

The American Red Cross Prepares for Hurricane Earl

August 30th, 2010, Hyannis, MA – As hurricane Earl appears to be strengthening, the American Red Cross, Cape Cod and Islands Chapter and its volunteers are busy preparing.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts 3-to-7 major hurricanes this year. These predictions bear an eerie resemblance to the 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons, when multiple major hurricanes, including Katrina, struck the U.S. Major hurricanes are those Category 3, 4, and 5 storms that do the most damage – like Bob, Andrew, Katrina – with winds of over 100 miles per hour.

While Cape Cod and the Islands have not seen a major storm or hurricane since Bob in 1991, they were devastating in size and nature. The warm weather and especially warm water would help feed hurricanes and tropical storms and hurricanes might come up farther up the coast than in recent years.

While media and public attention comes when a hurricane comes ashore, what's often missed are the preparations made by the Red Cross to be ready to respond well before the hurricane hits.

For instance, when Hurricane Alex gathered strength in late June and threatened the Gulf coast, the Red Cross deployed 133 people, 17 emergency response vehicles and kitchen equipment to south Texas and put other vehicles and crews on stand-by and staffed four shelters that provided 117 overnight stays, served nearly 350 meals, and gave out 75 clean-up kits and 32 comfort kits.

And although the hurricane's path took it into Mexico and South Texas did not suffer a direct hit, the Red Cross spent money prepositioning equipment, people and materials to be ready – decisions that had to be made and money that had to be spent well in advance of landfall.

In order to be ready to respond to hurricanes like Danielle, Earl and possibly Fiona next, and other disasters the Red Cross must maintain 22 warehouses around the nation and stock enough supplies to support 350,000 shelter residents. That's two and a half times the number of people we sheltered during Katrina.



What American Red Cross Volunteers are doing locally...

Here on Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, volunteers attended a Hurricane Summit the middle of July, organized by Red Cross staff and volunteers. During the past year, besides supporting local disasters and flood relief efforts in the Northeast, volunteers have been practicing mass care and mass feeding exercises in several shelters across Cape Cod. They are in the process of finalizing walkthroughs in other shelters to ensure that all Disaster Action Team members had an opportunity to view the potential shelters, are familiar with the kitchen facilities and know where shelter materials are stored etc.

Please note that the American Red Cross does NOT open shelters, but Red Cross volunteers staff them. Rather, local Emergency Managers in collaboration with Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC) are the ones deciding which shelters are to be opened and will even arrange for transportation to a shelter if need be for members of the public.

Depending upon the type of storm, some shelters may be able to be opened before a storm as happened last December with the major snow storm. Once a shelter is opened, Red Cross volunteers are tasked to ensure that people can receive a meal, drinks, a cot, blanket, and other relevant support in the shelters assigned. *cont'd*

Should you be unable to stay in your home, e.g. because of power outages or flooding after a storm or hurricane, and should you be required to temporarily go to a shelter, a special list of what to bring to a shelter follows. . Take a look at the Hurricane check list or request your copy today at (508) 775-1540 or go online to www.ccredcross.org The American Red Cross recommends the following preparedness actions:

Prepare.

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.

American Red Cross, Cape Cod and Islands Chapter Executive Director Glen Beasley says: *"In the event of power outages, use flashlights—not candles—for lighting. Avoid all downed utility wires, which may be electrified and please check on elderly neighbors and relatives"*.

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Be informed.

- Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or local radio or TV stations for evacuation instructions. If advised to evacuate, do so immediately.
- Heed the advice of local officials, and leave if they tell you to do so.

What to bring to a shelter:

- Prescriptions and emergency medicine
- Extra clothes
- Pillows and blankets
- Hygiene supplies (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, razor, etc.)
- Important documents (driver's license, social security card, insurance information, wills, deeds and birth and marriage certificates)
- Battery-powered radio
- Comfort items (books, magazines, games etc.)
- Special items for family members who are elderly or disabled
- Families with children and infants should also bring special items such as diapers, formula and toys with them as well

At this stage, it is not certain which shelters will have pet sheltering available, so please do not bring pets, weapons or valuables. However, as part of the overall Sheltering Plan, Emergency Management has started addressing the need for pet friendly shelters and some accommodations may be available. This will be announced via the radio and other media as information becomes available.

The public is invited to download a special Hurricane Preparedness Check list from the web site at www.cciredcross.org or is available for those who call the Chapter House at (508) 775-1540 or write to American Red Cross, Cape Cod and Islands Chapter, 286 South Street, Hyannis, MA 02601. In addition, there are special Be Red Cross Ready video's and booklets available in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

The American Red Cross is a major partner in the overall Regional Sheltering plan on Cape Cod and the Islands and as such collaborates with the Barnstable County Regional Emergency Planning Committee (BCREPC) Cape Cod Disaster Animal Response Team (DART), Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), Cape Organization for Rights of the Disabled (CORD), Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and others.

The regional sheltering plan is designed to complement local, town management of emergency resources. Local and community shelters can open at any time. In an emergency, each town's Emergency Management Director makes decisions independently on deploying emergency resources, in coordination with regional authorities.

To prevent people going to shelters that may not be reachable or be unsafe, the emergency managers will not publish a shelter map but will announce which shelters will open by using radio and other media as available.

What to do when Hurricane Watches and Warnings are issued?

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.

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 cciredcross.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.
- Check your disaster supplies kit to make sure items have not expired.

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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.

How you can help. American Red Cross launches special Fundraising campaign

The American Red Cross is practicing what it preaches on preparedness. Nationally, it has already spent nearly \$30 million this hurricane season training and preparing volunteers and pre-positioning equipment and materials near areas that could be hit by hurricanes.

We are very worried about predictions of a severe hurricane season and the possibility that people will need to evacuate their homes for longer periods of time given the oil in the Gulf. We're gearing up to provide 1 million meals a day for hurricane victims, shelter 350,000 people a day, and deploy more than 50,000 volunteers.

The American Red Cross is launching a new national fundraising drive in anticipation of an extremely active hurricane season that could be made even worse by the Gulf oil spill. The Red Cross is asking the public for their support in advance rather than waiting for disaster to strike.

Contributions to the fundraising drive will support Red Cross readiness to respond to the some 70,000 disasters we respond to every year, whether they are hurricanes that affect millions of people, floods that affect thousands, or a house fire that drives one family from their home.

While media attention has focused on the oil spill in the Gulf and on Haiti, the American Red Cross has responded to 29 significant disasters in the U.S. this year. These have included floods in Tennessee, North Dakota, the mid-Atlantic and Northeast, tornadoes in the South and Midwest, and major fires in communities across the country. In addition, the American Red Cross has responded to 8 major international disasters this year, including the earthquakes.

Red Cross chapters across the country will be asking for help, and we are kicking off new television ads to urge people to donate and help us be more ready to respond to disaster.

There is no other non-governmental organization that can respond to disasters on the size and scale of the Red Cross – but we depend on donations from the American public to be ready. And we work hard to be excellent stewards of these donor dollars.

This year, instead of waiting for a disaster to strike and then asking for money, we are raising the money now to improve our readiness and reduce our borrowing for disaster response. Please click, text or call to donate to the Red Cross to help people affected by disasters. Every single donation brings hope to those in need.

For more information about disaster 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. You can help people affected by disasters like floods, fires, tornadoes and hurricanes, as well as countless crises at home and around the world, by making a donation to support American Red Cross Disaster Relief. Your gift enables the Red Cross to prepare for and provide shelter, food, emotional support and other assistance in response to disasters. Internet users can make a secure online contribution at cciredcross.org or call (508) 775-1540. Simply Text REDCROSS to 90999 to support all American Red Cross Disaster Relief Fundraising through your cell phone.

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Notes for the media: Background information follows:

Hurricane Check list

Hurricanes on Cape Cod and the Islands (source Red Cross Hurricane Summit, July 2010)

New England Hurricanes of Note

(source

:http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eopsmodulechunk&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Public+Safety+Agencies&L2=Massachusetts+Emergency+Management+Agency&sid=Eops&b=terminalcontent&f=mema_new_england_hurricanes_of_note&csid=Eops

Although the approaching Hurricane Season in New England is defined as June 1st through November 30th, the vast majority of the 40 tropical systems that have impacted our region over the past century have struck during the months of August and September. Because Massachusetts is such a relatively small state, it is important to realize that these are not just ‘coastal events’, but, in fact, everyone in the Commonwealth can be severely impacted by a major storm.

“New England is in the unenviable position of receiving all three types of Hurricane Threats,” states Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Director Don Boyce. “Depending upon the storm’s track and landfall location, we can experience coastal inundation from storm surge, widespread inland river flooding, and widespread wind damage.”

To best prepare ourselves for the future, it is important to revisit the past, and examine a dozen of the most notable New England Hurricanes and their catastrophic impact upon our region.

The Great Colonial Hurricane of 1635

August 25, 1635

This was the first historical record of an intense hurricane striking New England. The highest winds have been estimated at Category 3 or greater, with winds of 115-plus mph. The storm’s eye passed between Boston and Plymouth causing at least 46 casualties. A 20-foot tidal surge was reported in Boston, ruining farms throughout the area. Reports from Governor William Bradford describing the drowning of dozens of Native Americans, the toppling of thousands of trees and the flattening of houses suggest that this storm possessed even greater intensity than the storms of 1815 and 1938.

The Great September Gale of 1815

September 23, 1815

This storm was the first major hurricane to impact New England in 180 years. It initiated in the West Indies, growing to a Category 3 with winds of 135 mph. After crossing Long Island, New York, the storm came ashore at Saybrook, Connecticut, funneling an 11-foot storm surge up Narragansett Bay. There, it destroyed 500 houses, 35 ships and flooded Providence, Rhode Island. Impacting Central and Coastal Massachusetts, ‘The Great Gale’ destroyed the bridge over the Neponset River, connecting Dorchester and Milton, Massachusetts. At least 38 deaths have been attributed to this disaster.

The September Gale of 1869

September 8, 1869

A Category 3, this ‘September Gale’ was first observed in the Bahamas. It ultimately made landfall in Rhode Island just west of Buzzards Bay, dissipating in Northern Maine. This storm was very compact, but intense. It was reported to have been only 60 miles wide, but it caused extensive damage in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Maine. Fortunately, its arrival coincided with low tide lessening the storm surge and resulting damage.

The Great New England Hurricane of 1938

September 21, 1938

This Category 5, which has also been dubbed “The Long Island Express”, was first detected in the Tropical Atlantic. As it slowly moved northward, it suddenly accelerated to a forward motion of 60 to 70 mph, when it was 100 miles east of North Carolina. Without warning, it made landfall as a Category 3, during an astronomically high tide along Long Island, New York and the Connecticut coast. The Blue Hill Observatory, outside of Boston, measured sustained winds of 121 mph, with gusts of 183 mph. Storm surges of 10 to 12 feet inundated portions of the coast from Long Island to Southeastern Massachusetts, most notably in Narragansett Bay and Buzzards Bay. Heavy rains of 3” to 6” produced severe flooding, particularly in areas of Western Massachusetts and along the Connecticut River. Downtown Providence, Rhode Island was impacted by a 20-foot storm

surge. Sections of the Towns of Falmouth and Truro on Cape Cod were under 8 feet of water. The widespread destruction resulting from this storm included 600 deaths and 1,700 injuries. Over \$400 million in damage occurred, including 9,000 homes and businesses lost and 15,000 damaged. Damage to the Southern New England fishing fleet was catastrophic, as over 6,000 vessels were either destroyed or severely damaged.

The Great Atlantic Hurricane of 1944

September 14-15, 1944

Sometimes compared to the Great Hurricane of 1938, this storm was first detected northeast of the Lesser Antilles. From there, it hugged the United States coast, crossing Long Island, New York, the Rhode Island Coast, emerged into Massachusetts Bay and impacted Maine. With 140 mph winds, this Category 4, produced hurricane force winds over a diameter of 600 miles causing over \$100 million damage. 70-foot high waves were also reported. Up to 11" of rain fell in areas of New England. 390 deaths, mostly at sea, were attributed to this hurricane. It wreaked havoc on World War II shipping, sinking a U.S. Navy destroyer and minesweeper, as well as two U.S. Coast Guard cutters.

Hurricane Dog

September 11-12, 1950

A strong Category 5, Hurricane Dog reached a peak intensity of 185 mph. First observed east of the Lesser Antilles on August 30th, this was a major hurricane that never actually made landfall, passing within 200 miles of Cape Cod. However, it was responsible for the deaths of at least a dozen fishermen off the New England coast. It also caused about \$3 million damage. To this day, it retains the record for the longest continuous duration for a Category 5 Atlantic Hurricane of 60 hours, from September 5th through September 8th. 'Dog' also fluctuated between Category 4 & 5 strength on four different occasions, which is also a record.

Hurricane Carol

August 31, 1954

This compact, but powerful Category 2 battered New England, killing 68. With 100 mph winds, gusting up to 135mph, 'Carol' caused over \$461 million in damage, destroying 4,000 homes, 3,500 cars, and over 3,000 boats. This was arguably the most destructive storm to hit Southern New England since 1938. It formed as a tropical storm near the Bahamas, making brief landfall along the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The storm passed over Long Island, New York, through Central New England into Canada, bringing a storm surge of 14.4 feet to Narragansett Bay and New Bedford Harbor. Over 6" of rain fell. Water depths reached 12 feet in downtown Providence, Rhode Island. Some consider 'Carol' the worst storm in the history of Cape Cod. All of Rhode Island, much of Eastern Connecticut, and much of Eastern Massachusetts lost power, with a 95% loss of telephone service. The name 'Carol' has been retired.

Hurricane Edna

September 11, 1954

'Edna' arrived right on the heels of Hurricane Carol. It formed off of Barbados, reaching Category 3 strength at the Outer Banks of North Carolina, with its highest winds of 120 mph. Before striking New England, its eye split into two different ones, up to 60 miles apart at times, moving over Cape Cod & the Islands where peak gusts were recorded at 120 mph. Its eastern track, which resulted in heavy rain and major inland flooding, adding 5" to 7" of rain to Carol's previous 6". The storm was responsible for 29 deaths and \$40 million damage. Ultimately, it made landfall near Eastport, Maine, becoming one of Maine's worst-ever hurricanes. The name 'Edna' has been retired.

Hurricane Diane

August 17-19, 1955

Born in the tropical Atlantic, this storm reached Category 3 status, as it followed the path of Hurricane Connie of 5 days earlier. Maximum winds were recorded at 120 mph. Although it weakened to a Tropical Storm as it reached the Southern New England coast, 'Diane' dropped heavy rain of 10" to 20", setting flood records throughout the region. The storm was blamed for between

185 and 200 deaths. The \$832 million damage qualified it as the most costly hurricane in U.S. history until Hurricane Betsy in 1965. The name 'Diana' has been retired.

Hurricane Donna

September 12, 1960

Hurricane Donna was a Category 5 Cape Verde-type hurricane that impacted most of the Caribbean Islands and every single state on the U.S. Eastern seaboard. It recorded 160 mph winds with gusts up to 200 mph. 'Donna' holds the record for retaining 'major hurricane' status of Category 3 or better in the Atlantic basin for the longest period of time. From September 2nd to September 11th it sustained winds of 115 mph as it roamed the Atlantic for 17 days. This storm is the only one on record to produce hurricane-force winds in Florida, the Mid-Atlantic States and New England. 'Donna' hit New England in Southeast Connecticut with sustained winds of 100 mph, gusting to 125-130 mph, cutting diagonally through the region to Maine. It produced pockets of 4" to 8" of rain as well as 5 to 10-foot storm surges. The storm ultimately killed 364, and caused over \$500 million in damage. The name 'Donna' has been retired.

Hurricane Gloria

September 27, 1985

Hurricane Gloria was a powerful Category 4 Cape Verde-type storm that prowled the Atlantic for 13 days, with highest winds of 145 mph. Hugging the coastline, as it made its way north, 'Gloria' crossed Long Island, New York, making landfall at Milford, Connecticut. In spite of arriving during low tide, it did cause severe beach erosion along the New England coast, as well as the loss of many piers and coastal roads. There was a moderate storm surge of 6.8 feet in New Bedford, Massachusetts. The storm left over 2,000,000 people without power. It dropped up to 6" of rain in Massachusetts, causing many flooding issues in the region. Overall, casualties were relatively low with 8 deaths, but damage reached \$900 million. The name 'Gloria' has been retired.

Hurricane Bob

August 19, 1991

Formed east of the Bahamas, Hurricane Bob made landfall in New England near New Bedford, Massachusetts with 115 mph winds, cutting a path across Southeastern Massachusetts towards the Gulf of Maine. Peak winds of 125 mph were recorded in the Towns of Brewster and Truro on Cape Cod. Over 60% of the residents of Southeastern Massachusetts and Southeastern Rhode Island lost power. There were 4 different reports of tornados as 'Bob' came ashore. Buzzards Bay saw a 10 to 15-foot storm surge. A number of south-facing beaches on the islands of Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard lost 50 feet of beach to erosion. Up to 7" of rain was reported to have fallen throughout New England. 'Bob' was blamed for 18 storm-related deaths. The damage total for Southern New England was set at \$1 billion, with \$2.5 billion overall damage from the storm. The name 'Bob' has been retired.