



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS BEST PRACTICES

The 2023 Atlantic hurricane season has more uncertainty than usual due to a couple of key factors, according to a recently-released outlook. The Weather Company, an IBM Business, and Atmospheric G2 are forecasting 15 named storms, seven of which will become hurricanes and three of which will reach Category 3 status or stronger, in their initial outlook for 2023 released Thursday. That matches the 30-year average tally for hurricanes and is close to the average number of named storms in a hurricane season. □

First Responders, Public Works, and other departments will be called upon and must be prepared to assist their communities. Leaders of these organizations must also prepare for the possibility they may be the ones affected by a storm. Leaders are reminded of their obligation to protect their own, so they can protect others. Now is the time to prepare your facility, equipment, personnel, and business infrastructure for the possibility that you will be the one in need. Best practices include:

- **Discuss Claim Reporting Procedures.** Ensure there is a clear reporting procedure from the employee discovering the storm damage, to the department's representative, to the Fund's claim representative. Work with risk managers to identify possible insurance gaps and discuss areas of exposure.
- **Develop an Operations Continuity Plan.** Identify the department's critical functions and infrastructure. Safeguard vital records.
 - Create mutual aid pacts and vendor lists to provide services, or replace infrastructure affected by stormwater or wind.
 - If the facility is in a historically vulnerable area, consider relocating just before the storm hits.
 - Take pictures of the building and essential equipment.
- **Develop Salvage Response & Mitigation Plans.** Protect property from further damage when possible by quickly restoring power and fire-protection systems, repairing leaks, and providing temporary support.
- **Secure Objectives.** Survey the grounds and exterior of the building for loose objects and properly secure them. Trim trees near the building. Secure sheds and other outbuildings.
 - Gather mitigation resources such as sandbags, food & water, personal sundry items, plastic sheeting, and duct tape, extra mops, and squeegees.
 - Ensure generators' fuel tanks are full.
 - Ensure utility shut-offs are labeled and locations are known by occupants.
- **Inventory Routine, Emergency, & Backup Equipment.** Test emergency and backup equipment.
 - Perform routine maintenance on chainsaws, pumps, and other restorative equipment. Sharpen blades. Buy extras.
 - Verify contact information for employees. Distribute updated contact information to stakeholders.
- **Prepare Workers.** Workers must be trained to properly respond to storm conditions. Encourage them to have Go Bags.
 - Remind employees, that as the storm nears, they should sleep, eat, and hydrate themselves to prepare for a strenuous period.

- **Prepare Workers' Families.** Essential personnel cannot be available or effective if their families are not taken care of. Leaders must work with Administration, Human Resources, banks, Red Cross, etc. to make sure families are safely evacuated and cared for ahead of the approaching storm. Consider distributing the [Red Cross's Family Disaster Plan](#) form to assist with their planning.

Additional resources include:

- OSHA provides a Hurricane Preparedness and Response along with a [Hurricane eMatrix to Protect Workers](#).
- [Ready.gov](#) has many excellent hurricane-planning tools for businesses and families.
- N.J. Office of Emergency Management produced a [New Jersey Hurricane Survival Guide](#) for local information.
- [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Hurricane Preparedness](#).