

## Calabash Hurricane Preparedness

Hurricane season is here. As a North Carolina coastal community, the Town of Calabash feels that it is very important that its citizens be aware of the possibility that we could be impacted by coastal storms ranging in strength from a nor'easter to a major hurricane. These storms may have intense rainfall, very strong damaging winds, and severe flooding causing damage to homes and property.

The hurricane season each year lasts from June 1 through November 30. This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasts that a weak or non-existent El Nino coupled with warm ocean waters in the southern Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea could mean an above normal hurricane season. Forecasters predict a 70% likelihood of 11 to 17 named storms, of which 5 to 9 could become hurricanes, including 2 to 4 major hurricanes (Category 3 or higher).

What can you do to be prepared?

1. Pay attention to weather forecasts. With hurricanes, you have some time prior to landfall to prepare for impending storm impacts. Many times, these storms are tracked for days and forecasters will give ideas where the storm may hit and what impacts to expect.
2. Determine your vulnerability to storm impacts such as wind, flooding, and storm surge. Do you live near the waterfront? Do you live near rivers or drainage canals? Will your home withstand forecast wind or flooding impacts? What can you do to mitigate your vulnerability?
3. Have an evacuation plan and a communication plan. Do you know the local evacuation routes? Where should you evacuate to in order to get out of the path of the storm? When should you evacuate? How will you get in touch with relatives to let them know you are safe?
4. Have an emergency supply kit. Are you prepared for prolonged power outages? Do you have enough food and water to last until help arrives?
5. Have sufficient insurance coverage. Make arrangements to meet with your insurance company representative to discuss your coverages and to determine if you are covered for all storm impacts.

Prior to a hurricane you can expect periods of heavy rain with winds building. During a hurricane you can expect high winds and extremely heavy rainfall. Trees will come down, roads will be flooded, and it may be impossible for police, fire and rescue personnel to respond. Power lines will come down and power will be out to extensive areas. After a hurricane, depending upon how extensive an area is affected, you can expect prolonged power outages, flooded areas, limited transportation access, debris everywhere, and limited businesses to purchase gasoline and supplies.

A lot of people have moved to this area with little knowledge of the geographic or climatic conditions that may exist after a hurricane. This is the southeastern coastal plain of North Carolina. The land is flat and swampy. The area is prone to flooding, especially with 15 to 20 inches of rainfall from severe coastal storms or hurricanes. When the major river systems make flood stage, there is no place for creeks, ditches or canals to drain into and the water backs up. Flooding will happen, and there is not any amount of ditch work or flood control work that will stop it. Also, as more development occurs,

there is less pervious surface to absorb rainfall, meaning that there will be more surface runoff contributing to the flooding. It may take weeks to get back to normal.

Many people want to know if and when they should evacuate. The Town may issue statements with wording such as “recommended evacuation of low lying areas”, or “mandatory evacuation”. These are very important and citizens should take notice. However, you do not have to wait on the Town to tell you to evacuate. If you pay attention to the weather, and know your vulnerabilities, you can evacuate when you feel the need, and each individual should be able to make this call. Many times if you wait you may encounter very heavy traffic, and low lying evacuation routes can become flooded. You should also know where the storm is headed and plan your evacuation to move away from the impact area. You should plan to stay away until it is safe to return, and you should understand that if the area is hit severely enough, it may be hard to get clearance to return for some time.

#### Website Resources:

FEMA Federal Emergency Management	<a href="https://www.ready.gov/">https://www.ready.gov/</a>
National Hurricane Center	<a href="http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/outreach/">http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/outreach/</a>
NCDOT NC Evacuation Routes	<a href="https://www.ncdot.gov/travel/evacuationmaps/">https://www.ncdot.gov/travel/evacuationmaps/</a>
SCDOT SC Evacuation Routes	<a href="http://www.scdot.org/getting/evacuation.aspx">http://www.scdot.org/getting/evacuation.aspx</a>
NC Department of Public Safety	<a href="https://www.ncdps.gov/Our-Organization/Emergency-Management">https://www.ncdps.gov/Our-Organization/Emergency-Management</a>
Brunswick County Emergency Services	<a href="http://www.brunswickcountync.gov/es/">http://www.brunswickcountync.gov/es/</a>
Brunswick County Telephone Notification	<a href="https://public.coderedweb.com/cne/en-US/7BC24EDE14D3">https://public.coderedweb.com/cne/en-US/7BC24EDE14D3</a>
Brunswick County Special Needs	<a href="http://fs19.formsite.com/ubwatts/form165290145/index.html">http://fs19.formsite.com/ubwatts/form165290145/index.html</a>
Red Cross	<a href="http://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/disaster-relief">http://www.redcross.org/about-us/our-work/disaster-relief</a>
Brunswick Electric	<a href="http://www.bemc.org/">http://www.bemc.org/</a>
Town of Calabash	<a href="http://www.townofcalabash.net/">http://www.townofcalabash.net/</a>

There are also numerous documents published regarding hurricane preparedness that can help you plan for that emergency. Brunswick County Emergency Management, Brunswick Electric and WECT puts out hurricane guides to name a few. Publications can be picked up at Calabash Town Hall for those that are interested. Town Hall staff can also help you sign up for Brunswick County Code Red (emergency notification) and Special Needs if needed.

Please take the time to make a plan and become familiar with the hazards associated with hurricanes. Your Town has already taken care of its preliminary measures to make sure that we can maintain communications, keep stormwater flowing, and keep the roads and streets open. Stay informed and be prepared.

