



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS BEST PRACTICES

The 2026 Hurricane Season is upon us. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts a 35% chance of a near-normal season, a 10% chance of an above-normal season, and a 55% chance of a below-normal season. NOAA is projecting:

- 8 to 14 Named Storms (top winds of 39 mph or higher), including:
- 3 to 6 Hurricanes (top winds of 74 mph or higher), of which:
- 1 to 3 could be Major Hurricanes (Category 3, 4, or 5; winds of at least 111 mph)

2026 Atlantic Cyclones Names

Arthur	Edouard	Isaias	Marco	Rene
Bertha	Fay	Josephine	Nana	Sally
Cristobal	Gonzalo	Kyle	Omar	Teddy
Dolly	Hanna	Leah	Paulette	Vicky

Acting NOAA Administrator Laura Grimm reminded us, “As we witnessed last year with significant inland flooding from hurricanes Helene and Debby, the impacts of hurricanes can reach far beyond coastal communities.” All New Jersey communities must prepare for the impacts of high winds and flood waters.

While law enforcement, fire, EMS, 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 that 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:

1. Discuss claim reporting procedures with your risk manager. Ensure there is a clear reporting procedure from the person finding the storm damage to the department’s and Fund’s claim representatives. Work with risk managers to identify possible insurance gaps and discuss areas of exposure.
2. Develop an Operations Continuity Plan. Identify the department’s critical functions and infrastructure. Safeguard vital records.
 - a. Create mutual aid pacts and vendor lists to provide services or replace infrastructure affected by stormwater or wind.
 - b. If the facility is in a historically vulnerable area, consider relocating just before the storm hits.
 - c. Take pictures of the building and essential equipment.
3. Develop salvage response and mitigation plans. Protect property from further damage when possible by quickly restoring power and fire-protection systems, repairing leaks, and providing temporary support.
4. Survey the grounds and exterior of the building for loose objects and properly secure them. Trim trees from the building. Secure sheds and other outbuildings.
 - a. Gather mitigation resources such as sandbags, food & water, sundry personal items, plastic sheeting, duct tape, extra mops, and squeegees.
 - b. Make sure gasoline or diesel generators’ fuel tanks are full.
 - c. Make sure utility shut-offs are labeled, and occupants know the locations.

5. Inventory routine, emergency, and backup equipment. Test emergency and backup equipment.
 - a. Perform routine maintenance on chainsaws, pumps, and other restorative equipment. Sharpen blades. Buy extras.
 - b. Verify contact information for employees. Distribute updated contact information to stakeholders.
6. Prepare your personnel – Workers must be trained to respond to storm conditions properly. Encourage them to have Go Bags.
 - a. Remind employees that as the storm nears, they should sleep, eat, and hydrate themselves to prepare for a strenuous period.
7. Prepare workers' families – Essential personnel cannot be available or effective if their families are not cared for. Leaders must work with the Administration, Human Resources, banks, Red Cross, etc., to ensure families are safely evacuated and cared for before the approaching storm. Consider distributing the [Red Cross's Family Disaster Plan](#) form to assist with their planning.

There are several resources available to help planners.

- OSHA provides a [Hazard Exposure and Risk Assessment Matrix](#) with information on many of the most common and significant additional hazards that response and recovery workers might encounter when working in an area recently devastated by a hurricane. The Matrix is designed to help employers make decisions during their risk assessment that will protect their workers working in hurricane-impacted areas.
- [Ready.gov](#) has excellent hurricane planning tools for businesses and families.
- N.J. Office of Emergency Management produced a [New Jersey Hurricane Survival Guide](#) for local information.
- [MSI Infographic: Prepare Your Department & Family for Hurricanes & Severe Weather Events](#)