

NJ Office of Emergency Management



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New Jersey Prepares for Tropical Storm Hanna

Trenton, NJ – The Corzine Administration in conjunction with The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJOEM) today issued a reminder that New Jersey residents and visitors should remain prepared for storm-related emergencies with the approach of Tropical Storm Hanna.

NJOEM, working in coordination with the National Weather Service and emergency management officials from all 21 counties are at work tracking the path of this powerful storm and are ready to meet it head on. They are also ready to issue up-to-the-moment safety reminders and evacuation orders in the event any hurricane, nor'easter or violent storm approaches coastal New Jersey.

“New Jersey's emergency management system is at the ready to help the public safely negotiate any threat or disaster,” said Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police and Director of NJOEM Colonel Rick Fuentes. He noted that New Jersey's emergency management system has made great strides in preparing for storms over the years through teamwork and technology. “Our best plans are not enough though, if the public doesn't take us seriously when the time comes. That's why we continuously stress storm preparedness and emergency procedures,” said Fuentes.

Experts at NJOEM noted that while weather forecasters are often unable to predict exactly where and when a storm will strike and how severe it might be until less than 12 hours before the storm actually hits land, residents are reminded that they must allow sufficient time to safely evacuate threatened areas if ordered. To keep people thinking about emergency preparedness, the state OEM reiterated that several basic safety reminders can help get people through a hurricane or disaster event.

Preparedness tips and evacuation routes can all be found online by going to the New Jersey Office of emergency Management website at www.ready.nj.gov. For those not online please call 211.

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The Corzine Administration recommends the following in the event of an emergency:

- Have batteries and flashlights available in case of a power outage
- Store water for drinking and washing in containers and in your bath tub
- Prepare an emergency kit to take with you when you evacuate
- Identify/prepare the transportation you will use to evacuate
- Know your threat and the evacuation route to use
- Only evacuate when recommended by emergency management officials
- Be a good neighbor and assist any elderly or special needs members of your community to ensure their safety, and preparedness levels in the event of an emergency

Residents are also encouraged to log on to the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services at: www.state.nj.us/health/ for health related information. Additionally, the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities encourage residents to visit: www.state.nj.us/bpu/ and find out what to do in the event of a power outage.

Fuentes also said that the Office of Emergency Management, located at the W. Trenton State Police Headquarters, tracks not only hurricanes, but any natural and/or man-made disaster with the potential to create a public safety threat for New Jersey residents. NJOEM is in place to assist and support county and municipal officials during times of emergency.

To aid in the orderly evacuation of threatened areas, New Jersey's state, county and municipal emergency management officials have developed plans aimed at reducing confusion and danger to the public. Emergency planning concerns focus on the analysis of potential hazards; vulnerable population(s); use of shelters to house evacuees; anticipated population behavior; and the stability of transportation systems and evacuation routes. To further aid in the evacuation of coastal areas, "Coastal Evacuation" signs have been placed along selected routes in Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, Ocean and Monmouth counties to help direct evacuating traffic along pre-designated routes.

According to data compiled by the National Weather Service, hurricanes of tropical storm intensity or greater have passed within 75 miles of New Jersey 20 times during the 1900s. While the hurricane season generally runs from June through November, September has been the month with the most hurricanes and damaging storms impacting New Jersey. In fact, most tropical storms that have had a severe impact on New Jersey occurred in September -- including the hurricanes of 1821 (the only time the eye of the hurricane passed directly over New Jersey); 1903; 1938; 1944; Donna in 1960; David in 1969; Gloria in 1985; and Floyd in 1999.

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While severe coastal storms skirt New Jersey each year, it does not mean that a major tropical storm or hurricane cannot hit the Jersey coastline. With an average coastal population of nearly four million people (the fourth largest coastal population of states affected by tropical storms), New Jersey is extremely vulnerable to the effects of hurricanes and related storm activity.

With New Jersey's coastline located far north of the tropics and geographically oriented north/south, the threat of hurricanes is somewhat diminished. And, at New Jersey's latitude, hurricanes normally move in a northerly direction rather than westerly, thus storms rarely hit the coast head-on. Also, the colder waters of the Atlantic inhibit hurricane growth. In fact, most tropical storms are actually decreasing in strength when they approach the Jersey coastline.

In spite of these circumstances, hurricanes are considered a major threat to New Jersey's population and coastal areas. The destructive winds and dangerous tidal surges associated with even a small hurricane have the potential of causing great loss of life and property damage. In fact, the main killer in a hurricane (9 out of 10 deaths) is floodwater -- primarily from coastal storm surge activity.

The following is a description of weather facts and terms used during hurricane and tropical storm events:

Hurricanes start as Tropical Depressions with winds of 39 mph or less; they become Tropical Storms when sustained winds reach 39 mph or greater. Hurricanes are placed in one of five categories, depending on their intensity and potential for causing destruction:

- Category 1 74-95 mph (trees, debris blown about; little or no damage to buildings)
- Category 2 96-110 mph (tree branches down; mobile homes, unsecured vehicles at risk)
- Category 3 111-130 mph (trees uprooted; damage to structures)
- Category 4 131-155 mph (significant damage to buildings and structures)
- Category 5 Over 156 mph (catastrophic damage)

A **Hurricane Watch** is issued for a coastal area when there is a threat of hurricane conditions within 24-36 hours. It means residents must obtain supplies, secure the home and prepare to evacuate. A **Hurricane Warning** is issued when hurricane conditions of strong winds, high water and storm surge are expected in coastal areas in 24 hours or less. It means residents must take action and prepare for possible evacuation.

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A **Flood Warning** is issued as an advance notice that a flood is imminent or is in progress at low-lying or flood-prone locations. Flood warnings are forecasts of impending floods and are issued by the NOAA Weather radio, local radio and television, and local emergency management agencies. A **Flash Flood Watch** is issued when flash flooding is possible within the designated watch area - be alert. A **Flash Flood Warning** is issued when a flash flood has been reported or is imminent - take necessary precautions.

“Our job is to make certain that the public fully understands emergency procedures and that they have the necessary information to make informed decisions. While we've gotten better and more sophisticated in predicting hurricanes, coastal storms, tornados and other natural phenomena, disaster can strike at any time,” said Fuentes.

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