

## Trying to Reason with Hurricane Season

*Proper Pro-Action + Proper Re-Action = Resiliency*

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In 1974, Jimmy Buffett released either his 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> album, depending upon where you place the “High Cumberland Jubilee” release date. That album was entitled “A1A”, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> track on Side B was a song known as “Trying to Reason with Hurricane Season”. As a native son of Pascagoula, Mississippi, we should not be surprised that Mr. Buffett knows a little something about peculiarly gray Sundays, white caps, watchin’ for waterspouts, and the time for closing shutters. If you grow up along the gulf coast or the Atlantic seaboard, you can typically detect the slightest changes in barometric pressure by sensing the hairs on the back of your neck. It comes with the territory.

Thursday June 1st marked the official beginning of the 2023 Atlantic Hurricane Season, and this figurative dark cloud will be hanging over us for a full 6 months until November 30<sup>th</sup>. As with anything like this, pro-active measures are critically important and certainly worth the investment of our time and treasure. While we have all heard the typical bits of advice like filling your tubs with fresh water and having extra flashlight batteries on hand, here are a few that you may not have heard elsewhere.

1. Thank your lucky stars for the incredible technological advancements in disaster preparedness, meteorology, engineering, and construction. Consider the following. During the decade of the 1920s, the total number of deaths (worldwide) from disasters (e.g., earthquakes, landslides, fires, flooding, storms, and droughts) was more than 500,000<sup>1</sup>. For the decade of the 2010s that number was less than 50,000. Embrace the technological advancements and use them to minimize your risk.
2. Do not rely solely upon the projected Saffir–Simpson category rating of the storm to decide what your prep will entail and whether you will evacuate. Keep in mind that 2012’s Hurricane Sandy peaked as a Category 3 system as it battered Cuba and was a mere “Post-tropical Cyclone” when it made landfall near Brigantine, New Jersey. The New England residents who felt the wrath of Sandy can testify to the fact that the Category of a storm is not its only determinant.
3. Do not view tropical storms as strictly coastal events and consider how human intervention can sometimes increase the adverse impacts of a storm. Consider the 1928 Okeechobee Hurricane as a prime example. While the storm came ashore near West Palm Beach, Florida, its most deadly effects were felt approximately forty-five miles inland in communities like Canal Point, Pahokee, South Bay, Belle Glade, and Miami Locks (now known as Lake Harbor). During the years leading up to the storm, a massive reclamation program was established to boost crop output and enhance overall commerce. As part of this initiative, a series of levees and locks were built to hold back the waters of Lake Okeechobee, the 10<sup>th</sup> largest lake in the United States. During the 1928 storm, failures within these structures led to catastrophic flooding and the deaths of at least 2,500 people in the communities to the east and south of the giant lake.
4. Get a Tetanus shot. If you have not been vaccinated for tetanus during the past 10 years, be sure to get the proper Tetanus Booster. Severe weather and the recovery efforts that follow almost always entail countless opportunities to sustain cuts, scraps, punctures, and abrasions. All of

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<sup>1</sup> Our World in Data, EM-DAT, CRED / UCLouvain, Brussels, Belgium, [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be) (D. Guha-Sapir).

these represent potential pathways for infection by the *Clostridium Tetani* bacterium that causes tetanus. Consult your physician for the proper vaccine that can protect against Tetanus and other ailments like Diphtheria and Pertussis.

5. Buy a flashlight that is powered by something other than D Cell batteries. In the wake of a catastrophic storm certain things tend to be in short supply – generators, ice, chainsaws, bottled water, and D Cell batteries. Having a flashlight that uses something like C Cell batteries will increase your odds of finding replacements. Virtually everyone will be looking for the D Cells while almost no one will be competing to purchase the C Cells.
6. Do not attempt to justify staying in the path of a deadly storm by arguing that you must stay behind to protect your home and your belongings. If mother nature is bound to destroy your home and its contents, that is precisely what will happen. You cannot protect your home or your personal effects if they are scattered across several acres of the National Forest thousands of yards from the site where your home once stood.

That last one is a lesson that my parents learned the hard way on the night of September 22, 1989. In the end, one really cannot Reason with Hurricane Season, but we can take measures to minimize our risk and have the best chance for a meaningful recovery.

More on the topic of *Resiliency* to follow.

