

For Immediate Release

The American Red Cross Urges Cape Cod and Islands to Prepare for Hurricane Bill

Hyannis, MA August 21, 2009 –Hurricanes are strong storms that cause life and property threatening hazards such a flooding, storm surge, high winds and tornadoes. The American Red Cross urges everyone to update their family evacuation plan, emergency preparedness kit and get prepared. Preparation is the best protection against the dangers of a hurricane.

“By taking three basic preparedness actions you can become Red Cross Ready for hurricanes and other emergencies, the steps are 1) Get a kit, 2) Make a plan and 3) Be informed,” said Executive Director Glen Beasley. *“The Cape Cod and Islands Chapter, American Red Cross is here to help you get prepared for specific disasters like hurricanes. Even if you took action to prepare last hurricane season, it’s important that you revisit and update your communication plan and check your emergency preparedness kit for expired items.”*

If storm watches and warnings are issued, please always listen to the radio for information about shelters opening etc. The Red Cross will also strive to put the latest information up on the web site capecodandislandsredcross.org

Know what to do if a hurricane WATCH is issued

- Listen to weather updates from your battery-powered or hand-cranked radio.
- Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, hanging plants, bicycles, toys and garden tools, anchor objects that cannot be brought inside.
- Close all windows and doors. Cover windows with storm shutters or plywood.
- If time permits, and you live in an identified surge zone, elevate furniture or move it to a higher floor to protect it from flooding.
- Fill your vehicle’s gas tank.
- Check your disaster supplies kit to make sure items have not expired.

Know what to do if a hurricane WARNING is issued

- Listen to the advice of local officials, and leave if they tell you to do so.
- If in a manufactured home, check tie-downs and evacuate as told by local authorities.
- Secure your home by unplugging appliances and turning off electricity and the main water valve.
- If you are not advised to evacuate, stay inside, away from windows, skylights and glass doors.
- Do NOT use open flames, such as candles and kerosene lamps, as a source of light.
- If power is lost, turn off appliances to reduce damage from a power surge when electricity is restored.

The American Red Cross recommends the following preparedness actions:

Get or assemble an emergency preparedness kit:

A portable kit, stored in a sturdy, easy to carry, water resistant container should have enough supplies for three days. Check your kit and replace perishable stock every six months. Whether you purchase a kit or choose to build your own, your three-day kit should include:

- Water - one gallon per person, per day.
- Food - non-perishable, easy-to-prepare items such as tuna fish, peanut butter, crackers, and canned fruit. Make sure to include a manual can opener.
- A battery-powered or hand-crank radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries.
- A first aid kit.
- Prescription and non-prescription medication items. Include medical supplies like extra hearing aid batteries, syringes, etc.
- Copies of important documents, including birth certificates, insurance policies and social security cards.
- Sanitation and personal hygiene items.
- Extra cash. ATMs and credit cards won't work if the power is out.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members.
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person.
- Pet supplies (collar, leash, ID, food, carrier, bowls).

Prepare a family evacuation plan

The American Red Cross urges each and every household to develop a household disaster plan.

- Meet with your family to create a plan. Discuss the information you have gathered and why it is important to prepare for a disaster.
- Identify two meeting places; One right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire, and one outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- Be sure to make advanced preparations for your pets. Be aware that pets may not be allowed in shelters. Contact hotels, motels, family members and animal shelters to see if they would allow pets in a disaster situation. Keep a contact list of "pet friendly" locations. If you are asked to evacuate, take your pets with you.
- Choose an out-of-area emergency contact person. During or after a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance, especially if local phone lines are overloaded or out of service. Family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your emergency contact person's phone number and email address.
- Tell your family about the Safe and Well web site accessible at all times via www.redcross.org. The Safe and Well Web site is an Internet-based tool that allows those directly affected by a disaster to let their loved ones know of their well-being. People within a disaster affected area are able to select and post standard "safe and well" messages. Concerned family members who know the person's phone number (home, cell, or work) or a complete home address can search for the messages posted by those who self-register.
- Show and explain to each family member how and when to turn off the water and electricity at the main switches. Turn gas off only if instructed by local authorities. Remember, if the gas is shut-off, only a professional can turn it back on.
- Plan your evacuation route. Use local maps and identify alternate evacuation routes from home, work and/or school. Know where you are going and how you plan to get there before you leave home.

For more information about preparedness, about training, volunteering or to make a donation, please contact the American Red Cross, Cape Cod and Islands Chapter at 286 South Street, Hyannis, MA 02601. Internet users can make a secure online contribution at capecodandislandsredcross.org or call (508) 775-1540.

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