



Wellness Committee

## Mindful Moment

# Newsletter

### June's Navigating the Storm: Preparation, Policy & Peace of Mind

As we enter the heart of hurricane season, this month's wellness spotlight is all about understanding the complexity of storms- both literal and emotional. In this edition, we'll explore how to better prepare ourselves at home and at work, the importance of knowing your agency's emergency policies, and the role preparation plays in reducing stress. When we are informed and ready, we create space for clarity, resilience, and safety no matter the forecast.



Floridaapco.org

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# ***HURRICANE SEASON IS HERE!***

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## **ARE YOU READY?**

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## **HOW COULD THAT BE?**

Running from June 1 to November 30, being prepared for hurricane season becomes essential. Both at home and at work, first responders have to do double the work to get ready for anything that may come their way. From securing homes and preparing family members to packing go bags for work, starting early can be a major benefit.

### ***GETTING PREPARED***

#### **UNDERSTAND STORMS**

By knowing terminology, what the “spaghetti” models are telling us, and the different intensities of the storm, we can better understand how to ensure we are ready for what is coming our way.

#### **KNOW YOUR AGENCY’S POLICIES**

How does your agency prepare for impending storms? Do your shift assignments change? Does your agency offer additional support for preparing your home and family? Understanding these policies can help you address outside needs in a timely manner, leaving you in a less stressful situation.

#### **WHAT SHOULD YOU GET?**

Businesses are going to close, and you may need extra supplies if you are going to be away from your family and at your station. There are some essentials you should have on hand to help you get through the storm and be ready for what comes after.

# What are News Casters Talking About??

There are all sorts of terms that get thrown around once a storm is brewing. But what do they all mean? Storm terms start as soon as a storm develops and become the focus of the news we watch.

- Tropical Disturbance: The start of it all. Maintaining its momentum for at least 24 hours, these have an organized prospect of turning into a formal storm.
- Tropical Cyclone: At this point, the storm has organized into a system circulating around a well-defined center. It maintains its status from the heat energy of the ocean water.
- Tropical Depression: The storm is organized at this point, with sustained winds of 38 mph or less.
- Tropical Storm: These are named once the winds hit a minimum of 39 mph and no more than 73 mph, staying at this speed continuously.
- Hurricane: Winds sustained at 74 mph or more; this term is used for storms that occur in the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico.
- Major Hurricane: A storm that maintains winds of Category 3 or higher.
- Watch: Whether it be a Tropical Storm Watch or a Hurricane Watch, this means the storm may hit a certain area. These are issued 48 hours in advance for further preparation.
- Warning: For Tropical Storms and Hurricanes, a warning is issued to areas where the storm is expected to hit. This is a more specific area than a watch and is issued within 36 hours of landfall for final preparations.
- Eye: The circular center of the storm, where there are light winds compared to the sustained winds of the storm.
- Eyewall: The storm clouds directly surrounding the eye of the storm.
- Maximum Sustained Wind: The constant wind speed within the storm that is the highest recorded.
- Storm Surge: The abnormal rise in sea level, showing a height difference between the level of the sea surface and the level that would occur if there were no storm coming.



## What do the Categories Mean?

We are always talking about the categories of a storm, and we base our preparation on this categorization. Known as the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, there are five defined categories based on the storm's sustained winds. These categories are only defined once the storm hits 74 mph, the wind speed that makes the storm a hurricane.

- Category 1: 74-95 MPH winds - will produce some damage
- Category 2: 96-110 MPH winds - will cause extensive damage
- Category 3: 111-129 MPH winds - devastating damage will occur
- Category 4: 130-156 MPH winds - catastrophic damage will occur
- Category 5: >156 MPH winds - catastrophic damage will occur



# *Preparing for the High Winds That Come With the Storm*

- **Mobile Homes and RVs:** These are not considered sturdy buildings and are not safe in high winds. If you are in this type of building, you will need to find a place to seek shelter. Plan these arrangements well in advance of the storm hitting so that you are prepared. If you have pets, make sure you also make arrangements for them. Some shelters are designated as pet-friendly.
- **Two-Story Buildings:** Plan to go to an interior windowless room on the lowest level of the house. If you do not have a windowless room, make sure you stay as far away from glass as possible.
- **Multi-Story Buildings:** Try to make plans to get to a lower level of the building, away from windows as far as possible.

## *Preparing For Floods*

Winds will cause significant damage, but what if you are in a flood zone? On average, hurricanes produce 16 inches of rain, though this can vary depending on factors like the size and speed of the storm. Most of this rainfall occurs within a 24-hour time frame, causing widespread flooding that significantly affects flood zones.

### Steps to Prepare:

- Use FEMA's Flood Map Service Center or your local government to assess your flood risk.
- Make a plan with your family, including evacuation routes and shelter locations.
- Check your home's ability to withstand heavy winds and rain.
- Consider flood insurance, especially in high-risk areas. Some may even be required by your mortgage broker.

### If You Are In A Flood:

- **Evacuate** if ordered.
- **Stay safe:** Avoid floodwaters and do not drive or walk through floods.
- **Seek shelter:** Move to the highest part of your house if you cannot evacuate.
- **Stay informed:** Monitor the media for updates and instructions.

# *How Do I Prepare My Home?*

- Review your insurance: What exactly does it cover?
- Assess your home: Are there any areas that may be more vulnerable to wind, rain, or debris?
- Secure your home: Put up shutters or plywood and bring in items that could become flying objects.
- Are you in an evacuation zone? Make arrangements to get to a safer place.
- Do you have the necessary supplies? Make an emergency kit to last up to a week.
- Document your home - Take photos of damages so you can send them to the insurance company.

## *Preparing Your Family*

- Create an emergency plan - Are you evacuating? How are you communicating? Assign roles and make arrangements for pets.
- Have your emergency kit ready - Make sure you have enough items for all of your family members and that they know where the kit is located. You may need one for staying at home and one in case you need to leave.
- Stay informed - Continue to monitor news channels to keep up with the latest updates on what the storm is doing.
- Know where there are evacuation sites - You may need to leave last minute. Make sure you know where you can go, or have arrangements at a hotel or with other family members.



# THE STORM IS COMING! WHAT SHOULD I STOCK UP ON AT MY HOUSE??

When there is an imminent threat of a storm, you need to make sure that you have all the essentials to hold you over during the storm and for some time after the storm. You should create a hurricane essentials kit that contains items for up to at least three days after the storm. But what should be in there?

- Water - You should have one gallon of water per person, per day for drinking and sanitation. It does not hurt to start stocking up before a storm even forms, as many places will limit the amount that you are allowed to buy as a storm approaches.
- Food - There should be 3-7 days' worth of food for each person. These food items should be non-perishable. Remember - if you are without power, there is no refrigeration, stove, or oven. You will need to rely on gas grills or stoves.
- First Aid - Having essentials like band-aids, antiseptic wipes, pain relievers, and most importantly, your prescription medications. If you are running low, talk to your doctor and see if they can fill your prescription so that you do not run out or have issues getting them if the pharmacy is closed.
- Additional items that you should have in your kit include:
  - Flashlights, lanterns, and batteries
  - Battery-powered radio
  - Manual can opener
  - Important documents (Keep these in a safe, waterproof container so that they do not get damaged)
  - Cash (Card readers may be down due to outages)
  - Personal hygiene items and sanitation items
  - Blankets, sleeping bags, and extra clothing
  - Pet supplies
  - Items to keep you occupied (books, games, puzzles)

Find more items or share with others to be prepared at  
<https://www.ready.gov/kit>

**BUNKERING DOWN AT THE STATION? HERE ARE SOME ITEMS OUR TEAM HAS COME UP WITH TO BETTER BE PREPARED TO WORK THROUGH THE STORM.**

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# How are agencies preparing for storms?

"Our Communications Director monitors the storm alongside the EOC and attends their meetings, following up a day or so before landfall is expected. Based on the impact expected for our area and the surrounding areas, she formulates our "Combined Communications Center Ops Plan". Our shifts are typically built out to an A and B rotation (following our patrol) where the majority of our shifts from both teams will combine to form a larger staffed shift to operate during the storm, while the other shift locks into our building and alternates sleep shifts."

"Prior to hurricane season starting, staff sign up to either be part of the 'during' team or the 'after' team. Once the storm becomes a threat to the area, the EOC activates, and we begin to follow the protocols that they are putting in place. Once these teams are activated, we go to our A/B schedule of 12-hour shifts. The during team responds just prior to the storm coming in, prepared to stay for up to 3 days. The after team remains on standby and is required to come in to relieve the during team once the winds have dropped to 40 miles per hour."

"Our agency will generally follow the county EOC's activations, meaning we usually wait to activate for a storm until they do as well. We will take steps to get prepared, but generally, until the county activates their EOC / does call backs for employees, we do not either. Staff will be split into an A or B squad that are twelve-hour shifts from 0700-1900 and 1900-0700 hours. Usually, days off or vacations are cancelled in preparation for the storm. Employees are given checklists and are required to review our All-Hazards Plan at the beginning of hurricane season, so they have the information fresh in their minds, including what food or belongings they are expected to bring with them and policies relating to being recalled. Our employees are told to bring clothes and food for up to three days. Our comm center personnel all have separate sleeping quarters in our records division, which is pretty distant from the rest of the hot spots in the station, so it stays cold, dark, and quiet! Our team of supervisors will come together and come up with a menu and go shopping for food items that we can cook for our staff. We usually stick with things that are easy to cook in a crock pot, such as tacos, pot roast, etc. If we have learned one thing, it is that food is a way to the soul and really makes a difference in morale, especially during the stressful times of hurricanes.

For calls for service, we will handle calls status quo until the conditions begin to deteriorate, or we have to pull officers to assist with evacuations. Once winds hit a sustained 30mph, our FD pulls their equipment, and we will pull our units off the street and position them throughout the city and respond to only high-priority events. Once winds hit a sustained 50mph, our officers do not respond to any calls for service unless specified by the incident commander. Our agency will still take the calls for service, and they are stacked on the screen to be dispatched once the storm passes. We also have one call open where we document the majority of hazards or flooding, to document it, and also so that we can check to make sure we are not duplicating calls to utilities. Once the storm has passed and it is deemed safe for employees to travel on the road, our employees will be allowed to leave to check on their houses and families. If they have power or places to stay, they can do that. If they have no electricity or live far away, they can stay at our station. Our 12-hour shifts will continue until the situation is under control and we do not require those numbers for staffing. For employees who are impacted significantly (We had several people take significant hits this last year and lost most of their stuff), we will put together collections of money or items they need to rebuild. We will also go to employee's homes to help them clean up damage, move if needed, etc. "

# How are you preparing to be at work?

- Preparing mentally and physically is a must.
- Prepare for the overstimulation of being in a large group in a confined space.
- Navigate the stress of not being home during a crisis.
- We have to prepare our homes, family, and nearby family to make sure their houses are protected and have adequate food and supplies in case the worst hits and we are not available to help for a few days.
- Providing loved ones with a list of emergency resources they can call if needed.
- We have to have a plan in place for pets, also.
- Important to fill up all vehicles with gas and possibly have extra on hand for generators.
- Plan for medication refills ahead of time, along with being prepared for delivery delays and proper storage for refrigerated medicines. Also, having a stock of medication administering supplies is essential.
- "In our center, we are all "Activated" and mandated to be at work for the time decided by the Emergency Management, and the two-day shifts work on days, and the two-night shifts work over night until we are released from activated mode."



# How Can We Prepare For Further Mental Wellbeing?

HERE'S HOW BEING PREPARED LOWERS STRESS:

## **REDUCED UNCERTAINTY:**

WHEN YOU'RE PREPARED, YOU HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE OF WHAT'S COMING AND WHAT YOU NEED TO DO. THIS REDUCES UNCERTAINTY AND THE ANXIETY THAT OFTEN ACCOMPANIES IT.

## **INCREASED SENSE OF CONTROL:**

KNOWING YOU'RE PREPARED AND HAVE A PLAN IN PLACE GIVES YOU A FEELING OF BEING IN CONTROL, EVEN WHEN DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS.

## **IMPROVED DECISION-MAKING:**

HAVING A PLAN ALLOWS YOU TO MAKE MORE INFORMED DECISIONS UNDER PRESSURE, WHICH CAN LEAD TO MORE POSITIVE OUTCOMES AND REDUCE STRESS.

## **ENHANCED PROBLEM-SOLVING:**

PREPARATION CAN HELP YOU ANTICIPATE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AND DEVELOP SOLUTIONS IN ADVANCE. THIS CAN MAKE IT EASIER TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES WHEN THEY ARISE.

## **GREATER CONFIDENCE:**

KNOWING YOU'RE WELL-PREPARED BOOSTS YOUR CONFIDENCE AND MAKES YOU FEEL MORE CAPABLE OF HANDLING STRESSFUL SITUATIONS.

## **POSITIVE MINDSET:**

WHEN YOU'RE PREPARED, YOU CAN APPROACH CHALLENGING SITUATIONS WITH A MORE POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE MINDSET, WHICH CAN HELP YOU MANAGE STRESS MORE EFFECTIVELY.



# What are You Doing to Inform the Public?

"Due to the severity of the hurricane, help is not on the way at this time. Our emergency response teams are being advised to shelter in place because of the wind speeds and the severity of the storm. We understand that this situation can be distressing, and we urge everyone to exercise caution and stay in a safe location. Thank you for your patience and understanding."

IF they need more:

"Your health (or your safety) is a priority, and while we are doing everything in our power to assist, please be advised that help will not arrive as quickly as usual. For those in urgent need of assistance, we are working tirelessly to prioritize cases based on severity. Remember, our emergency personnel are dedicated to helping our community, and they are doing their best to navigate through the challenging weather to reach those in need. We appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we work through these adverse conditions together. The safety of our emergency personnel is paramount, and they will only be dispatched when conditions allow for safe travel."

Additional:

"Please remain strong and vigilant throughout this hurricane. We are here to support you, and together, we will weather this storm. "





The demanding nature of emergency services often leaves its mark, impacting the well-being of those who dedicate their lives to helping others. The events, such as the tragedy in Parkland, alongside the daily realities of line-of-duty deaths and suicides, underscore the profound emotional toll this profession takes. It's a burden many carry silently.

This is why the FL-911 Peer Support Network exists. We understand the unique challenges faced by emergency personnel, particularly members of Peer Support Teams, and we're dedicated to providing a lifeline of immediate and compassionate support. We're a community built on shared experience and understanding.

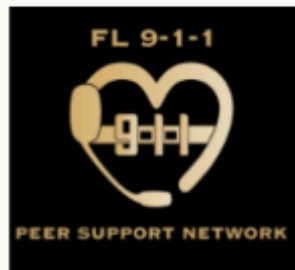
Our network is comprised of carefully vetted and extensively trained professionals who have directly experienced the pressures you face daily. They've walked the same path, navigated the same intense emotions, and know the weight of high-stakes situations. This shared understanding forms the bedrock of our support, fostering a safe and empathetic environment where you can openly process your experiences.

Beyond individual support, we're actively collaborating with other agencies to create a comprehensive, interconnected support system across the entire emergency services community. We believe that nurturing the mental health of those who safeguard our communities is paramount to maintaining a strong, resilient, and effective emergency response system. We are committed to building a culture of well-being, where seeking help is not a sign of weakness, but a testament to strength and self-care.

We invite you to learn more about our services and how we can support you in your journey. Your well-being is our priority.

If You Have Been Affected and need someone to talk to, you can reach out to the FL-911 Peer Support Team

Reach out to Brittany McGary @ [brittany.mcgary@floridaapco.org](mailto:brittany.mcgary@floridaapco.org)  
or Natalia Duran at [natalia.duran@floridaapco.org](mailto:natalia.duran@floridaapco.org)



Join the FL-911 Peer Support Team in partnership with



We are excited to offer a unique opportunity to support telecommunications across the state in addressing various challenges.

We invite trained peer support telecommunications to join our dedicated team. For those of you who are interested in training, we will send out resources available for you to take to prepare you for Peer Support.

If you're interested in making a meaningful impact, please contact

Brittany McGary, RPL

FL-911 Peer Support Member Coordinator

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Discover more about us at [www/fl-tert.org/peersupport](http://www/fl-tert.org/peersupport)

Become part of a community dedicated to support and collaboration!

cc:Natalia Duran - State Coordinator

If You are Looking to be a member that would like to offer support to those in need, reach out to join the FL-911 Peer Support Team