

June 2020 Hurricane Planning

June for us in Florida is the Official start of hurricane season according to the National Weather Service. Nature of course sometimes thinks otherwise. We got our first named system last week that provided us some wind, rain, clouds and good waves for surfers. It should be a strong warning for us to start preparations now.

When I worked for Everglades National Park, I served on the Hurricane Operations Team as a Division leader and later Safety Officer. I then served on a National Incident Management Team where I responded to a number of areas hit by hurricanes. Part of my responsibilities were teaching courses on hurricane response. I have done it at the UUCM a few times also.

I look at hurricane preparedness as three steps to do well before the storm.

1. Planning: Even a bad plan is better than no plan at all. Gather all the information you can. Miami-Dade County, individual municipalities, FEMA and the state of Florida have lots of resources on line and in print. Gather it up and review it. Make a list of things you have to do. Meet with family members and friends to exchange ideas, suggestions and experiences.
2. Preparation: Once you have your list of things you need to do start to take action. Get items ready before hand, do not wait till the last moments. Things may not be available or there will be long lines and panicky people. Want a generator, buy it now before the rush. Check that every thing works, shutters close, the propane stove works, you have a back up power supply for your cell phone and your family and neighbors have a welfare check-in plan. Special need transport is arranged or your evacuation plan is updated.
3. Practice: Does everything work as it should? Will all the stuff fit in its storage space or the car if you plan on evacuating. Prepare some easy hurricane meals. Do your shutters work, are power tools charged. All the little mundane stuff. Make a list of needs and take action. Have alternative plans for the unexpected.

We went through Andrew with not a lot of good planning or preparation. Pretty scary but we managed. We are much better now and it has paid off in big ways. With the CONVID-19 virus we had two weeks of supplies in the house left over from last year, perhaps a boring diet but things to eat and no panic about paper products. We met with neighbors and arranged plans to help each other if needed. The longer ahead you plan and prepare, the easier, cheaper and less stressful the hurricane season will be.

Hint: Do Not use candles, oil lanterns or Coleman lanterns. They produce, smoke, fumes, heat and are a fire hazard. Instead go to a big box store or place like Harbor Freight where you can get LED battery powered closet or pluck lights, small lanterns and flash lights. Inexpensive and long lasting. Plug in the wall power out lights work great also.

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