

City of Fort Walton Beach Hurricane Info

www.fwb.org

August 2015

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Hurricane Season Begins June 1st



Hurricane season for the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico region runs from June 1st until the end of November. While last year was another quiet year for us along the Emerald Coast, it is important for everyone to prepare for this hurricane season. You

should begin preparations and purchase those items you need in the event of an emergency and begin storm proofing your property now. You don't want to wait until a storm enters the Gulf of Mexico.

Now is also the time to go over your disaster plan with your family; make sure you know your evacuation route should you plan to leave the area; and provide a neighbor/friend with your contact information should you leave.

The City encourages all residents to be safe before, during and after a storm. Inside this newsletter you will find more helpful tips and information for this hurricane season.

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Disaster Supply Kit

At the start of hurricane season, it is important to assemble a disaster supplies kit. Store these supplies in sturdy, easy to carry containers. Keep important documents in a waterproof container. A disaster supplies kit should include the following:

- At least a 3-day supply of water (one gallon per person per day)
- Food that won't spoil/can opener
- One change of clothing and shoes per person per day
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person and pillow
- First-aid kit with bandages, antiseptic

wipes, antibacterial ointment, tweezers, adhesive tape, etc.

- Prescriptions
- Battery powered portable radio, flashlight and extra batteries
- Emergency tools
- Credit Card and cash
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members
- Personal hygiene supplies/Sunscreen
- Other items needed on daily basis

Mission Statement

To enhance and protect the community by providing quality services.

Debris Removal Following a Storm

In the aftermath of a hurricane or tropical storm, there is one thing we can count on - debris that needs to be cleaned up and hauled away. Please do not do any preemptive cutting as a storm is approaching. Loose tree limbs can clog storm drains and become wind borne debris. General guidelines for separating storm debris in the City are: 1) Make two separate piles - one for vegetative debris (tree trunks, branches) and one for construction debris (shingles, lumber, etc.). Place the separate piles in the public right-of-way next to the street in front of your property. Only storm debris in the right-of-way will be collected. Storm debris should never be placed in the street and should be kept away from fire hydrants, manholes, storm drains, mail boxes, utility meters, etc. 2) Debris collection and disposal that is covered by property insurance is not eligible and should not be placed in the right-of-way for collection. 3) Commercial entities and residents of private roads must make their own arrangements for debris removal.

Storm Terms for the Hurricane Season

Understanding the following terms may be helpful as you listen to weather information on your radio or television before and during a storm. Hurricanes are a type of tropical cyclone - organized rotating weather systems that develop in the tropics. Tropical cyclones are classified as follows:

- Tropical Depression** - an organized system of persistent clouds and thunderstorms with a closed low-level circulation and maximum sustained winds of 38 mph or less.
- Tropical Storm** - an organized system of strong thunderstorms with a well defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39 - 73 mph.
- Hurricane** - an intense tropical weather system with a well defined circulation and sustained winds of 74 mph or higher.

Other terms important to know to help identify a hurricane hazard include:

- Storm Surge** - a dome of water pushed onshore by hurricane and tropical

storm winds. Storm surges can reach 25 feet high and be 50 - 100 miles wide.

- Storm Tide** - a combination of storm surge and the normal tide (i.e. a 15-foot storm surge combined with a 2-foot normal high tide over the mean sea level creates a 17-foot storm tide).

- Hurricane/Tropical Storm Watch** - hurricane/tropical storm conditions are possible in the specified area, usually within 36 hours.

- Hurricane/Tropical Storm Warning** - hurricane/tropical storm conditions are expected in the specified area, usually within 24 hours.

- Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale** - hurricanes are classified into five categories based on their wind speed, central pressure, and damage potential. Category 3 and higher hurricanes are considered major hurricanes, Category 1 and 2 storms are still extremely dangerous and warrant our residents' full attention.

Evacuation/Shelter Information

If a hurricane threatens our area, an evacuation order may be issued. Information will be communicated on radio, newspaper, the City's web site at www.fwb.org, and other local television channels.

When an evacuation is ordered, you should leave as soon as instructed. If you wait, you may not have time to leave. If you require emergency help after the storm intensifies, emergency responders may be unable to reach you until the storm has passed.

When you evacuate, make sure you follow your evacuation plan and let family/friends know your planned des-

tinuation. If you own a pet and plan to evacuate, please do not leave your animal home alone. Do an internet search for pet friendly hotels in your planned evacuation area prior to departure.

If you evacuate, you don't have to leave the area. Antioch Elementary, Riverside Elementary, Shoal River Elementary, Davidson Middle School (special needs shelter) and Baker Schools are the designated shelters this hurricane season. If you do not have transportation and need a ride to a shelter, contact Okaloosa County Transit at 833-9186. You must sign up for this service.

Be Safe When Storing Gasoline

Many residents stock up on gasoline during the summer months due to lawn care and hurricane season. The Fort Walton Beach Fire Department would like to provide these helpful hints for gasoline storage. Improper storage and handling of flammable liquids (most commonly gasoline) can be ignited by smoking materials, electrical spark, or appliance pilot lights. The following actions can prevent the build-up of unseen gasoline vapors.

When storing gas at home, be sure to use approved "UL" listed safety containers. Never use a glass jug, discarded bleach bottle or other non-conforming container.

Store the fuel in a well ventilated area where tipping over or accidental damage is unlikely to occur.

Do not store flammable liquids in the same room as household heating equipment. Home utility rooms can be unsafe because a pilot light or sparking switch can set off an explosion of unseen vapors. Many local regulations prohibit

the storage of large amounts of flammable liquids in inhabited buildings.

Carrying an extra supply of gasoline in the car is not recommended. This practice enhances the likelihood of injury from explosion. However, if gasoline must be carried in your vehicle store it in a heavy, unvented can. A container must have vapor tight seals on the cap of the fill opening and the pouring spout.

Leave room in the container for gas to expand as it is warmed by the heat of the day or heat of the car.

Securely anchor the can to prevent damage in the event of an accident or sudden stop. And of course, do not smoke.

Remember, always keep cigarettes, lighters, matches and small children away from gasoline. When refilling yard equipment, do so in a well vented area, and allow the engine to cool before pouring in the gas.

Tips for Filing Your Insurance Claims

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers these tips for filing insurance claims:

When you call your insurance agent to make a claim, have your policy number and an address and telephone number where you can be reached.

During the call, ask when an adjuster can be expected to visit your property. The adjuster will work with you to calculate your losses and prepare a settlement estimate. If you do not hear from the adjuster within a week of the expected time, contact your agent again.

Evidence of your loss will be important in reaching an estimate. Photographs and videotape of the property showing damage are valuable. Make a list of your damaged property including age and value. Show adjuster any repair estimates you have received from contractors or technicians.

Contact FEMA at 800-621-FEMA (3362), or www.fema.gov to register for disaster assistance.

Important Phone Numbers

Listed below are important phone numbers you may need following a storm:

- Emergency: 911
- City of Fort Walton Beach: 833-9500
- City of FWB Building Permits: 833-9605
- FWB Police: 833-9546
- FWB Fire Dept.: 833-9565
- FWB Sanitation: 833-9655
- Okaloosa County Citizen Information Line (only when activated for a storm): 651-7583
- Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office 651-7400
- FEMA: 1-800-621-FEMA (3362)
- Small Business Administration Hotline: 1-800-827-5722
- Gulf Power (to report outages): 1-800-487-6937
- Salvation Army: 243-4531
- American Red Cross: 682-3356
- United Way of Okaloosa & Walton Counties: 243-0315
- If you are unable to reach your insurance agent/company, call the FL. Dept. of Financial Services at 1-800-227-8676.

2015 Storm Names

Tropical storms and hurricanes are given a name due to their long-term persistence and need for a unique identifier for issuing warning and information. The National Hurricane Center has six different lists of names that are used. The lists are recycled every six years, but notable names, such as Ivan and Katrina, can be retired. Below is the list of names for the 2015 hurricane season. If all of these names are used before the end of the season, storms will be named after letters of the Greek alphabet (Alpha, Beta, etc.). The use of names began in 1933.

Ana
 Bill
 Claudette
 Danny
 Erika
 Fred
 Grace
 Henri
 Ida
 Joaquin
 Kate
 Larry
 Mindy
 Nicholas
 Odette
 Peter
 Rose
 Sam
 Teresa
 Victor
 Wanda

2015 Prediction

The Department of Atmospheric Science at Colorado State University published the following prediction for 2015:

“We anticipate that the 2015 Atlantic basin hurricane season will be one of the least active seasons since the middle of the 20th century. It appears likely that an El Niño of at least moderate strength will develop this summer and fall. The tropical and subtropical Atlantic are also quite cool at present. We anticipate a be-

low-average probability for major hurricanes making landfall along the United States coastline and in the Caribbean. Despite the forecast for below-average activity, coastal residents are reminded that it only takes one hurricane making landfall to make it an active hurricane season for them. They should prepare the same for every season, regardless of how much activity is predicted.

Get a Plan on FloridaDisaster.org



In a major disaster, emergency workers may not be able to reach everyone right away, and in some cases it may take 3 or more days for help to arrive. What would you do if you had no electricity, no gas, no water and no telephone service? Having a plan for your family and their needs will help ensure their safety and comfort during

these difficult times.

That's why citizens are encouraged to get a disaster plan in the event our area is struck by a storm. One way to do this is through the Florida Division of Emergency Management's website, Floridadisaster.org.

While on this webpage, residents can get information and help on de-

veloping a family plan, developing a business plan, developing a kids plan and strengthening your home. There is also information for disabled residents.

Get your plan together today. Remember, it is always better to plan before a disaster strikes.

Only Rain Down the Drain

Most coastal residents are fully aware of the new Hurricane season fast approaching (June 1-November 30).

What some residents might not think about, however, are what stormwater mechanisms are in place to remove the flood waters during and after these and other storm events.

The City of Fort Walton Beach currently has approximately 34 miles of underground stormwater pipe, 61 outfalls (end of pipe meeting open body of water), 11 stormwater retention ponds, 3 miles of ditches and streams, and over 1300 curb and surface inlets.

The City maintains this infrastructure by cleaning ditch lines, inspecting stormwater infrastructure, mapping infrastructure, rehabbing and replacing outdated pipes, designing and planning upgrades, and removing debris.

The general public can help the City keep the stormwater system clean and ready for the next big rain event, and also keep area waterways clean, by keeping these items out of stormwater infrastructure:

Motor oil – 5 quarts of motor oil can create an oil slick two football fields in size. Keep your car tuned up & repair leaks. Do not store these items in low lying areas.

Household hazardous waste (antifreeze, batteries, paint, cleaners, etc) – dispose of properly or recycle at designated centers. Do not pour these items down a stormwater inlet.

Sediment – suffocates and kills oysters, submerged vegetation, and clogs

stormwater pipes. Oysters and submerged vegetation filter local waterways to help keep them clean.

Trash – clutters our beaches, clogs pipes, and could be mistaken for food by marine mammals and sea turtles.

Leaves – create a compost pile with yard clippings & kitchen scraps. Do not put leaves in ditches or storm drains. Place the leaves in yard debris bags and put them on the curb for pickup. Do not put loose leaves on the curb.

Pet waste – picking up after your pet will help reduce bacterial & nutrient pollution during rain events.

These items can pollute the water, clog the storm drain systems and lead to flooding, especially during extreme rain events such as a hurricane.

Eliminating items other than stormwater from the storm drain systems also reduces operating & maintenance cost.

By keeping these items out of the storm drain system & ditches we will work together in improving our water quality, and ensure floodwaters subside by only allowing stormwater to become discharged into our local waters.

This is one of many steps needed to ensure the health and safety for future generations!

Remember: Only rain down the drain!

Power Line Safety

When a hurricane hits our area, power may be lost. Depending on the severity of a storm, it can take a few days to several weeks to restore power to all customers. During this time, please stay away from all downed power lines, and treat all lines as if they are active. If a power line is down near you, stand still, warn others to stay back and call Gulf Power immediately. This is important because of the hazards of Step Potential. If you're caught in the energy field of a downed line, and step away, one foot may be in a 7,000 volt area and the other is in a 6,000 volt area. The difference that will pass through you is 1,000 volts. Also, do not connect portable generators to your household electrical wiring. Rather, plug appliances into the generator. By backfeeding power through your house, you endanger power crews working to restore power in your neighborhood. Turn off large appliances and air conditioners and wait 10 to 15 minutes after power has been restored before turning them back on.