

Children Need Facts, Reassurance During A Hurricane

BY SUSAN USHER

What about the kids?

When a hurricane threatens, it is easy for adults to get caught up in their own concerns for securing physical safety. When the storm passes, their first response is that of relief.

In either case it is all too easy to ignore the emotional needs of children. In *Coping with Children's Reactions to Hurricanes and Other Disasters*, the staff of the San Fernando Valley Child Guidance Clinic in Northridge, Calif., reminds us that fear is a normal reaction to danger that threatens life or well-being and that a child's fears may continue even after that threat no longer exists.

The Brunswick Beacon talked with two school system guidance counselors on their experiences with primary school children and hurricanes. Their training and experience suggests that children need both information and reassurance when coping with a fear-inducing event such as a hurricane.

"A young child is centered on self," said Sue Chapman, a guidance counselor at Union Primary School. Youngsters expect a certain dependability from adults and from nature. Anything that disrupts familiar surroundings or a familiar routine can cause a child to experience anxiety and fear.

How a child handles a threatening situation often

When an unusual situation occurs, the ability of some parents to reassure their child may be impaired, particularly when they themselves may be frightened.

mirrors their parents' response. Parents set the tone. Reassurance with firmness is an effective approach; getting angry, spanking or shouting rarely help.

Parents need to remember that the child isn't trying to disrupt the family, only to ease his own fears.

Parents routinely help children cope with fears encountered every day. However, when an unusual situation occurs, the ability of some parents to reassure their child may be impaired, particularly when themselves may be frightened. Being unable to turn to adults for reassurance can make a child even more fearful.

"Parents scare their children sometimes with their own reactions," said Mrs. Chapman. "It is important for parents to get their emotions in check."

That can be hard to do; she knows. Even at the school, while trying to deal in a straightforward fashion

with students' questions and concerns, teachers and staff are hastening to secure the campus.

What to do? While you can't control nature, students are told, you can prepare. Those who don't prepare are the most likely to come to some harm.

"If people would just get ready that would take care of a lot of the fear," concluded Mrs. Chapman.

Coupled with the reassurance that the family is together and that the child will be looked after, it's OK for a parent or other adult to admit he or she is afraid also; that admission might even make it easier for a child to talk about his or her own fears, real or imagined.

Children want and should be part of the family's preparations for an emergency. They have a strong need to know what is going on, and more specifically, how it might affect them.

Most of the time what they need is information, said Wendy Milligan, drop-out prevention coordinator for the Brunswick County Schools and a former guidance counselor. She was a counselor at Union Primary School when the school closed early a few years ago as warnings were posted for a hurricane.

"Just give me the facts, then I can deal with them," she says of the students' general position. "Don't give me false reassurances."

When a family is preparing to evacuate for a hurri-

cane, for example, a child may want to know where the family is going, how long they might be there and whether a favorite pet or toy can be taken as well.

"A lot of them I talked to feared leaving home," she said, and returning that those familiar surroundings aren't there any more.

"We tell them they may not be the same, but that that is OK, they can rebuild. It may look bad, but like in *Annie* (a musical based on the comic strip character Little Orphan Annie), there's always tomorrow," said Mrs. Milligan. "It's tough, but you have to deal with it, and there are people who will pull together to help you."

Some students went with their families to a shelter during a previous hurricane threat. "That was not a good experience," she gathered from their comments, and the memories were very much on their minds when a warning was posted again.

But not all their memories of evacuation were negative; some of the kids talked in terms of the positive.

"They said they liked the way everybody came together, and the way their lifestyle slowed down—being with their extended families, the coziness of candles," she said. In the middle of their fears, students still enjoyed the adventure of it all.

Added Mrs. Chapman, "So far, we've been lucky. We haven't had to deal with the aftermath."

Don't Let Hurricanes Catch You Off Guard, Prepare Ahead Of Time

When it comes to hurricanes, experts agree that people should always prepare early and prepare for the worst.

Federal Emergency Management Agency officials say coastal residents should begin getting ready for hurricanes before a storm ever forms at sea.

"There's no doubt, you've got to be prepared," Holden Beach Town Manager Gary Parker said. "If you're not prepared there's a much greater possibility of loss of property and loss of life."

An escape route to the home of a friend or relative inland or approved Red Cross shelter should be picked out well ahead of time.

As a general rule, emergency management experts say people shouldn't travel any farther than necessary to find safety since roads will probably be jammed.

Homeowners also should make a comprehensive list of personal property and review their insurance policies before hurricane season to avoid problems down the road.

Basic supplies including emergency light sources, a portable radio and a first aid kit should be kept handy during the season, FEMA officials say.

Coastal residents should make sure they have flashlights and radios with extra batteries, lanterns, can-

Take Special Care In Securing Boats

BY DOUG RUTTER

Boat owners needs to take special precautions when a hurricane threatens.

All vessels that can be trailered should be removed from the water and stored in a safe place. Boaters from outside the area should plan ahead for safe anchorage or follow local boaters to a safe anchorage area.

Filling a boat with water will weigh it down and could keep it from being damaged in hurricane-force winds.

Larger boats that can't be trailered should be safely anchored in sheltered areas well before storm tides arrive. Upstream sections of the Shallotte and Lockwood Folly rivers have been used locally in the past.

If possible, large boats should be anchored in groups and tied together at the bows and sterns using protective bumpers.

Each boat should have three or four substantial anchors. Bow lines should be tied high to trees or pilings on the land, using a half hitch knot. Ropes should have plenty of slack to allow for rising tides.

Don't tie up parallel to a bank, since receding tides often beach or capsize boats secured in this fashion.

dles and matches. First aid kits should include bandages and aspirin plus any medication needed on a regular basis.

Families also should have enough food and water to last several days. Foods that don't need to be cooked or refrigerated such as canned meats, vegetables, fruits and juices are best.

Emergency management officials say water should be stored in plastic jugs or other covered containers. Each person will need about one

quart of drinking water per day.

If necessary, baby supplies such as food, canned milk or formula and disposable diapers should be kept handy for all emergencies.

Residents should stay tuned to radio or television broadcasts as storms approach the coast and begin preparing for possible evacuation as soon as a hurricane watch or warning is issued. A watch means that a hurricane or incipient hurricane conditions may pose a threat to coastal and inland communities. A hurricane warning warns that certain con-

ditions are expected in a specified coastal area within 24 hours or less: sustained winds of 74 mph or higher and/or dangerously high water or a combination of dangerously high water and exceptionally high waves, even though winds expected may be less than hurricane force.

Nailing boards over doors and large windows and putting masking tape on small windows can help reduce damage.

It's also a good idea to keep a full tank of gas during hurricane season or fill up as soon as a watch is issued. Remember, gas pumps won't work without electricity.

If you must evacuate, FEMA officials say it's important to know where you are going, leave early and leave during daylight if possible.

People should move their most valuable possessions that they can't take with them to the highest points inside the house.

Before they evacuate, homeowners should lock doors and windows, turn off water and electricity and do everything they can to protect their property from damage. Lawn furniture and garbage cans should be moved inside or tied down securely.

Evacuees should keep important papers such as driver's licenses and other forms of identification with them at all times. They should take

insurance policies, property inventory, medic alert information and maps.

People who plan to stay in a shelter should remember to make arrangements for their pets ahead of time. Pets, weapons and alcoholic beverages are not allowed in Red Cross shelters, though some churches or other private facilities may al-

low them.

Coastal residents should always heed evacuation warnings. But people who choose to remain in their homes should stay indoors and away from doors and windows. They should never attempt to drive during a hurricane because flooding can be erratic and may occur with little or no warning.



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What Damage Can It Do?

All hurricanes are dangerous, but some are more so than others.

The way storm surge, wind and other factors combine determines the hurricane's destructive power.

To make comparisons easier—and to make the possible hazards clearer, such as potential property damage and flooding—national forecasters use a disaster potential scale, the Saffir/Simpson, which assigns hurricanes to five categories: Category 1 is a minimum hurricane; category 5 is a worst case storm.

Category 1: Winds 74 mph to 95 mph or storm surge 4 feet to 5 feet above normal (Actual storm surge values for any hurricane vary depending upon the coastline configuration and other factors.). No real damage to building structures, with damage primarily to unanchored mobile homes, shrubbery and trees. Some coastal road flooding and minor pier damage may be expected.

Category 2: Winds 96 mph to 110 mph or storm surge 6 feet to 8 feet above normal. Roofing material, door and window damage may occur, with considerable damage to vegetation, mobile homes and piers. Coastal and low-lying evacuation routes flood two to four hours before arrival of center of storm. Small craft in unprotected anchorages break their moorings.

Category 3: Winds of 111 mph to 130 mph or storm surge 9 feet to 12 feet above normal. Some structural damage may occur to small residences and utility buildings with some curtainwall failures, and mo-

bile homes are destroyed. Flooding near the coast destroys smaller structures with larger structures damaged by floating debris. Terrain continuously lower than 5 feet above sea level may be flooded inland as far as 6 miles.

Category 4: Winds 131 mph to 155 mph or storm surge 13 feet to 18 feet above normal. More extensive curtainwall failures with some complete roof structure failure on small residences. Major erosion on beaches; major damage to lower elevations of structures near the shore. Terrain continuously lower than 10 feet above sea level may be flooded, requiring massive evacuation of residential areas inland as far as 6 miles.

Category 5: Winds greater than 155 mph or storm surge greater than 18 feet above normal. Complete roof failure on many residences and commercial buildings; some complete building failures with small utility buildings blown over or away. Major damage to lower floors of all structures located less than 15 feet above sea level and within 500 yards of the shoreline.

Massive evacuation of residential areas on low ground within 5 miles to 10 miles of the shoreline may be required.

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