

Plan Before Storms To Secure Home, Evacuate To Shelter

BY SUSAN USHER

When a hurricane threatens, most coastal residents in its expected path need to do two things: secure their homes; and, if asked to evacuate, retreat to safer shelter.

Judging by past storms, most South Brunswick Islands visitors head directly for home, according to Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan.

Area residents are encouraged to take shelter with family members or friends who live outside the evacuation area. Many seek shelter in their local churches, though those facilities are not approved shelters and do not receive county support before, during or after a hurricane—including liability protection.

But Brunswick County opens at least 10 public shelters of its own, using the facilities of the Brunswick County Schools (see list).

When it comes to responding to a hurricane threat, Brunswick County considers itself to be one of the best-prepared of North Carolina's coastal counties. It has an extensive response system in place that involves all county employees, the public schools, fire and rescue volunteers, and American Red Cross personnel.

While local beach communities work very well with county officials when Brunswick County Commissioners recommend evacuation of barrier islands, during past storms not everyone has left the beach.

"We never have had 100 percent evacuation of the islands," said Logan. "We always have one or two to stay."

The county only recommends evacuation; to what degree it is enforced is left to the towns and varies from island to island. "Generally, if someone chooses to stay on an island," said Logan, "what happens is the officers ask for personal data: name, address, next of kin. That's pretty much all we can do."

When evacuation is advised in Brunswick County, it applies not on-

ly to barrier island beach communities, but also other coastal areas, low-lying areas subject to heavy flooding, and to all mobile or pre-fabricated-type homes.

"We try before we make a decision, to use all available information," said Logan, tapping state and national resources such as personal contacts at the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, Fla.

Campgrounds are asked to evacuate early, under watch conditions, because slow-moving vehicles can turn local roadways into bottlenecks during an evacuation.

Evacuation is ordered in time for all parties to leave the barrier islands safely—before high tides or high winds make the pontoon bridge at Sunset Beach impassable and before gale-force winds begin buffeting the high-rise bridges to the Oak Island beaches, Ocean Isle Beach and Holden Beach. "Once you reach gale-force winds, the bridges really aren't safe to travel," said Logan. "If someone chooses to stay on the island, they will have to stick it out. You can't leave during the eye of the storm and expect to get to safety. The storm moves too quickly and that wind can blow a vehicle off the bridge."

While the state guideline is 8 1/2 hours lead time in Brunswick County, Logan said local officials know that during the fall "fishing season," evacuation can be completed in as little as 4 1/2 hours.

"We've done it," he said. "That gives us a four-hour margin of error this time of year in addition to the fudge factor built into the computer models themselves."

Under A Watch

Those who fare best when a hurricane threatens are those who have planned ahead, who know what steps to follow and are ready to act quickly and calmly.

Logan especially recommends advance planning for any elderly or ill family member who may need special care, such as oxygen. Some area nursing or rest homes will agree in

Brunswick County Shelters

Here are Brunswick County's existing shelters and the areas they generally serve:

- Union Elementary School, Union School Road—Ocean Isle to Calabash;
- Shallotte Middle School, Village Road—part of Ocean Isle Beach, Shallotte and Shallotte Point;
- West Brunswick High School, N.C. 130 West—Holden Beach, plus the areas listed above;
- Waccamaw School, Waccamaw School Road, Ash—overflow facility for those heading away and unable to continue on because of high winds, torrential rainfall or flooded roadways;
- Southport Elementary, West Ninth Street, Southport—Oak Island, Bald Head Island and Southport;
- South Brunswick Middle, Cougar Road, Boiling Spring Lakes—same;
- South Brunswick High, Cougar Road, Boiling Spring Lakes—same;
- North Brunswick High, Leland Middle and Lincoln Primary in the Leland area also handle evacuees from the Southport-Oak Island area.

advance to accept such individuals on an as-needed basis. Logan has contacts in other counties he works with as well.

When a hurricane watch is issued, it means a hurricane is possible within 24 to 36 hours. Logan said that means it is time to:

- check batteries, prescription medication and other supplies;
- stock up on water, bottled and otherwise. Fill up bathtubs, sinks, buckets, clean milk jugs, clean trash cans, pots and pans. If electrical power is slow to be restored, or water sources contaminated, you'll need all the water you can provide for drinking, food preparation, flushing toilets and washing.
- fuel vehicles;
- make sure the family boat is sheltered, either in storage or in safe harbor;
- secure loose items outdoors, such as lawn chairs;
- obtain a re-entry permit (available at town hall) if you live in a barrier island town. This permit must be presented to guards in order to return to the island after the storm. This is a precaution aimed at protecting the owner's or renter's property from looting and vandalism.

ism.

Under A Warning

When a watch is upgraded to a warning—which means a hurricane is expected within 24 hours—it's time to get ready to leave, said Logan.

He recommends that property owners or renters:

- Cut off all fuel sources, such as LP gas, natural gas or heating oil, outside the house.
- Pull the main electrical breaker for the house. Most likely the power company is going to cut the power off. However, pulling the breaker reduces the potential for fire inside your home when electrical service is restored, should there be downed power lines.
- Close doors and windows.
- Leave. Take pets to the kennel (prearrange) and travel to your shelter of choice by a route you've planned in advance, taking into account the possibility of flooding in low-lying areas.

Going To A County Shelter?

They provide temporary shelter, not comfort. That's the thing to re-

COORDINATING HURRICANE RESPONSE

Increased Public Awareness Of Threat Considered Plus By Manager

BY SUSAN USHER

If South Brunswick Islands area residents were ever complacent about the potential threat of a major hurricane, that's certainly not true today.

Cecil Logan, Brunswick County's emergency management coordinator, rates the awareness of local residents as "high," citing response to Emily's threatening passage as a good example.



LOGAN

He's glad of it because when the public is cooperative it makes his job—coordinating local response to protect lives and property—easier.

Catching our attention: The ferocity of Hurricane Hugo, which caused \$6 billion in property damage in South Carolina in 1989, and Hurricane Andrew, which caused \$18 billion in damage in Florida alone last year.

Hugo made landfall 150 miles to the south, near McClellanville, S.C., yet \$7 million in damage claims was paid in Brunswick County. Damage was even more telling from a fierce winter storm with hurricane-force winds that struck March 13. Claims totaled \$23 million.

The damage from Hugo was an eye-opener.

"It's not supposed to happen. We were not supposed to get that kind of damage, but it happened," said Logan. "It shook everybody up—the federal people, the state people—when I showed them the video (taken from a local pier during the storm). Now they are rethinking their scenarios."

Data from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' updated hurricane

modeling program should be available for Brunswick County by mid-September. The new data should reflect Brunswick County's unique coastal configuration—beaches with an east-west alignment, lying within the curvature of the Long Bay.

Now that emergency managers have the public's attention, they want to keep it. For Logan, that boils down to a simple approach: "We try not to overreact to any situation, but try to maintain a calm, collective outlook. We take it step by step."

That increased public awareness of the threat posed by hurricanes could be very important over the coming decade.

The National Weather Center and other students/observers of tropical cyclones warn that changing weather conditions point to a future return to the frequencies of hurricane activity experienced during the 1940s through 1960s.

For the past two decades major hurricanes striking the United States coast have been less frequent than for the three previous decades. Storm activity is expected to continue slightly below average again this hurricane season, which began June 1 and continues through Nov. 30.

However an increase in both the number and severity of hurricanes in the Atlantic basin is expected in coming decades.

A leading hurricane expert, Professor William Gray of the Department of Atmospheric Science, Colorado State University, has predicted six named storms (tropical disturbances that intensify to tropical storm status, with rotary circulation and wind speeds above 39 mph), with three expected to threaten the East Coast. He doesn't predict how many will actually make landfall.

"But the severity of the storms is greater than they have been," said Logan.

Gray bases his predictions on four factors, giving weight to rainfall patterns and temperatures in West Africa, where drought has ended and one region appears to be entering a wet period like that of 1947-69. He also looks at the relative strength of El Nino, a warm-weather pattern; barometric pressure in the Caribbean basin and the direction of equatorial winds at two levels of the atmosphere.

Since June there have been five named storms, Arlene, Bret, Cindy, Dennis and Emily. Any future storms will be named in alphabetical order from a list that still includes: Floyd, Gert, Harvey, Irene, Jose, Katrina, Lenny, Maria, Nate, Ophelia, Philippe, Rita, Stan, Tammy, Vince and Wilma.

September and October are the peak hurricane months along the coast of the Carolinas, with seawater temperature a player in the overall picture.

"Whether we have a quick cooling off will make a difference," said Logan. "If we maintain high water temperature that serves almost like a magnet for a hurricane. It draws bad weather."

Pre-Kindergarten Services Offered By Five Schools

Five Brunswick County schools will provide either home- or school-based pre-kindergarten services this year to eligible four-year-old children.

Union Elementary in Shallotte and Lincoln Primary in Leland will serve approximately 18 children each in school-based programs.

Home-based services will be offered by Waccamaw, Supply and Bolivia elementary schools. In this

model a certified teacher will visit the child's home each week to provide activities and experiences that are important for school readiness. Any parents whose child will be age 4 by Oct. 16 may register their children for screening by Sept. 8.

Additional information and registration forms are available at each participating school or by contacting Patricia Ward, Chapter 1 director, 754-9282 or 457-5241.

Left-Turn Lane Proposed At Ash

State takeover of a section of Shingletree Road isn't the only action at Friday's State Board of Transportation meeting expected to be well received in Brunswick County.

Also on the agenda is approval of a center left-turn lane on N.C. 130 at its intersection with Waccamaw School Road (S.R. 1330) and Longwood Road (S.R. 1321).

That public safety project is expected to cost \$68,215.

member if you're contemplating going to a county-operated, Red Cross-approved public shelter in a local school.

You won't find the comforts of a cheap motel room, much less of home.

All county shelters generally open at approximately the same time in advance of a storm. If school is in session, classes are dismissed in time for students to return to their homes and evacuate with their families, and for staffs to ready the shelters.

Each school is staffed by the school principal, the head custodian and the cafeteria manager, plus law enforcement officers, personnel from the Brunswick County Department of Social Services and a local "ham" radio enthusiast from the Brunswick County Amateur Radio League, which provides a vital communications link.

"If the power goes out and the telephones go out, those folks will still be operating," said Logan.

This year Logan is arranging with the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Department to provide staff members or volunteers to help maintain morale in the shelters by planning activities such as games.

If electricity goes out there are backup generators at each site, maintained and operated by school system personnel, that provide enough power "to run the lights, a TV and the coffee pot," said Logan.

As an extra safety precaution during the actual passage of the storm, evacuees will be moved into hallways and classrooms, away from outside doors and windows and the big-roofed area of the gymnasium or cafeteria.

What To Take, Not Take

Carry only approved items inside the shelter and prepare for a stay of up to three days.

Approved items include the following:

- blankets;
- jugs of drinking water (one gallon per person per day);
- important legal papers such as identification, deed, insurance, etc.,

—prescribed medications; provisions for infants; games, etc. to keep children entertained.

Other items that you might need immediately after the storm can remain in your vehicle. Logan recommends making a videotape or photographic inventory of any special collections, such as guns, jewelry or crystal.

Any items brought into a public shelter are subject to search by law enforcement officers on duty at each shelter.

Items that may not be brought:

- alcoholic beverages of any kind;
- coolers;
- food (other than infant formula, etc.). Food will be provided as soon as possible.
- weapons.

pets. Make arrangements in advance for your animals. If a pet is brought to a shelter, it will be placed in the temporary care of Brunswick County Animal Control and remain in a truck or portable animal shelter outside the building.

Golf Courses Join Marketing Program

Six Brunswick County golf courses have joined forces with Corporate Sports Incentives (CSI) of Merrimack, N.H., for a national marketing program.

Carolina Shores, Lockwood Links, Brick Landing Plantation, The Pearl, Ocean Harbour and Sea Trail Plantation are participating in CSI's nationwide Universal Golf Ticket program.

The program currently works with 500 golf courses across North America, including 12 in North Carolina, according to a CSI news release.

CSI sells Universal Golf Tickets to corporations, which distribute them to employees, in business deals and as part of consumer promotions.

Recipients can use the tickets for free rounds of golf at participating courses, and the courses remit the tickets to CSI for payment.

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