

HURRICANE AWARENESS IN SOUTH CAROLINA



Hurricane season begins on June 1 and continues through November 30 each year. To coincide with the start of the Atlantic Basin tropical season, South Carolina Hurricane Awareness Week is typically observed during the last week of May. Although this period is the predominant time of year for hurricanes to occur in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea, tropical storms can and have formed in every month of the calendar year.

The risk of an impact of tropical cyclones in South Carolina ranks near the top in a vulnerability assessment of natural hazards. Although only 6 of 46 counties are along the immediate coastline of South Carolina, another 21 inland counties are at risk from the effects of tropical cyclones due to their low elevations and proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. The ever-growing coastal population and summer tourism industry create a great risk for the possibility of lost lives and property. Remember that the risks of high winds, tornadoes, and flooding from tropical rainfall threaten all regions of the state from the coast to the mountains. Last year, the remnants of Hurricane Frances spawned 47 tornadoes, primarily in the Midlands, while Gaston dumped up to 15 inches of rain in the northern coastal plain.

The South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) offers a comprehensive South Carolina Hurricane Guide each year with valuable information on evacuation routes, shelter locations, preparedness tips, and general information on hurricanes and tropical storms. The guide can be accessed through their home page (www.scmd.org). To prepare for the tropical activity in 2006, the South Carolina State Climatology Office offers a set of preparedness tips and important details on the emergency notification system used by the National Weather Service. (See sidebars.)

As a tropical cyclone approaches land, knowing the status of watches and warnings for your area is crucial to ensure safety and limit the loss of life and property along the coast. The National Hurricane Center uses the following chart to identify the proper advisory based on the length of time before conditions deteriorate and the intensity of the storm upon impact.



TROPICAL STORM WATCH:

Tropical Storm conditions (winds \geq 39 mph) are possible in the specified area of the Watch, usually within 36 hours.

TROPICAL STORM WARNING:

Tropical Storm conditions (winds \geq 39 mph) are expected in the specified area of the Warning, usually within 24 hours.

HURRICANE WATCH:

Hurricane conditions (winds \geq 74 mph) are possible in the specified area of the Watch, usually within 36 hours. During a Hurricane Watch, prepare to take immediate action to protect your family and property in case a Hurricane Warning is issued.

HURRICANE WARNING:

Hurricane conditions (winds \geq 74 mph) are expected in the specified area of the Warning, usually within 24 hours. Complete all storm preparations and evacuate if directed by local officials.

Once the National Hurricane Center issues a watch or warning for your area, the emergency notification is sent out through radio and television stations as part of the Emergency Alert System. The list of the key participants in South Carolina (shown below) was provided by SCEMD in the 2005 South Carolina Hurricane Guide.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION RADIO AND TELEVISION PARTICIPANTS

Charleston

WNKT 107.5 FM
WEZL 103.5 FM

Grand Strand

WKZQ 101.7 FM
WSYN 106.5 FM

Florence

WJMX 103.3 FM
WYNN 106.3 FM

Upstate

WFBC 93.7 FM
WESC 92.5 FM

Aiken/Augusta

WBBQ 104.3 FM
WZNY 105.7 FM

Columbia

WCOS 97.5 FM
WTCB 106.7 FM
WLTR 91.3 FM (public radio)

York

WAGI 105.3 FM
WNSC 88.9 FM

S.C. Educational Radio Network

WLTR 91.3 FM (Columbia)
WSCI 89.3 FM (Charleston)
WRJA 88.1 FM (Sumter/Columbia)
WNSC 88.9 FM (Rock Hill)
WJWJ 89.9 FM (Beaufort/Hilton Head)
WEPR 90.1 FM (Greenville/Spartanburg)
WHMC 90.1 FM (Conway/Myrtle Beach)
WLJK 89.1 FM (Aiken)



Wes Tyler

HURRICANE AWARENESS TIPS

Make a disaster kit that includes items such as non-perishable food, batteries, radio, flashlight, water, medicines, clothes, blankets, and a first aid kit. Pack some cash and a credit card for necessary purchases in the coming days when you may be evacuated. Make sure to take this with you if you do evacuate.

Check your insurance on your home. Flooding is not usually covered on homeowners' policies. Purchase a specific flood insurance policy if you live in an area subject to damage from rising waters.

Prepare your home by boarding windows, removing loose items from the yard, and moving boats inland off the waters. Do this well before even a voluntary evacuation is in effect.

Upon a voluntary evacuation, prepare to leave immediately. It is recommended to leave before a mandatory evacuation is in place to prevent travel delays and highway congestion. When a mandatory evacuation is ordered, LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. Pack your essentials from the disaster kit and travel inland.

Keep a NOAA Weather Radio with you. The National Weather Service will broadcast local information on the threatening storm along with watches, warnings, and advisories for winds, floods and other severe weather that will affect you.

Remember: Although storm surge and wind are usually confined to the immediate coastal regions, inland areas where you find shelter are also under the threat of significant weather including rainfall-induced floods, tornadoes, and high winds. Downed trees and powerlines present a new set of challenges upon re-entry into storm-ravaged areas. Take proper precautions to avoid electric shock. Contact the proper utility company and stay clear of the danger.

Using a generator in an enclosed room, such as a garage or home, can cause carbon monoxide poisoning, which can lead to significant health problems and possibly death. The generator should be used outside in a well-ventilated area.