



Public Information Statement
National Weather Service Melbourne FL
100 AM EST Thu Feb 14 2013



Today is Hurricane and Flooding Awareness Day.

The 2012 hurricane season showed that while tropical storms or hurricanes may not make direct landfalls in east central Florida, their large size can bring significant impacts to the region that are often more than just wind. Tropical cyclones can bring fresh water flooding, storm surge, pounding surf and tornadoes.

Historically, water causes most of the deaths in hurricanes. About 90 percent of all hurricane related deaths occur from drowning, either from storm surge or fresh water flooding. The flat terrain of the area lends itself to widespread inundation of poorly drained and low lying areas during heavy rain events, rather than the flash flooding that occurs in other parts of the country. It can also produce significant longer lasting impacts. Water can enter homes and other structures, as well as make driving extremely hazardous due to flooded roads which can sometimes obscure canals. With little terrain, significant flooding can last for days, and in areas near the St. Johns River, the flooding can persist for weeks. As shown when the center of Hurricane Isaac passed through the Florida straits in late August, outer rainbands can produce significant flooding of streets, homes and businesses. If you encounter water covering a roadway, do not assume that you can drive through it. Even lower water heights can hide many hazards. Remember, turn around, don't drown.

While storm surge is not particularly extreme along the central Florida Atlantic coast, erosion even from storms that pass well offshore frequently causes breaches in the dune line and severe loss of beach and shoreline property. High seas from Hurricane Sandy as it passed well offshore led to significant beach erosion and minor coastal flooding along east central Florida beaches for several days.

Tornadoes associated with tropical cyclones often occur well away from the center of the storm. When Tropical Storm Debby moved across north central Florida in late June of 2012, it spawned four tornadoes across the region that produced damage to homes and businesses. Two additional tornadoes were also spawned by Hurricane Isaac.

It is not too early to begin to prepare for the 2013 hurricane season. Develop a hurricane plan and have it in place before a storm threatens. Know if you live in a hurricane evacuation zone or a federal flood zone. Barrier island residents should heed advice from

local officials and evacuate when a hurricane threatens. Even if not in a flood or evacuation zone, know whether you live in an area that frequently floods from heavy rains. The best advice is to have flood insurance, separate from your homeowners insurance.

Make sure you have your hurricane kit stocked with the supplies such as bottled water, canned foods and batteries before the start of each season. Consider buying and installing hurricane shutters. When a storm threatens, purchase gas and take out extra cash since neither may be available for several days following a tropical cyclone. Plan to buy enough provisions to last a minimum of three to five days for each member of your household, including pets.

People are also urged to be extremely cautious during the storm's aftermath. Persons who survive the initial passage of a tropical cyclone have died as a result of a number of factors, including carbon monoxide poisoning from generators, electrocution from downed wires, severe injuries during debris removal and motor vehicle accidents. Extreme care must be used when using generators. Make sure to run generators in an open outdoor location and never in an enclosed area.

Monitor NOAA Weather Radio before, during and after an event to stay abreast of the latest information. You can also visit the Melbourne National Weather Service web site for the latest hurricane and flood watches and warnings, along with the National Hurricane Center five day tropical cyclone track and intensity forecasts, at:
<http://weather.gov/melbourne>