



Virginia Department of Emergency Management News Release

Virginia Department of Emergency Management
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FOR RELEASE AT WILL

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Virginia Emergency Response Organizations Collaborate on Preparedness Campaign

"It Could Happen to You"

Organizations active in Virginia's disaster preparedness and response efforts are collaborating to ensure that Virginians are ready for the upcoming hurricane season, which starts June 1. In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, every citizen should know one thing about a tropical storm: It could happen to you.

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management, the Virginia Department of Transportation, National Weather Service offices in the Commonwealth and American Red Cross chapters across the state are promoting a joint public information campaign called, "It Could Happen to You." In addition, the American Red Cross is partnering with VDEM and the Virginia Department of Health in a local "Prepare Hampton Roads" campaign for general emergency preparedness.

Although all of these groups have always worked side-by-side before, during and after an emergency, each organization's outreach efforts have varied. To reach more people more effectively, these emergency preparedness and response groups are partnering this year to emphasize four simple and easy steps citizens should take to get ready.

"We learned from Katrina that most citizens were not as prepared as they should have been," said Michael Cline, state coordinator for VDEM. "Each Virginian has the responsibility to prepare their homes and families, and it is easier than they think."

The four basic steps to disaster preparedness are: get a kit, make a plan, listen for instructions and learn your evacuation routes.

1. Emergency Supply Kit

Putting together an emergency supply kit takes little time and money, but it will provide

your family or employees with the tools they need when it counts. An emergency supply kit includes, among other things, essential items to last at least three days, such as water and non-perishable food, a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, flashlights, a first aid kit and medications.

2. Communication Plan

Making a communications plan involves discussing the hazards and threats for your area and what your family or employees would do during an actual emergency. As you create your plan, decide on a meeting place if your family cannot return home, designate an out-of-town friend or relative as a point-of-contact and plan for the specific needs of your household, such as an evacuation destination for pets or transportation for medical equipment.

3. Local Instructions

Before, during and after a disaster, it is critical that you listen for the most local, up-to-date information from emergency officials. Local media will convey instructions from local, state and federal government partners concerning evacuation orders, how to safely stay where you are and what to do when the emergency has passed.

4. Evacuation routes

Coastal residents should become familiar with their designated evacuation routes and know where they will go if ordered to evacuate. Emergency officials have designated hurricane evacuation routes for Hampton, the Eastern Shore, Norfolk, Poquoson, the Middle Peninsula, the Northern Neck, Virginia Beach and York County.

Inland residents should know where to go if ordered to evacuate their area. Flash floods can develop in a matter of minutes, with little or no warning. Know ahead of time where your family or employees should go to find higher ground.

For more information about the combined preparedness campaign, visit VDEM's Web site, www.vaemergency.com. Visit www.redcross.org to find contact information for your local American red Cross chapter.

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- Sterling, Dave Manning, (703) 260-0209, www.erh.noaa.gov/lwx/
- Blacksburg, Phil Hysell, (540) 552-1613, www.erh.noaa.gov/rnk/
- Morristown, TN, Howard Waldron, (423) 586-3771, www.srh.noaa.gov/mrx/

American Red Cross, www.redcross.org