

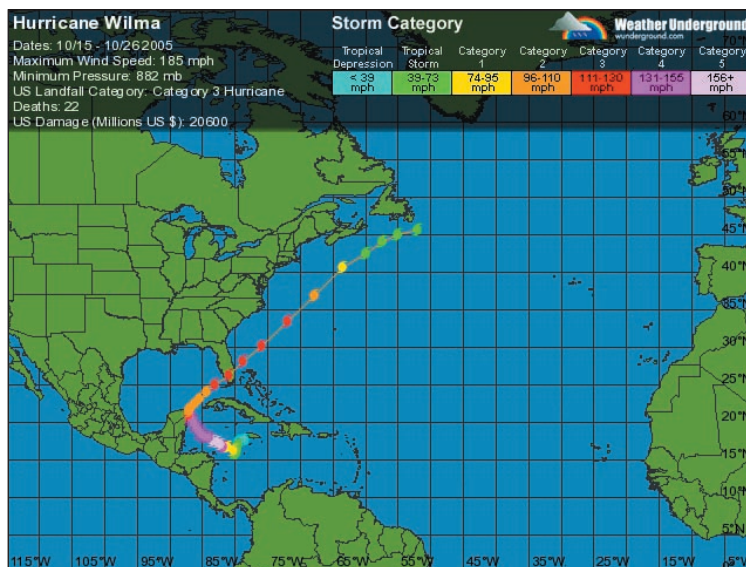
Are You Prepared for Hurricane Season 2008?

Story by PA1 Jennifer Johnson, District Seven Public Affairs

It's that time of year again. The hot, muggy air associated with summer is back and fills the afternoons. Weather forecasters constantly keep a watchful eye for any activity that starts as a tropical disturbances off the coast of West Africa and makes its way across the Atlantic Ocean. Hurricanes can develop at any time. But the question is, are you and your family ready for hurricane season 2008?

The Seventh Coast Guard District has been free of major hurricanes since Hurricane Wilma ripped through South Florida in October 2005. However, catastrophic damage caused by hurricanes Dean and Felix, and tropical storm Noel, which tore through Mexico and the Dominican Republic during the 2007 season, compelled the National Hurricane Center in Miami to retire their names from being used again.

“This is all you need to know about hurricane season: It only takes one storm and the only thing you can control is making sure you are prepared,” said Lt. Cmdr. Connie Rooke, the Seventh District Contingency Preparedness and Exercise coordinator.



South Florida residents were surprised when the category three hurricane, Wilma, changed direction and slammed the area Oct. 22, 2005. The storm was responsible for 22 deaths and nearly \$21 million in damages. (Image courtesy of Weather Underground)

The Atlantic Basin hurricane season runs June 1 through Nov. 30. Service members should think in advance about what they will do to take care of their family and home if a storm hits.

Rooke believes the biggest mistake or challenge Seventh District members encounter is complacency because they may have forgotten what it was like after Hurricanes Wilma and Rita tore through South Florida in the fall of 2005.

Following a three-step program to better prepare you and your family for a hurricane is simple. Resources and guidance are readily available, including information provided by the Department of Homeland Security Web site www.ready.gov. The Web site illustrates preparedness for all disasters and suggests following a simple three step hurricane preparedness plan.

Step one is to create an emergency supply kit. At a minimum, the kit should include a 72-hour supply of non-perishable food and water as well as battery-powered flashlights and a radio.



Does your family have an emergency kit ready to in case of an emergency? Florida is known for its susceptibility to inclement weather and each member of Coast Guard District Seven should be prepared in case of a hurricane or natural disaster. (Photo courtesy of the Red Cross)

Additionally, members should consider having copies of important paperwork including insurance documents, wills, deeds, driver's licenses, birth and marriage certificates, prescription medications and medical supplies.

Step two is to create an emergency plan for you and your family. Your family may not all be in the same place when disaster strikes, so it is important to know how you will contact one another, how you will get back together and where you will go in case you are forced to evacuate.

Finally, step three is to make sure you familiarize yourself with common hurricane terms and stay informed of weather developments. Monitor local radio and news broadcasts for updates regarding evacuation orders, business and school closings, and emergency shelter locations.

Being prepared may sound difficult, but if you follow these three easy steps you will be better organized and equipped to handle whatever Mother Nature may have in store.

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