

PUBLIC INFORMATION STATEMENT
NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE RALEIGH NC
800 AM EDT SUN MAY 24 2015

THIS WEEK IS HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK FOR 2015

Today marks the first day of the 2015 Hurricane Preparedness Week in North Carolina. This is the time for everybody to make weather-readiness a priority. All week long the National Weather Service will issue informative messages to help you prepare for the hurricane season. Topics covered this week will include rip currents, storm surge, winds, inland flooding, forecast process, and planning and action.

North Carolina is one of the most hurricane ravaged states in the country. The entire state, from the mountains to the coast, is susceptible to hurricane and tropical storm impacts. The coastal areas of the state can be susceptible to storm surge, high winds, flooding, and tornadoes. The central portion of the state can be susceptible to inland freshwater flooding, high winds, and tornadoes; and the western portion of the state can be susceptible to tornadoes, flash flooding, and resulting landslides from heavy rains when dying tropical cyclones move from the northern Gulf of Mexico northeast along the Appalachians.

The most active months for tropical systems in North Carolina are August and September. However, hurricanes have wreaked havoc as early as June and as late as mid-November. The peak tropical activity usually occurs in a six week period from mid-August to late September. During active cycles in hurricane activity North Carolina can experience multiple hurricanes and tropical storms within weeks of each other.

A look back at our hurricane history shows impressive statistics. Nearly 20 percent of all tropical systems pass within at least 300 miles of North Carolina. A tropical storm or hurricane makes direct landfall on our coast about once every 2 years. A tropical storm or hurricane, which doesn't make landfall in North Carolina but somehow affects our state, occurs about twice per year. A major hurricane, which is a category 3 or higher on the Saffir-Simpson Scale, threatens North Carolina at least once every 15 years. However, the last major hurricane to threaten and impact the state was Hurricane Fran in 1996, so it may seem that North Carolina is due for another major hurricane to impact the state. These stats re-emphasize the importance of being prepared for the hurricane season. It's not "if" a hurricane or tropical storm will somehow affect North Carolina this year, rather it's "when".

Even when hurricanes stay out at sea, the North Carolina coast can still be impacted by large swells and deadly rip currents, thus making it important to stay aware of the tropics and weather forecasts all throughout the hurricane season. Rip currents are channelized currents of water flowing away from shore at surf beaches. Rip currents are quite common and can be found on many surf beaches every day. They typically form at breaks in sandbars, and also near structures such as jetties and piers. While the risk of rip currents occurring along the North Carolina beaches increases when a tropical cyclone is out in the Atlantic, the risk increases even more so when a tropical cyclone is moving toward the North Carolina coast, especially when the storm is a day or two away from making landfall along the Carolina coast.

Rip currents are dangerous because they can pull people away from shore. Rip current speeds can vary from moment to moment and can quickly increase to become dangerous to anyone entering the surf. Rip currents can sweep even the strongest swimmer out to sea. Some clues that a rip current may be

present include a channel of churning, choppy water, a difference in water color, a break in the incoming wave pattern, and a line of foam, seaweed or debris moving seaward.

If you find yourself caught in a rip current, stay calm and don't fight the current. Escape the current by swimming in a direction following the shoreline. When free of the current, swim at an angle—away from the current—toward shore. If you are unable to escape by swimming, float or tread water. When the current weakens, swim at an angle away from the current toward shore. If at any time you feel you will be unable to reach shore, draw attention to yourself: face the shore, call or wave for help. Also, don't become a victim while trying to help someone else! Many people have died in efforts to rescue rip current victims. Instead, get help from a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not present, yell instructions on how to escape. If possible, throw the rip current victim something that floats. Call 9-1-1 for further assistance.

When it comes to this hurricane season, it's important to take appropriate preparedness action and encourage others to do the same. An informed and motivated public will transform the way North Carolinians respond to hurricane seasons and, ultimately, save more lives and livelihoods. Make a pledge to prepare for this hurricane season, complete an emergency preparedness plan, make or update your emergency kit, and be an example by sharing your preparedness story with family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

For more information about hurricane preparedness, please visit the following web sites:

- <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare>
- <http://www.readync.org>