



IMAS NOTE

From the University of Delaware Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service
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HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS FOR COASTAL SUSSEX COUNTY, DELAWARE

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According to the National Weather Service, June 1 through November 1 is officially hurricane season in Delaware. A hurricane is a tropical cyclone in which winds reach constant speed of 74 mph and greater and blow in a large spiral around a relatively calm center - the eye of the hurricane. Because 9 out of 10 deaths related to hurricanes are due to drowning, residents and visitors in coastal Sussex County should take the proper steps for hurricane preparedness. Hurricane preparedness is **understanding the threat** and **reacting properly**.

UNDERSTANDING THE THREAT

Locating the storm. It is important to understand the intensity, speed, and direction of the storm in order to plan and react appropriately.

- Storm intensity is based on the Saffir/Simpson Hurricane Scale, which ranges from one to five based on the hurricane's present intensity. This scale, given in the chart below, is used to estimate the potential property damage and flooding expected along the coast as a result of the hurricane.
- Knowing the direction and speed of the storm is necessary to determine how fast the storm is approaching the local area and whether it will move parallel to the coast or will directly impact the coast.
- Knowing the proximity of the eye will help determine how far you are from the maximum force winds and torrential rains that surround this deceptively calm center.

Determining whether you are vulnerable. The following guidelines should help you decide whether you should be prepared to evacuate. It is important to know your elevation. Call your local municipality or the Sussex County Office of Emergency Preparedness. To determine your vulnerability, see the chart below.

REACTING PROPERLY

Once you understand the nature of the threat, you can prepare adequately by following these emergency preparedness instructions.

When a hurricane watch is issued, follow these instructions:

- Have ready a portable radio and flashlight with fresh batteries, or other light source, and waterproof matches.
- Listen to radio or television National Weather Service reports and keep track of the storm's direction and intensity. This information is broadcast at 162.5 50 MHz frequency in Sussex County.
- Contact friends and relatives about your plans.
- Moor boats carefully. Take into account rising tides from storm surges. Move small craft on shore and secure to trailer, then fasten trailer to the ground or house. Fill boat with water to help weight it down.
- Fill family vehicle's fuel tanks and check water and oil.
- Tie down or store all outdoor equipment, such as furniture, garbage cans, tools, toys, etc. Otherwise, these objects will become instruments of destruction.
- Stock foods that do not require refrigeration or cooking preparation because all utilities may not be operable during and after the storm.
- Prepare a supply of fresh drinking water using clean, airtight containers.
- Board up large windows with shutters or lumber and use masking tape to reinforce small windows. Securely fasten mobile homes but be prepared to leave.
- Pack valuable documents, such as wills, insurance information, deeds, and contracts in waterproof containers and prepare to take them with you.
- Prepare survival kit that includes first aid supplies, food and water, blankets, light source and power, water purification tablets, tools for emergency repairs, and a change of clothes.

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When a hurricane warning is issued, follow these instructions:

- Prepare to evacuate (see Understanding the Threat). Shut off main power and main gas valve. Elevate your appliances above the floor to minimize damage from flooding water. Cover the refrigerator and freezer with newspapers and blankets for greater insulation. Avoid opening the refrigerator door to prevent food spoilage.
- Move valuable possessions that you cannot take with you to higher points within your home.
- Review check list to make certain that you did all you can to secure your property and your family's safety.
- Evacuate, if necessary. If you remain, stay away from windows and doors and continue to listen to official broadcasts.

For more information on hurricane preparedness, contact either of the following:

Delaware Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service, 738-8169

Marian Peleski, Chief Meteorologist of the National Weather Service, 328-7596.

WHEN TO PREPARE TO EVACUATE DURING A HURRICANE

STORM INTENSITY (BASED ON SAFFIR/SIMPSON HURRICANE SCALE)	LOCATION	ACTION*
<i>When the storm intensity is one of the following:</i>	and your location is one of the following:	then:
1 Winds 74-95 mph or storm surge 4-5 feet above normal	Below the 10-foot elevation contour line In a tent In a mobile home	Prepare to evacuate to higher ground.
or 2 Winds 95-110 mph or storm surge 6-8 feet above normal		
<i>When the storm intensity is the following:</i>	and your location is one of the following:	then:
**3 Winds 111-130 mph or storm surge 9-12 feet above normal	In a beach-front home or high-rise facing the ocean On narrow barrier islands facing ocean or bay Along the Inland Bays (Rehoboth, Indian River, Little Assawoman)	Prepare to evacuate to higher ground.
<i>When the storm intensity is one of the following:</i>	and your location is the following:	then :
***4 Winds of 131-155 mph or storm surge 13-18 feet above normal	Elsewhere along the coast	Prepare to evacuate to higher ground.
or ***5 Winds of 155 mph or greater or storm surge greater than 18 feet above normal		

***Remember: Not all coastal residents need to evacuate for all hurricanes, but they should be prepared to do so.**

****Expect widespread flooding and destruction of mobile homes.**

*****Expect extensive devastation and flooding.**

GLOSSARY

A hurricane is a tropical cyclone with sustained winds of 74 mph or greater.

A hurricane watch is the first alert when a hurricane poses a possible, but as yet uncertain, threat to the coastal community. Small craft advisories are issued at this time.

A hurricane warning is notice that within 24 hours or less a coastal area might be subject to either hurricane-force winds or dangerously high water and waves, even though expected winds might be below 74 mph.

A storm surge is an abnormal rise in the level of the sea produced by a hurricane or tropical storm. This inundation is usually responsible for the greatest loss of life and destruction of property.

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