

Hurricane Readiness

By Jason Baker, Pine Knoll Shores Fire Chief

Hurricane season is almost here, and it is time to go over some of the lessons learned from past storms here in Pine Knoll Shores. It takes just *one* storm to devastate a coastline, and being prepared can go far in avoiding disaster and minimizing damage.

Now is the time to make your hurricane preparations; don't wait until a storm is approaching to take action. Below are some guidelines and reminders.

First, gather all of your important paperwork: insurance documents (property, life and health), social security cards and basic bank records. Should the worst occur and you incur damage to your house or property, you will have the necessary paperwork to begin the recovery process. Make sure everything is current. It is a good idea to place this paperwork in waterproof packaging in a backpack and keep it in a safe place where you can easily find it and take it with you should you evacuate.

Be sure you have your hurricane re-entry pass. If you do not have one, please come to the Public Safety Building and speak to Natalie Gibble, me or any of the firefighters to have one issued to you. You must have this pass to return to the island after an evacuation.

As a storm approaches, be sure you have enough food for 96 hours. Stock up on nonperishable food items and water, and don't forget supplies for your pets. Place these foods in a box or crate in a safe place.

Check your supply of medications. Be sure that you have adequate supplies of prescription medications to last if you are evacuated or are unable to get to the pharmacy for a few days. This, too, should be stored in a safe, dry place.

Make sure your basic emergency kit is up to date. Be sure you have fresh batteries in your flashlights and battery-operated radio and that your first-aid kit is well stocked.

Fill your car with gas. Well in advance of a storm's landfall, top off your tank. Evacuation routes can be jammed with traffic, and a full tank will ease your anxiety as you make your way away from danger. Also, if you choose to shelter in place for the storm, it may be a while before gas stations have their power restored.

Be sure to have cash on hand in case ATMs are not working. Just as mentioned above for gas stations, banks may be without power for a period of time.

Don't wait until the last minute to prepare your home for the storm. We've all seen the mad rush to purchase plywood and other supplies to protect homes. Decide what you may need ahead of time and make your purchases early. If you need help to bring in patio furniture and other items, be sure to make arrangements for that before the last minute as well.

Register with the Carteret County CodeRED communication service that allows the Emergency Management team to notify citizens about emergency situations. To register, visit carteretcountync.gov/525/Emergency-Notification. Direct all questions about CodeRED to the Emergency Services Department at 222-5841.

Proper generator use. If your home has a built-in generator system, it is a good idea to have it serviced to be sure it will be ready to go if you lose power during a storm. During the service call, ask the technician to give you a refresher on the operation of the system as well.

If you rely on a portable generator for your emergency power needs, it is important to be aware of the potential hazards associated with these units, which include risk of electrical shock, carbon monoxide poisoning and fires from improper refueling. You should never plug a portable generator directly into your house unless you have a proper transfer switch that has been installed by a qualified electrician. Instead, plug appliances directly into the generator itself or use extension cords that are rated for the load you are placing on them.

Never place a portable generator in the house or in the enclosed garage; it is essential that the generator have proper ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. In addition, keep in mind that it will likely be wet during a hurricane. If your generator doesn't have a GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter), you should use a multi-plug adapter that has that feature. Never operate the generator standing in wet conditions.

The main fire hazard from a portable generator occurs during refueling. The generator will get hot enough during operation to ignite the vapors from the gasoline as you pour it into the tank—potentially resulting in a flash fire. Always allow the generator to cool before refueling, and be sure it is well ventilated to avoid accumulation

A Matter of Balance

A free class sponsored by the Age-Friendly Advisory Committee

Are you afraid of falling? Are you interested in improving balance and flexibility? If you answered yes, this workshop is for you. Carteret County Senior Services will be offering a workshop entitled "A Matter of Balance"—an eight-session program that emphasizes practical strategies for managing falls. Participants will learn to view falls as controllable. At the workshop's conclusion, you will be prepared to set goals for increased activity, make changes to reduce fall risks at home, and perform exercises to increase strength and balance.

The workshop will be held at the Pine Knoll Shores town hall beginning June 1 at 2 p.m., and will continue each Friday and Wednesday through June 24. Registration is required as space is limited. For more information about the workshop or to register, please contact Mary Dixon with Carteret County Senior Services at 247-2626.

of vapors. Also, be sure to store the fuel away from the operating generator (and away from your living space).

Mandatory evacuation—what does this mean? It means that Emergency Management Services is strongly recommending that you leave the island. It does not mean that we can forcibly make you leave. There may be a time in the storm when rescue efforts will be shut down because it is unsafe for emergency services personnel to be out in the storm. If you were to need services, there could be a delay before you receive assistance. Be sure to consider this possibility when making your decision about evacuation.

If you evacuate, when should you choose to leave? It is recommended that you leave at least 48 hours before the estimated landfall of a hurricane. If you can possibly leave at 72 hours out, you may avoid traffic issues.

Where should you go if you evacuate? My personal recommendation is beyond Raleigh, Burlington or Greensboro. Hopefully that will place you beyond any potential path of the storm, and you will have power throughout your stay in the motel. Be sure to check with motels ahead of time to make sure your pets will be welcome. It is also a good idea to let friends and family know that you have evacuated.

If you require evacuation to a facility for medical reasons (oxygen, assistance with medications, etc.), you must register with Carteret County Emergency Services. If you do not have internet access, call Natalie Gibble at the Pine Knoll Shores Public Safety Department at 247-2268 for assistance. If you do have access to a computer, go the Carteret County website (carteretcountync.gov) and select Emergency Services under the "Services" tab. On the Emergency Services page you will see a link to "Public Shelters." Once you click on that, you will be able to download a form to register for this service.

More information is available. More storm readiness tips are available on the National Weather Service's website at www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare or FEMA's website at www.ready.gov. In addition, I will give a hurricane preparedness briefing at town hall in June that will be open to all citizens. Notice of the date and time of that briefing will be publicized through the town-wide email system.

When the storm is over. It is good to check the town's website (townofpks.com) or Facebook page for updated information after a storm has passed. The town's radio station, AM-1610, is a good source of information as well. If you do not already receive emails from Town Manager Brian Kramer, email Town Clerk Scott Sherrill now at admin@townofpks.com to be added to that list. If you don't have internet access from your evacuation site, you may call the Pine Knoll Shores Public Safety Building at 252-247-2268 or the Carteret County Communications Center at 252-726-1911 to be sure the bridges have reopened before you return to the area. An important (and obvious) point: *do not* call these numbers to ask when electricity and cable services will be restored.