

DPH Encourages Residents to Prepare Now for Emergencies as Peak Hurricane Season Begins

DOVER – In the Northern Atlantic Ocean, hurricane season occurs from June 1 to November 30, sharply peaking from late August through late October. Though Delaware has never experienced a direct hit from a hurricane, it has experienced impacts from some passing by, and just as often, the intense effects from tropical storms and nor'easters. The impact of Hurricane Harvey in Texas is a tragic example of how rain—even after a hurricane is over—can cause catastrophic loss of life and damage. Hazards from hurricanes and other storms include storm surge and severe flooding, along with high winds. These weather impacts can affect your drinking water, your ability to remain in your home, and your pets' safety as well. If a hurricane or significant storm were on track to hit Delaware, would you know what to do?

The Division of Public Health (DPH) is encouraging everyone to prepare and make your plans now so that you're ready in the event of a natural disaster or other type of emergency. Visit PrepareDE.org to get started. The website provides information about different types of disasters, such as damaging storms, flooding, severe heat or cold events, chemical leaks, and terrorist attacks. It also starts you on the right track to prepare with the below four basic steps:

- **Make a Plan:** The site provides communication plan templates for parents and a separate one for children, commuters, pets and evacuations. Most importantly, practice your plan.
- **Make a Kit:** After a major disaster, relief workers will

be on the scene, but it may take time for them to get to you. You should prepare to take care of yourself and your family for up to **three days** by making emergency kits and a go bag. Here you'll find out how much food, water, and what other supplies you'll need to keep on hand to keep your family going.

- **Stay Informed:** The Delaware Emergency Notification System (DENS) is the primary system for public warning and emergency protective action information in Delaware. The system allows local 911 centers or emergency managers to send messages to the specific street, neighborhood, or larger areas affected by the event. Register for DENS at PrepareDE.org.
- **Access Resources:** This page contains videos showing you how to make a plan, a kit and lists training opportunities available to you.

During a hurricane or strong Atlantic storm, flooding could make drinking water unsafe, and high winds may take out power. DPH wants you to keep the following tips in mind before any potential problems arise:

Persons With Complex Needs

DPH recommends printing out a copy of the [“Preparedness Buddy”](#) brochure, and filling it out. This downloadable and printable brochure is a great template for helping people with access and functional needs to identify a Preparedness Buddy to help them prepare to manage through emergencies and develop a personal emergency plan. The brochure asks you to list such important information as medications you are taking, food and drug allergies, medical supplies and equipment, medical and personal caregivers or disability service providers, primary care physician, communication and mobility challenges, and your specific transportation needs. A copy of the completed brochure should go to your Buddy so they are prepared in case of an emergency to assist you. You should also identify and send a copy of the brochure to an out-of-state Preparedness

Buddy. The Preparedness Buddy brochure can be found online at <http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/php/preparednessbuddy.html> in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole.

Food Safety

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) recommends stocking a three-day supply of non-perishable food. If you lose electrical power, be very cautious with refrigerated foods. Keeping refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible will keep food cold for about four hours. A full freezer will keep the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs or leftovers) that has been above 40 degrees F for two or more hours.

If you plan to eat refrigerated or frozen meat, poultry, fish or eggs kept at safe temperatures, cook the food thoroughly to the proper temperature to kill bacteria. Do not eat any food that may have come into contact with flood water. Discard canned foods with swelling, leakage, punctures, holes, fractures, extensive deep rusting, or dents that prevent normal stacking or opening.

Safe Drinking Water

Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purposes such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other large containers with water. FEMA recommends stocking one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation. If you are advised to boil your drinking water, heat water at the highest possible temperature so that it bubbles constantly (a rolling boil). Continue to boil water for one minute, and then let it cool. Store in clean, covered containers. Residents can also disinfect water using household bleach. Add 1/8 teaspoon (or 8 drops) of regular, unscented, liquid household bleach for each gallon of water. Stir it well and let it stand for 30 minutes before using it. Bottled water is another safe alternative.

For bottle feeding infants, use prepared, canned baby formula that requires no added water. When using concentrated or powdered formulas, prepare with bottled water if the local tap water source is potentially contaminated. Wash fruits and vegetables with water from a safe source before eating.

For information on safe drinking water, visit the DPH website at

<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsp/i-floodrecovery.html>.

Avoid Carbon Monoxide

A common source of fatalities during and after storms is carbon monoxide poisoning. Released from gasoline-powered generators, camp stoves, grills, lanterns and charcoal-burning devices are designed for outdoor use only. Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that can be lethal at high levels. If combustion devices are used indoors, dangerous CO levels can build up rapidly with no warning. Never use them inside and always ensure that any outside use is well-ventilated.

Pet Safety

Create an emergency pet supply kit in a waterproof tote. Include enough food, water, medications or other necessities for each of your pets to last at least three days. Also include a copy of your pet's medical records so you will have everything you need to sustain your pets in the event you and your pets need to evacuate quickly in an emergency. Pets should be wearing collars with tags that include your address and phone number.

Identify a safe room in your home for you and your pets, away from windows. Create a comfortable area for your pets with bedding and toys. If necessary, separate dogs and cats within the room or in separate rooms to minimize stress or conflict.

Bring all your pets inside immediately at the first sign or

warning of a storm or severe weather, and keep them inside with you. Pets can become frightened, run away or hide during severe weather. As a result, they can become lost, injured or killed. Take precautions to ensure your pets are not able to exit the home without supervision.

September is National Preparedness Month. For more information about emergency preparedness throughout the year, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Power of Preparedness](#) webpage. Also stay up to date on social media @CDCemergency or by searching #NatlPrep. You can also Support the [Thunderclap for #SafeAndWellSelfie](#) which invites you to take a #SafeAndWellSelfie with your family—pets included—at an emergency meeting place. Participation is easy:

1. Identify an emergency meeting place in your neighborhood.
2. Have a fire drill—evacuate your home and go to the meeting place.
3. Take a selfie and post it to Twitter and/or Facebook with the hashtag #SafeAndWellSelfie.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary

beverages .