

Are you really ready for hurricane season?

Hurricane season is now here! From June 1-Nov. 30 you should be prepared for heavy rain, road flooding, power outage and even property damage.

Did you know that hurricanes cause billions of dollars worth of damage every year to man-made fixtures as well as to natural surroundings such as trees and shrubbery. These storms can also change an area's landscape, resulting in hills, roads, and trails washing away.

Experts are predicting 16 to 18 storms this season. Five will be hurricanes, seven landfalls, and two or three of the hurricanes will be major landfalls for the U.S.

Hurricanes like Bonnie, Julia, Nicole, Shary, and Walter, just to name a few, are not to be taken lightly! If you are new to the area, it's very easy to fall victim to the "how bad can a storm be" syndrome. So the question to you is: "Are you ready?"

Some helpful tips on how you can make sure you and your family are prepared for this year's hurricane season are:

- Know, ahead of time, where you will go in case you are told to evacuate. Choose more than one location, and make sure you notify family and friends where you are going and how they can contact you.

- Make sure you have an alternate route to your evacuation location. Major roads may be jammed with traffic or rerouted, so take a map!

- There are six basic items you should stock in your home: water, food, first aid supplies, clothing and bedding, tools, and emergency supplies. Keep the items that you would most likely need during an evacuation in an easy to carry container, such as a plastic or vinyl container with a lid; a backpack; or a duffel bag.

- Have on hand: plywood, nails, screws, and other materials to cover your windows and protect your home. The winter months are a perfect time to purchase and cut to fit the plywood you need.

- Know how to cut off the utilities to your home. Write down the instructions. Make sure all family members

know how to turn off and secure the utilities. Turn off electricity at the main panel.

- If you use LP gas, valve off the tanks. If your house has a water shut-off valve, turn it off. If you have a dock or pier, shut off the water to it also. If your home or pier does not have accessible water shut-off, have a plumber install one for you.

- During hurricane season, it is important that you make arrangements to take care of your pets. Leaving them home after an evacuation is not the answer. Begin crate training early, as this will reduce the stress on your dog/cat when they must be crated for a length of time.

- Look into pet friendly hotels, motels, shelters where you may seek refuge. If you stay with friends or family, be sure your pets are also welcome. This will save you a lot of time when time is essential.

For additional information, stop by NAS Meridian Emergency Operation Center in Building 255, Suite 249.

-- From EOC staff