typhoon season is to know and stay in contact with official sources like your chain of command, ombudsman, command websites and Facebook pages, the base commander's channel (Channel 15), Eagle 810 radio and the "cut and saves" provided here.

(Left) Forecast Duty Officer AG2 Steven Smith stands watch with AGAN Russell Chandler on the Naval Oceanography Antisubmarine Warfare Center Yokosuka watch floor April 25. Together they accomplish daily monitoring and updating the forecast for Yokosuka base.

Cut and save

Typhoon Condition Information

TCCOR Storm Watch - Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka for updates.

TCCOR IV - Essential personnel should be notified. Residents should obtain emergency supplies. Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka.

TCCOR III - Residents are advised to secure outdoor loose items. Fill vehicles and gas grill tanks. Ensure emergency kits are ready. Move items away from windows and ensure sufficient money and important documents are easily accessible. Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka.

TCCOR II - Secure outdoor items and all windows. Alert your commands' essential personnel. Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka.

TCCOR I - Residents should move fragile items away from all windows or cover them with plastic. Tape all windows. Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka.

TCCOR I Emergency - All personnel must stay indoors and away from windows. Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka.

TCCOR Recovery - Stay indoors while damage assessment and cleanup is accomplished. Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka.

TCCOR All Clear - Threat of sever weather is over. Stay tuned to channel 15, Eagle 810 radio, the CFAY website www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka and the CFAY Facebook page www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka.

This cut-and-save provides a brief description of each typhoon readiness level and the actions that should be taken in order to be more prepared. To fully prepare, create one or more emergency kits that include enough supplies for at least three days. There are six basic items that should be included: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools and items for medical conditions. Have one gallon of water per person, per day and non-perishable food. Local maps, a family emergency plan and an all-hazards weather radio enable residents to respond to an emergency more quickly.

Cut and save

Emergency Information cut and save

Cut and save

Emergency Information

Commander Fleet Activites Yokosuka (CFAY) and Negishi and Ikego Housing Detachment residents are advised to stay tuned to the following mediums for emergency information:

- CFAY Web Site: http://www.cnic.navy.mil/yokosuka
- CFAY Facebook page: http://www.Facebook.com/cfayokosuka
- CFAY Twitter page: http://twitter.com/cfay_yokosuka
- CFAY base Channel 15
- Eagle 810 AM Radio station
- A recorded weather message can be obtained by calling 243-5155.

The information provided will include but is not limited to notification of actions to take for severe weather and the unexpected or early dismissal of schools.

Cut and save

The above cut and save is a handy tool to help keep you up-to-date on important emergency information as it occurs. Post it at your work desk, on your refrigerator, in your car or anywhere you can get access to it quickly when needed.