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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michael Hadden
Communications Manager
(904) 279-0885 x 104
mhadden@nefrc.org

Hurricane Season Starts June 1- Have You Got a Plan?

Average Season Expected

NEFRC Leads Statewide Effort to Update Evacuation Plans

The 2009 Hurricane Season starts June 1. The National Hurricane Center and other sources have predicted an average season with forecasters saying there is a 70 percent chance of having nine to 14 named storms, of which four to seven could become hurricanes, including one to three major hurricanes (Category 3, 4, or 5.)

The Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFRC) is committed to serving as an educational and informational resource for the residents of our region and beyond. The Emergency Preparedness staff of the Council remains highly involved in tracking storm activity and remaining in constant contact with national, local and regional weather sources.

As evidenced in previous years, evacuation may be necessary in the event of a hurricane. All Northeast Florida residents are compelled to have an established “family hurricane plan” already in place before the season begins. Before a disaster occurs – it’s never too late to get a plan in place. Once a catastrophic event takes place – if you aren’t prepared - it could cost lives. It’s not worth the risk.

Residents need to know where your evacuation route is, where and how to get information about the route and when to leave for evacuation. As a response to the devastating 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, the Legislature identified enhanced statewide hurricane evacuation planning and a redefinition of the coastal high hazard area as state priorities. In accordance with this Legislative direction, the State of Florida Division of Emergency Management obtained Grant money through the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program to conduct regional evacuation studies across the State.

In support of these efforts, the NEFRC was designated to lead and coordinate the statewide effort to update ALL Regional Evacuation Plans with the State of Florida. The Statewide Regional Evacuation Study Program (SRESP) is a consistent and integrated mapping and analysis of all-hazards evacuation across Florida. Phase I of this effort is nearly complete and Phase II is underway, expected to be completed by the 2010 Hurricane Season. The Updated State Regional Evacuation Plan will make Floridians safer any time an evacuation, due to a hurricane or any other emergency, is required.

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Since the 2009 Hurricane Season is upon us, ***NOW is the time to prepare!*** Here is some useful information to help you ‘get a plan’ and be prepared:

- **Your Family Plan**

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) has prepared an **interactive guide** that will help you develop your family plan. Their ‘Get a Plan’ website will lead you through the necessary steps to make your family plan. **‘Planned is Prepared’** is the end result! Their Web site can be found at: <http://www.floridadisaster.org/family/>

- **Your Business Plan**

Of course, businesses need to ‘get a plan’ too. The **FDEM** has outlined the steps for businesses too, in the same interactive format, at: <http://www.floridadisaster.org/business/>

- **Your Necessary Supplies**

It is important to get your hurricane supplies well in advance of a storm. At a minimum you should have food and water for at least three to seven days. More detailed information can be found at: www.floridadisaster.org/supplykit.htm/

- **Beyond the 2009 Season:**

In the long run, besides having a plan for each season, residents of NE Florida are encouraged to take steps to make their homes more ‘hurricane resistant’.

The Florida Department of Financial Services administers the ‘MySafeFloridaHome Program’, which provides for matching grants to homeowners to ‘harden’ their homes against hurricane winds. Information about the program can be found at: <http://www.mysafefloridahome.com/>

Useful interactive guides to the type of efforts homeowners can make to strengthen homes and protect their families from wind and water can be found at the award winning **Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH)** Web site: <http://flash.org/>

When a storm may threaten Northeast Florida, the NEFRC website will be periodically updated with information that pertains to our Region. Visit the Council’s Web site at www.nefrc.org.

For up-to-date information on preparedness actions please rely on the National Weather Service office in Jacksonville (<http://www.srh.noaa.gov/jax/>) and your local County Emergency Management Office for the information you need!

GET A PLAN- BE SAFE AND PREPARED- NOW IS THE TIME!

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