

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations



**Department of Human Services
Division of Elderly Affairs**

RHODE ISLAND SENIOR BEAT

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AN ACTIVE 2013 HURRICANE SEASON IS PREDICTED-BE PREPARED

CRANSTON--- While the debate on climate change and weather-related disasters will undoubtedly be a controversial topic over the summer, atmospheric truth is not in question. The 2013 hurricane season began on June 1 and runs until November 1. On May 30, the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) held its annual statewide hurricane conference. The conference gives emergency fire, police, rescue personnel and local emergency management officials a “heads up” on the upcoming hurricane season. Meteorologists are predicting an active 2013 hurricane cycle.

In fact, three tropical storms have already gained “named” status. This week, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) declared that tropical storm “Cosme,” had become a hurricane as it churned in the Gulf of Mexico.

A hurricane is a violent storm with heavy rains, tidal flooding, and sustained winds of more than 74 miles per hour (mph). On the Saffir Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale, commonly used to rate the potential damage of a hurricane, a storm that has winds from 74 to 94 mph would be termed as a Category 1 event. From 95 to 110 mph is defined as a Category 2 storm. From 111 to 130 mph is a Category 3 storm. From 131 to 155 mph is a Category 4 storm, and sustained winds of more than 155 mph are classified as a Category 5 event. The higher the category, there is more probability that wind damage, heavy rains and ocean surges will threaten life and property. The Atlantic region and the Gulf Coastal states are the most vulnerable areas for hurricane landfall. Typically, two to four hurricanes strike the United States each year.

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A hurricane watch means that a hurricane may threaten your area in 24 to 36 hours. A hurricane warning means that a hurricane is expected to strike your area within 24 hours.

The Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) emphasizes that preparedness is the key to protecting lives and property. For seniors and adults with disabilities, persons with chronic illnesses, limited mobility, or special medical needs, preparedness begins with enrolling in Special Needs Registry. By enrolling in this registry, persons who would need extra assistance during an emergency would be known to first responders such as firemen, police, and emergency medical technicians. You should enroll in the Special Needs Registry if you have chronic conditions such as insulin-dependent diabetes, kidney disease that requires dialysis, respiratory conditions that require oxygen or a ventilator, or you use a walker or a wheelchair. You can register on line at www.health.ri.gov/emregistry, or call 946-9996 to obtain a copy of the registration form.

One of the key components in any personal emergency preparation is having the right information. You will need a portable radio, with extra batteries, so that you will be able to hear important safety announcements from RIEMA or other government officials if your power is knocked out.

The next step would be to assemble an emergency kit. In addition to the portable radio and extra batteries, this kit should include a first aid kit and other health care items, a flashlight, water stored in sterile or air-tight containers, dry or canned foods, a manual can opener and utensils. It might be a good idea to fill your bathtub with water. It is suggested that you have a fully charged cell phone so that you can communicate with relatives or caregivers if land line telephone service is interrupted. It's also a good idea to set your refrigerator and freezer settings to the highest level to extend the preservation of your food supplies. If you have a pet, make sure that you have an adequate supply of pet food and water.

If you have to evacuate your home, your emergency kit should include your medications, a listing of all prescription and over-the-counter medications, a list of any drug or food allergies, a contact list of your family members, caregivers and friends, important documents such as an ID card, Social Security card, insurance cards and any other personal documents. You can also bring a list of all your health care providers, cash, credit cards, and a change of clothes.

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The Rhode Island Department of Health publishes a Personal Emergency Preparedness Guide pamphlet. It covers preparations for such events as hurricanes, floods, power outages, and disease pandemics. You can get a copy of this guide by calling 1-800-942-7434, or by going to their web site at www.health.ri.gov. You can also get additional information on emergency preparedness by calling RIEMA at 946-9996, or by going to www.riema.ri.gov, or to www.fema.gov.

A time-tested guideline for dealing with the 2013 hurricane season is contained in the Boy Scout motto, "Be prepared."

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The Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Division of Elderly Affairs (DEA) is responsible for the development and implementation of a comprehensive system of programs and services for Rhode Islanders ages 60 and older and for adults with disabilities. Questions or requests for additional information on the issues of growing older in Rhode Island should be directed to: Larry Grimaldi, Rhode Island Senior Beat, Rhode Island Department of Human Services, Division of Elderly Affairs, 74 West Road, Cranston, RI 02920 or faxed to 462-0503. Information may also be requested via e-mail at lgrimaldi@dea.ri.gov.