



HURRICANE SEASON PREPARATION BEST PRACTICES

On average, New Jersey can expect one or two hurricanes annually. Recent history shows that we are experiencing more frequent and severe storms due to changes in weather patterns. Fire and EMS departments will be called upon and must be prepared to assist their communities. Emergency response organizations must also be ready to be directly affected by a storm. Leaders have an obligation to protect their own so they can protect others. Now is the time to prepare your facility, vehicles, 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 defined reporting procedure from the person 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, have plans to relocate before the storm hits.
 - Take pictures of the building, vehicles, 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.
 - Define when storm conditions necessitate pausing operations with stakeholders. Identify a single decision-maker and how the decision will be communicated to response agencies.
- **Secure the Station & Grounds.** Survey the grounds and exterior of the building for loose objects and secure them. Trim trees near the building. Secure sheds and other outbuildings.
 - Gather mitigation resources such as sandbags, food & water, sundry personal items, plastic sheeting, duct tape, pails, mops/squeegees, and wet vacs.
- **Inventory Routine, Emergency, & Backup Equipment.** Test emergency and backup equipment.
 - Perform routine maintenance on chainsaws, pumps, and other storm-related equipment. Sharpen blades. Buy extras.
 - Verify contact information for responders. Distribute updated contact information to stakeholders.
- **Prepare Workers & Families.** Train workers to respond to storm conditions. Encourage them to have Go Bags.
 - Remind responders to [prepare their families, homes, and vehicles](#) for the storm and the possibility that they may be on duty for an extended period with limited availability.
 - Remind responders that as the storm nears, they should sleep, eat, and hydrate themselves to prepare for a strenuous period.
 - Remind drivers of the agency's policy for driving through flood waters.

The checklist on the next page will assist your agency in preparing.

Hurricane Preparation Checklist for Fire & EMS Agencies

5 Days Before	
Operations	
	Review reporting procedures with officers from when a person discovers storm damage to the department's leadership to the Fund's claim representative.
	Review and disseminate the department's Storm Response and Business Continuity Plans.
	Coordinate communication plans with law enforcement, elected officials, and the community, including backup and contingency communication methods.
	Decide if shifts will need to be modified. Will the station need to be modified to accommodate extra responders?
Stations	
	Stock salvage material at stations: tarps, plastic sheets, plywood, buckets, wet vac, etc.
	Inspect the roof, gutters, and downspouts.
	Clear floor drains, apron drains, and nearby street catch basins.
	Trim tree branches overhanging the station.
	Check the operation of the emergency generator. Fill the fuel tank.
	Ensure utility shut-offs are labeled, easily accessible, and known by occupants.
	Top-off station gasoline and diesel fuel tanks.
Vehicles	
	Check storm-related equipment & supplies on vehicles: sump/trash pumps,
Responders	
	Remind responders to prepare their families, homes, and vehicles for the storm and possible extended post-storm operations. Include guidance for childcare, food/water, medications, cash, credit cards, and insurance policies.
	Verify contact numbers and call-back/on-call procedures with staff.
2 Days Before	
Station	
	Move or secure outside equipment that could be blown away.
	Plan for food, water, and sundry items for responders during extended operations.
Vehicles	
	Stock vehicles with storm-related response supplies: sand, shovels, tow straps, bottled water, extra first aid & patient movement equipment.
Responders	
	Remind drivers of policies against driving through flood waters.
Hours Before	
Station	
	Take a last survey of the exterior of the station.
Vehicles	
	Refill all portable oxygen cylinders, jump kits,
	If necessary, relocate vehicles from flood-prone areas.
Responders	
	Check in with your family.