

Hurricane Safety Tips

The 2015 hurricane season will be one of the quietest seasons since the mid 20th century, according to Dr. Phillip J. Klotzbach, leader of tropical forecasting, from Colorado State University. The numbers: 7 named storms, 3 hurricanes, and 1 major hurricane (category 3 or higher). It appears quite likely that an El Nino of at least moderate strength will develop this summer and fall. The tropical and subtropical Atlantic is quite cool at present. He anticipates a below-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 season for them. People should prepare the same for every season, regardless of how much activity is predicted. Even though a below-average season is expected, it is worth noting that Hurricane Andrew, a category 5 storm that devastated Florida in 1992, occurred in an inconsequential year with only 7 storms for the season. For your information, a tropical storm has sustained winds of 39 mph; it becomes a hurricane when its winds reach 74 mph. The Atlantic hurricane season starts June 1 and lasts until November 30. The following names will be used for named storms that form in the Atlantic Ocean in 2015. The first name to be used this season is Ana, followed by Bill, Claudette, Erika, Fred, Grace, Henri, Ida, Joaquin, Kate, Larry, Mindy, Nicholas, Odette, Peter, Rose, Sam, Teresa, Victor, and Wanda.

What is a hurricane?

A hurricane is a type of tropical cyclone, the general term for all circulating weather systems over tropical waters. Tropical cyclones are classified as follows:

- **Tropical Depressions** – an organized system of clouds and thunderstorms with a defined maximum sustained winds of 38 mph or less.
- **Tropical Storm** – an organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph.
- **Hurricane** – an intense tropical weather system with a well-defined circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or higher. In the western Pacific hurricanes are called “typhoons” and similar storms in the Indian Ocean are called “cyclones”

Hurricanes form over the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and the Pacific Ocean. The Atlantic hurricane season starts June 1 and ends November 30 each year. Hurricanes can cause significant damage to coastal and inland areas which include wind and rain damage, flooding, and storm surges. They can also produce tornadoes and microbursts. Hurricanes are classified into 5 categories. Each of the categories are based on wind speed and central pressure which is commonly referred to as the Saffir-Simpson Scale.

Saffir-Simpson Scale

Category	Sustained Winds (MPH)	Damage	Storm Surge
1	74-95	Minimal	4-5 ft
2	96-110	Moderate	6-8 ft
3	111-130	Extensive	9-12 ft
4	131-155	Extreme	13-18 ft
5	156+	Catastrophic	19+ ft

Hurricanes can destroy property, uproot lives, and even cause loss of life, so be prepared. Here's how:

Plan and Prepare

- Have a plan of what everyone is to do and where to go in case of an emergency.
- Know who is in charge of younger children and loved ones, neighbors who may be elderly or have special needs, and pets.
- Know the evacuation routes and public shelters if you have to evacuate.
- Stock up on nonperishable food, water, medications and first aid supplies.
- Have a battery – powered radio and extra batteries on hand so you can stay informed.
- Have an emergency travel kit that includes food, water, battery-powered radio, flashlight, and first aid supplies.
- Consider flood insurance and take pictures of your belongings before disaster strikes.

Disaster Supply Kit

- Water – at least 1 gallon daily per person for 3 to 7 days.
- Food – at least enough for 3 to 7 days.
 - non-perishable packaged or canned food / juices
 - food for infants or the elderly
 - snack foods
 - non-electric can opener
 - cooking tools / fuel
 - paper plates / plastic utensils
- Blanket / Pillows, etc.
- Clothing – seasonal / rain gear / sturdy shoes
- First aid kit / medicines / prescription drugs
- Special items - for babies and the elderly
- Toiletries / Hygiene items / Moisture wipes
- Flashlight / Batteries
- Radio – Battery operated and NOAA weather radio
- Telephones – Fully charged cell phone with extra an battery and a traditional (not cordless) telephone set
- Cash (with some small bills) and credit cards – bank and ATMs may not be available for extended periods.
- Keys
- Toys, Books, and Games

- Important documents – in a waterproof container or watertight resealable plastic bag
- Tools – keep a set with you during the storm
- Vehicle fuel tank filled
- Pet care items – ample supply of food, water, medications, proper identification, a carrier or cage, and a muzzle or leash

If a Hurricane Threatens

- Secure your home with storm shutters or plywood and stow outdoor objects.
- If you have a boat, secure it.
- Trim trees and shrubs around your home and clear clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Fill the bathtub with water and keep the refrigerator closed.
- Keep cell phones charged and avoid using them except for serious emergencies.
- Fill your car's gas tank and have your emergency kit ready to go.
- Listen to the radio or TV for information.

Evacuate if

- Told to do so by local authorities.
- You live in a mobile home or temporary structure.
- You live in a high-rise building. Hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations.
- You live on the coast or near a river.

If You Cannot Evacuate

- Stay indoors during the hurricane and away from windows and glass doors.
- Close all inside doors, and secure and brace outside doors.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed.
- Do not go outside if the storm dies down; it could be the eye of the storm and winds will pick up again.
- Take refuge in a small interior room, closet, or hallway on the lowest level.

Watch Your Water

After a storm or other natural disaster, public water supplies and private wells may not be safe to drink. If you receive your water through a public system, know your water provider. Look for updates about the safety of your water supply from your provider or state officials.

Water that is dark, has an odor, or has floating pieces should **NOT** be used. Water in water pipes, hot water heaters, and toilet tanks (not bowls) may be safe to drink **IF** the valve to the main water line was closed before the storm.

Swimming Pools

Swimming pool water may be used for bathing, flushing toilets, etc., but not for drinking or cooking because of the chemical used to treat swimming pools.

If you Use Well Water

Save as much water as possible since your well will not work in a power outage. Fill the bathtub with water to be used for toilet flushing during a loss of power. If your well is flooded or damaged by the hurricane, assume that it is contaminated and do not use it until it has been flushed, disinfected and tested for bacteria. For more information on how to disinfect private wells, go to www.ct.gov/dph/privatewells.

For additional information about hurricane safety visit www.ct.gov/hurricane or dial 2-1-1.

Until next month, be safe!

Submitted by Captain Tony Orsini, Terryville Fire Department Health & Safety Officer

Sources of information:

Connecticut Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security

Connecticut Department of Public Health

The Weather Channel

New York State Emergency Management Office

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)