

THIS WEEK IS NORTH CAROLINA'S HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS WEEK FOR 2021

All week long the National Weather Service will issue informative messages to help you prepare for the hurricane season. Today's topics include: **Storm Surge; Develop an Evacuation Plan; and Know Your Zone.**

Storm Surge

One of the greatest potentials for loss of life related to a hurricane is from the storm surge. Storm surge is simply water that is pushed toward the shore by the force of the winds swirling around the storm. This advancing surge combines with the normal tides to create the hurricane storm tide, which can increase the mean water level to heights impacting roads, homes and other critical infrastructure. In addition, wind driven waves are superimposed on the storm tide. This rise in water level can cause severe flooding in coastal areas, particularly when the storm tide coincides with the normal high tides. Because much of the United States' densely populated Atlantic and Gulf Coast coastlines lie less than 10 feet above mean sea level, the danger from storm tides is tremendous.

The storm surge combined with wave action can cause extensive damage, severely erode beaches and coastal highways. With major storms like Katrina, Camille and Hugo, complete devastation of coastal communities occurred. Many buildings withstand hurricane force winds until their foundations, undermined by erosion, are weakened and fail. Storm surge can travel several miles inland and can also span hundreds of miles of coastline.

It is important to keep in mind that storm surge is not a factor in the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale. Know that even a tropical storm or Category 1 hurricane can have a devastating storm surge if the proper conditions exist. In other words, don't assume that a tropical storm or a hurricane on the low end of the Saffir-Simpson Scale will not have a large or significant storm surge. Be sure to stay informed and pay close attention to storm surge forecast details regardless of the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale rating.

Develop an Evacuation Plan

The first thing you need to do is find out if you live in a storm surge hurricane evacuation zone or if you're in a home that would be unsafe during a hurricane. If you are, figure out where you'd go and how you'd get there if told to evacuate. You do not need to travel hundreds of miles. Identify someone, perhaps a friend or relative who doesn't live in a zone or unsafe home, and work it out with them to use their home as your evacuation destination. If you don't live in an evacuation zone, identify someone who does, and plan to be their inland evacuation destination. Be sure to account for your pets, as most local shelters do not permit them. Finally, be sure to put the plan in writing for you and those you care about.

Know Your Zone

Know Your Zone is a cooperative effort of North Carolina Emergency Management and county emergency management partners in coastal counties. After being piloted during the 2019 hurricane season, state and county emergency management will partner to officially launch the Know Your Zone initiative prior to the peak of the 2020 season.

North Carolina Know Your Zone is a tiered evacuation system that highlights areas most vulnerable to impacts from hurricanes, tropical storms, and other hazards. If it becomes necessary, local officials will order evacuations using pre-determined zones created by coastal counties. The Know Your Zone lookup tool is a new color-coded interactive map you can use to determine the evacuation zone where you live, work, or are visiting based upon your street address.

Evacuation zones highlight areas most at risk to storm surge and flooding. Local officials will determine which areas should be evacuated. Areas in Zone A will typically be evacuated first, followed by areas in Zone B, etc. While all zones won't be evacuated in every event, emergency managers will work with local media and use other outreach tools to notify residents and visitors of impacted zones and evacuation instructions.

Please take some time this week to read more about Know Your Zone in preparation for this launch and coming hurricane season. To access the lookup tool and other resources, please visit <http://knowyourzone.nc.gov>.

For more information about hurricane preparedness, please visit the following

- web sites:
- <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/hurricane-preparedness>
 - <https://www.weather.gov/wrn/hurricane-hazards>
 - <http://www.readync.org>
 - <http://knowyourzone.nc.gov>