**Fire Fighters Urge Residents to Prepare Now**

**for a Busy Hurricane Season**

*Take action now to help protect your family and your property
in a major natural weather event*

Hurricane season has arrived, and your professional fire fighters are urging residents to make preparations to protect their families and property.

An above-normal hurricane season is expected this year, according to climate forecasters, threatening communities with extensive storm-surge flooding, wind damage and power outages. The continued presence of COVID-19 adds another layer of danger for residents seeking shelter – as well as for fire fighters and other emergency responders who are called on for countless storm-related rescues from homes and cars.

While your professional fire fighters are trained and are ready to protect you and your family, steps you can take now can help keep everyone safe.

Before a hurricane strikes your community, build and emergency kit stocked with food and water for at least three days, first aid supplies, prescription medications (if needed), flashlights, extra clothing and cash. Establish a communications plan for your family and learn evacuation routes in case local officials call for mandatory evacuation. Make sure your generator, flashlights and cell phones are working.

Next, take steps to secure your home and surrounding property in the event of flooding and high winds. Consider moving valuable items in your home to upper floors and store important documents in a safe watertight place. Move your cars to a garage or to higher ground away from the home.

Clean your gutters and your property of debris and stow all outdoor furniture, grills or other large items.

Once a hurricane hits, if you are not ordered to evacuate, take refuge in a small interior room. Stay away from windows, skylights and glass doors. If the eye of the hurricane passes in your area, there will be a brief period of calm – do not go outside until the storm is over.

After a hurricane, if you have been evacuated, return to your home only if officials say it is safe. Drive only if necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed-out bridges. Stay away from dangling power lines and report them immediately to the local power company. Never use a generator inside your home, crawlspace or shed. Smell and listen for gas leaks and do not overload power cords or run them under carpets.

Following any major natural disaster, consider having a licensed professional check the gas system and electrical wiring in your home to make sure it is safe to use.

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