

County urges residents to prepare for hurricane season

By Patrick Fuller

As the summer months approach, so too does the 2024 Atlantic hurricane season. While our community continues to recover from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Ian, we face what forecasters are predicting may be a record-breaking year for tropical storm and hurricane activity due to developing La Nina conditions and warm water temperatures. The proactive measures you take now to prepare for hurricane season influence your survival and recovery should we be unfortunate enough to be impacted once again this year. The culture of preparedness is growing in Charlotte County, but more can always be done. We urge residents to begin making their preparations now ahead of hurricane season so our resilient community can continue to thrive in the face of potential adversity.

The impacts of tropical weather are well known. From the devastating and life-threatening effects of storm surge, to flood-inducing rainfall, to the relentless and damaging winds, the scope and magnitude of tropical storms and hurricanes represent forces of nature with few parallels in the nature world. The good news is that through preparedness and action they are survivable.

The first step in your preparedness journey should be understanding your risk by knowing your zone and knowing your home. You can find your hurricane evacuation zone by visiting www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/knowyourzone and typing in your address. If your evacuation zone is being directed to evacuate, it is because of the potential of life-threatening storm surge. If you are not in an area being evacuated, it is important to know your home's ability to withstand winds and heavy rain.

Second, you should develop a disaster plan and ensure all members of the household know the plan and their role. These plans should address the steps to prepare your home in advance of storms. Where will you evacuate if directed to do so. Remember, shelters are a last resort, you are much better off evacuating to the home of a friend or family member home outside of the evacuated area. Consider what you are taking with you when evacuating and any special considerations you may have to take into account like mobility challenges or medical conditions.

Next, you should begin assembling a disaster supply kit. These kits should include all those things you and your household need to survive for five to seven days. A detailed checklist of supplies, consideration and tips can be found in the Charlotte County Disaster Guide at www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/disasterguide and printed copies are available at our local libraries. Take advantage of the two Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holidays: June 1-14 and Aug. 24 to Sept. 6.

Lastly, you need to ensure you stay informed. Whether you engage in social media, watch the local news, read the newspaper or listen to the radio, find your platform and stay tuned. After the storm when WiFi and cell signals aren't working, ensure you have a battery or crank powered radio and know that our libraries and recreation centers in impacted areas will serve as information hubs.

By adhering to the steps above you put you and your family in the best position possible before the storm. Conditions after a storm can be hazardous. Injuries and fatalities after storms are preventable but historically outpace those directly attributed to surge, wind and rainfall. If you prepare to be on your own for five to seven days you can avoid many of these conditions as

responders are using the first 72 hours to search, secure and stabilize the community. Please remember that impacts from tropical weather extend well outside of the cone so storms that make landfall well away from Charlotte County can still bring weather our way. As the beginning hurricane season approaches, remember Charlotte County has proved resilient in the past and will continue to be so as long as we all do those things necessary to prepare.

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