



STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR HURRICANE & FLOODING CONDITIONS

September 8, 2006

Re: Fire Department Hurricane Guidelines

Preparedness; Response and Retreat; Expected Flooding Conditions, etc.

The following is compiled from several seminars, experiences in NJ and Louisiana and a response and retreat procedure from several Florida Fire Departments. These ideas are meant as suggestions to help you formulate your own emergency hurricane and flooding plans. This is not presented as a Mutual Aid Plan. Start developing a list of people in your community that will need special help during a hurricane e.g., elderly handicapped folks that are regular users of your EMS.

It is suggested that you begin implementing parts of your plan at least 36 hours prior to the arrival of the hurricane. All parts of your pre-arrival plan should be completed 8-12 hours prior to the arrival of the hurricane.

Suggest that departments begin to think about what to do for their firefighter's families, e.g., 36 hours before the storm hits put the kids and significant others on a charter bus for a three day trip to Pittsburgh, have hotel reservations.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

According to the National Weather Service, since 1955 there have been 91 hurricanes in the Atlantic Basin. None have reached landfall north of the Carolinas. We in NJ have only been hit by tropical or lesser storms. The law of averages as determined by the N.W.S. indicates there should have been 3. This fact plus the increased level of hurricane activity has led to the concern that a Category 2-3 will hit the northeast coast, including New Jersey in the near future.

Storm effects may last 3-4 days or longer. The hurricane itself lasts about 12 hours in one area. The storm surge can range from 2-15 feet high. It can flood inland beyond 20 miles, in addition to wind damage, flooding, including sewer flooding, is a major problem.

Chiefs should meet with PD, OEM, DPW, LEPC (Local Emergency Planning Committees)

Talk to your departments "old-timers" they are a wealth of information on past storms and their effects.

EVACUATION

If the fire department is used to assist in evacuation, the message given out by the FD should contain who specifically ordered the evacuation, where to go, including the locations of shelters, and the route(s) to take. It may fall to the fire service to remove those who are physically, emotionally, or otherwise impaired. This might require physically checking each dwelling.

Target Occupancies in the Community

Personnel will familiarize themselves with Target Occupancies (I.e. Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Assisted Living Centers, Special Hazards, etc) within their districts and surrounding areas and be prepared to mitigate problems created by the hurricane or flooding conditions

PREPARATION AREAS TO CONSIDER DURING TIME PERIODS

I. When a **Hurricane Watch** is announced that a hurricane or incipient hurricane condition poses a possible threat to the area within 36-hours, the following items are recommended for a hurricane watch preparation:

- Fire station food, potable water containers, and medical supply needs
- Fire station generator fuel supply
- Remember normal supply chains will be effected, a three day supply of water, food, and fuel is good, a six day supply would be better
- Check all equipment on apparatus and spare equipment
- Check all battery chargers & batteries, including spares
- Chain Saw Kits – One (1) per unit plus two extra chains
 - Ask members if they can bring their own chain saw
- Secure the Fire Station
 - Secure all openings
 - Protect furniture and equipment
 - Secure items that may become projectiles
- Have all apparatus fueled and ready to respond
- Provide for standby manpower
- Plan for crew relief
- Plan for members who leave the station because of "family emergencies" caused by the storm
- Plan for adequate sleep time
- Relocate apparatus to "safe area" if fire station(s) have been predetermined to be vulnerable to wind or flood damage.

II. When a **Hurricane Warning** is announced the following items are recommended hurricane warning preparation:

PRE-IMPACT:

- A Wakeful watch for communications to be maintained at each fire station
- Spare suppression vehicles will be assigned as directed by the fire chief
- Establish where to get fuel after storm if there are wide spread power outages
- Local municipal fire stations will report every hour to the Communication Center the status at their location
- Emergency Shelters staffed by either local OEM/Fire/Police will check-in with the local fire station every hour.
- Fire stations located in high-risk flooding zones may need to be evacuated

IMMEDIATE IMPACT:

- No INDIVIDUAL will respond ALONE during the immediate impact phase
- Response to alarms will continue until the "NO RESPONSE" order is issued. Prior to this announcement any Chief or Unit Fire Officer who feels that situations encountered are sufficiently dangerous to personnel at his/her location, may choose to cease operations and return to the fire station. Report this no response status to the Communications Center
- Fire Stations Being Evacuated Should:
 - Shut down power and gas to station
 - Take radio and computer equipment
 - Move all private personnel vehicles to higher ground
 - Secure all doors, interior and exterior of the fire station
 - Place a sign on the door: In Case Of Emergency, Call 911
- Implement whatever "Wind Response Limitations" procedures

NOTE: USE THE FOLLOWING RESPONSE CAUTIONS:

The following guidelines may be used to determine when apparatus should be placed in non-response mode during storm conditions

A) 50-70 mph winds - limit responses to emergencies. Use strict supervision.

Rescue Operations will be terminated when sustained winds of 50 mph exist or local conditions dictate unsafe conditions.

Suppression Operations will be terminated when sustained winds greater than 60 mph exist or local conditions dictate unsafe conditions

B) Hurricane force winds (74mph+) – NO RESPONDING. A time of self-protection

SUSTAINED EMERGENCY (Operations after a hurricane)

- Command will issue a Resume Response order when conditions allow.
- Primary Search and Rescue efforts should take place at the Target Occupancy areas
- Safety and Hazard Identification Use the Standardized FEMA US&R Marking System
- Personnel conducting emergency operations must realize that their own safety and well-being are their 1st priority. Many hazards will be encountered during the first 72-hours after a hurricane any of which can and will be significant.
- These include, but not limited to:
 - Wires down
 - Gas leaks
 - Fires
 - Unsafe structures
 - Flooding
 - Hazardous materials incidents
 - Traumatized animals
 - It may be necessary if there is wide spread structural damage or utility outages to check each dwelling for those who may be unable to care for themselves.

POST EMERGENCY

- Surplus equipment will be returned to Inventory
- After storm all vehicle surfaces, including chassis, exposed to salt water should be flushed with fresh water
- After storm all vehicle surfaces exposed to sanitary sewer water should be appropriately decontaminated
- Check packing seals on each wheel hubs
- Clean and lubricate EVERYTHING

**For municipality area flood levels go to website for:
New Jersey Hurricane Evacuation Study (HES) Draft Maps and
Data - <http://www.nap.usace.army.mil/HES/nj/index.html>**