



Storm surge can be deadly

Storm surge from a hurricane is often the greatest threat to life and property, posing a significant threat for drowning, according to information provided by the National Hurricane Center.

A mere six inches of fast-moving flood water can knock over an adult. It takes only two feet of rushing water to carry away most vehicles—including pickups and SUVs.

Storm surge can cause wa-

ter levels to rise quickly and flood large areas—sometimes in just minutes, and you could be left with no time to take action if you haven't already evacuated as instructed.

Storm surge values do not correspond well to the hurricane wind categories (of the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale) that range from 1 to 5. These categories are based only on winds and do not account for storm surge.

Tropical storms, category 1 or 2 hurricanes, major (category 3 to 5) hurricanes, and post-tropical cyclones can all cause life-threatening storm surge. Storm surge can also occur with non-tropical storms like Northeast and other winter storms.

Many U.S. Gulf and East Coast areas are vulnerable to storm surge, including areas up to several miles inland from the coastline. Find out today, well before a hurricane ever approaches, if you live in a storm surge evacuation zone.

Storm surge can occur before, during, or after the center of a storm passes through an area. Storm surge can sometimes cut off evacuation routes, so do not delay leaving if an evacuation is ordered for your area.

During the peak of a storm surge event, it is unlikely that emergency responders will be able to reach you if you are in danger.

Even if your community is not directly affected by storm surge, it could experience other hazards from the storm and face dangerous conditions such as impassable roads, water and sewage problems, and power outages. If power remains on, downed electrical wires can pose an electrocution risk.

Weather conditions and the forecast can change. Local officials could issue evacuation or other instructions for many reasons. Always follow the instructions of local officials.

For more information, go to www.nhc.noaa.gov.

Sign up now for Bee Alert to be prepared for hurricanes

BY TYLER BASS

As the height of hurricane season approaches, Gloucester's Emergency Management Coordinator Jane Wenner encourages Gloucester residents to sign up for the county's new alert system, Bee Alert.

Announced earlier this year, Bee Alert replaced the Code Red service officially on Aug. 29. Those who were signed up for the old service must sign up again for the new one.

Wenner said the Bee Alert system provides those registered alerts for major storms, road closures and other county messages. Staying informed is key to being prepared to leave or hunker down during hurricanes and what they bring. She said people get comfortable this time of year because our area hasn't seen a hurricane in a good while.

This year's hurricane season is expected to be more active than normal, said Wenner. She said her and her staff are keeping an eye on the tropics and are anticipating storm systems to come up the coast. By registering with Bee Alert, Gloucester residents can stay informed as tropical storms and hurricanes move up the coast.

As the season progresses, Wenner said it's important to pay attention to the weather. Enough rain in a week paired with strong winds is enough to knock down trees. That danger is heightened by more significant storms.

Paying attention to weather also helps individuals better prepare for storms on the way. The choice to hunker down or evacuate is one that needs to be made in advance. When a storm arrives in our area, it's often too late to evacuate, said Wenner. When making the decision to drive through flood waters, she urges everyone to remember the phrase, "Turn around, don't drown."

Even tropical storms can cause massive damage. She said people forget that Isabel in 2003 was a tropical storm when it reached Gloucester. Though they aren't hurricane-level storms, people in flood zones need to be ready if a tropical storm does arrive.

If you and your family decide to stay put, it's best to hunker in place as the roads become too dangerous to travel, said Wenner. A driver might think they can make

it through some water, until that water starts coming into the car.

If the roads are too dangerous, then the county cannot send out first responders, said Wenner. She said people should be prepared to be sufficient without the aid of Gloucester's first responders. That includes having enough food, water and other necessary supplies to last for a few days.

During hurricanes or other severe storms, it's important to stay in contact with others to keep track of each other's safety. Those in need of assistance or special shelter accommodations should inform Emergency Management so that they can better assist you when there is an emergency.

The role of Emergency Management is to support first responders with its staff and trained volunteers. Those interested in volunteering with Emergency Management should sign up for the next training course it's offering, on Oct. 15 and 16. For more information or to enroll in Bee



Alert, go to www.gloucester-va.info/365/Emergency-Management. You can also register for Bee Alert by texting GCVA to 888777.

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SURVIVING THE STORM

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A)
 during a storm before," Gail said. "But after that, I said I'd never leave again."

Victor and Linda Jenkins
 Just down the way from the Kellums, the home belonging to Victor and Linda Jenkins on Maryus Road ended up with two feet of water in the kitchen and a foot-and-a-half of water in the living room, which is a step higher. Before the hurricane hit, the couple had moved their most treasured items to the attic, but when they returned home from the hotel where they stayed during the storm, they found that the furnace and the washer and dryer were destroyed, along with the freezer and all the food in it.

Fortunately, the Jenkins had insurance to cover the damages.

"It flooded everything," said Victor. "But we had just bought flood insurance for the first time."

And some things fared surprisingly well during the storm. The house, built of heart pine, is "solid as a rock," said Victor, and sustained no structural damage. While there was mud in the oven, a good cleaning was all it needed to remain usable, said Linda, and the refrigerator somehow managed to remain intact. The hardwood floors buckled in places, but a good sanding fixed that, she said.

As soon as they were able, the couple started pulling out damaged carpet with the help of a friend. Victor ruptured a disc in his back in the effort, and his son Jason, who lives in North Carolina, drove up to help out, along with his buddy Judd Major. They brought a

generator with them because there were none to be found in Virginia stores. A couple of neighbors helped bust out damaged sheetrock, said Victor, so the demolition didn't take too long.

During the four months it took to renovate the house, Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins stayed in a "brand-new" FEMA trailer that was set up in their driveway.

"Everybody jumped in and helped each other out," said Victor. "So we made it through it."

Christine Dehnert

Over in the New Point area of Mathews, Christine Dehnert's home, which she had bought from her parents, didn't fare as well. Located on Dyer Creek, with a direct view out to the Chesapeake Bay, her house took the full force of the tide and winds that swept in with Hurricane Isabel.

"Nothing was blocking the bay from coming into the creek and into my house," she said.

Christine and her two small children evacuated prior to the storm, and when she returned the next day, the first thing she noticed was that her dock was sitting inland at the end of her 1/4-mile-long lane.

"I knew it was bad when I saw that," she said. "But what I saw when I got up to my house was almost like a bomb exploded."
 Two boats belonging to someone else were in the yard, along with extensive debris from her shed. An old boat on an old railway had pushed through the shed and flung pieces of it across the yard. The deck was ripped off

her house, and there were numerous tree limbs downed by the storm.

Inside the house, the stench from creek mud was the first thing Christine noticed, along with fiddler crabs scurrying around on her floors. The house had been flooded by one to two feet of water and had shifted slightly on its foundation, causing cracks in the plaster walls and ceilings both downstairs and upstairs. One thing that showed the force of the flood waters, said Christine, was a beach towel that had been in her Florida room. The door to the room held, she said, but as the water receded, it pulled three quarters of the thick beach towel out through the narrow crack under the door.

As she looked at the damage, Christine said, "you're thinking you're never going to get anything straight again. You don't know how to start."

Christine rented an apartment above Richardson's Café in downtown Mathews for the year it took her house to be renovated after the storm. She said one lesson she learned is that flood insurance doesn't necessarily cover all the costs of hurricane damage. In her case, she had to absorb over two-thirds of the cost of repairs because her flood insurance wouldn't cover it all, especially the damage done to the second floor. Her homeowner's insurance wouldn't cover damages because they said they was water-related and not wind-related.

"It was a hard hit financially and emotionally," said Christine. "It was just hard all the way around."



You still have time to get flood insurance coverage

In a season marked by flooding across the commonwealth, country and world, Virginians can protect themselves from catastrophic losses due to floods from future storms.

September through mid-October is historically Virginia's most active hurricane period, and the Atlantic hurricane season continues through Nov. 30. Conditions are still in place for an above-average hurricane season, according to the annual mid-season update from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service.

Floods, not winds, are the most costly consequence of hurricanes. Flood insurance is the best way for residents to protect their property and the lives they've worked hard to build. There's still time to get this coverage during this hurricane season.

Here's what Virginians need to know about flood insurance:

—One inch of water in an average home can cause more than \$25,000 in damages.

—Standard homeowner's and renter's policies don't cover flood damage.

—Renters can obtain a contents-only flood insurance policy to protect belongings.

—A new flood insurance policy can take up to 30 days to become effective.

"The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation urges everyone to understand their flood risk and take steps now to protect their property from flood damage. Anywhere it can rain, it can flood, so it's important that Virginians have flood insurance coverage," said Wendy Howard-Cooper, DCR director of dam safety and floodplain management programs.

"Unfortunately, many homeowners and renters don't have flood insurance, putting them at greater risk as we experience more frequent, severe and widespread flooding. With hurricane season near-

ing its peak, now is a great time to take the necessary steps to be sure you are covered in case of a flood. Know your risk, protect your property and get flood insurance now," said Howard-Cooper.

DCR's Division of Dam Safety and Floodplain Management works closely with communities statewide to strengthen local floodplain ordinances and to help them comply with requirements of the National Flood Insurance Program. DCR also offers financial assistance to localities to help mitigate the effects of flooding.

Learn about buying flood insurance at FloodSmart.gov, or contact an insurance agent. For more information, go to www.dcr.virginia.gov/floodawareness.

Be prepared

After an emergency such as a hurricane, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having your own food, water and other supplies to last for several days.

A disaster supplies kit is a collection of basic items your household members may need in the event of an emergency.

To assemble your kit, store items in airtight plastic bags and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers such as plastic bins or a duffel bag.

According to Ready.gov, a basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items:

—Water (one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation)

—Food (at least a several-day supply of non-perishable food)

—Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with tone alert

—Flashlight

—First aid kit

—Extra batteries

—Whistle (to signal for help)

—Dust mask (to help filter contaminated air)

—Plastic sheeting and duct tape (to shelter in place)

—Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties (for personal sanitation)

—Wrench or pliers (to turn off utilities)

—Manual can opener (for food)

—Local maps

—Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery.

Other suggested items include prescription and non-prescription medicines, pet food and extra water for your pet, important family documents, and cash or traveler's checks.

For more information, visit www.ready.gov.

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- Make An Emergency Plan
- Know Your Evacuation Zone
- Recognize Warnings And Alerts
- Get Tech Ready
- Gather Supplies

SIGN UP FOR BEE ALERT!

Gloucester County's Emergency Management Department is Here to Help:
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