



Gilchrist County Emergency Management

3250 North U.S. Highway 129

Bell, Florida 32619

(386) 935-5400 (386) 935-0294 Fax

Ralph Smith, Director of Emergency Management



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Ralph Smith, Director of Emergency Management
386-935-5400 office
rsmith@gcfr.org

HURRICANE SEASON STARTS JUNE 1ST EVALUATE YOUR PREPAREDNESS LEVEL

The Hurricane Season starts June 1st. We can never forget that it only takes one storm to change everything.

It is very easy for us to fall into a false sense of complacency. With another slow hurricane season predicted, many may adopt the attitude of “I will be ready by next year.” This is a dangerous way of thinking. Although we talk a lot about hurricanes in the State of Florida, it is important to realize that we must be prepared for all hazards, not just the ones that we see on the Weather Channel. It is almost better to think of hurricane season as a benchmark for reminding you to check and practice your emergency plans.

We must be ready to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world. If we work together as a community, there is nothing that we can't get through. It all starts with you and your family. A well-prepared family is the most powerful tool that we have in disaster resiliency. We must prepare for the world we live in now, not the world we grew up in.

So, what are some of things that you can do to keep you and your family safe? The answer is simple. First, create a FAMILY DISASTER PLAN and practice it. That plan should include, at a minimum, the following:

- Discussing the hazards that could affect your family, including storm surge, flooding, and wind.
- Locate a safe room or area in your home or community
- Determine escape routes from your home
- Consider using out of state friends or family as a point of contact
- Make a plan on what you will do with your pets (Gilchrist County DOES NOT have a pet shelter)
- Post emergency numbers by phones, make sure your kids know how and when to call 911
- Check your insurance policy. Remember flooding is usually not covered by standard homeowner insurance
- Create a disaster supply kit
- Get a NOAA weather radio
- Take a first aid/CPR course
- Register with Gilchrist County's Special Needs Registry if you have a disability or other special need that would need to be addressed in the event of an emergency. This can be done by contacting the Gilchrist County Emergency Management Department or visiting our website at www.gilchristemergency.com
- Sign up for Gilchrist County's free Emergency Notification System. This can be done by visiting www.alertgilchrist.com or you may contact my office at 1-866-751-1728. This service is a great tool that is provided free of charge to Gilchrist County citizens by the Gilchrist County Board of Commissioners and Department of Emergency Management

Creating a Disaster Supply Kit is something that many people do not take the time to do. Below you will find some items that you should include in a DISASTER SUPPLY KIT:

- WATER- At least 1 gallon per person per day (replace once a year)
- FOOD- At least enough for 3-7 days and a non-electric can opener
- Blankets/Pillows etc.
- Clothing, seasonal, rain gear, sturdy shoes
- Prescription Drugs, Medication, OTC medication
- Baby/Elderly special Items
- Hygiene items
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Radio
- Fully charged cell phone, a traditional landline phone (not cordless). A corded landline phone may have power even if nothing else does
- Cash and Credit Cards. Remember to include small bills
- Keys
- Important documents in a waterproof container
- Tools
- Fully fueled vehicle
- Pet supplies including food, water, and medications
- Toys, games, and other items to keep your mind occupied

Finally, one of the most important questions that you may be asking yourself is **WHEN SHOULD I EVACUATE?** If you are told to evacuate, it is important that you do so right away. However, it is unlikely that you will be asked to evacuate unless you are in a designated flood area, or in a coastal area. It is important that you have a plan for you and your family. If you feel that you need to leave, then it is a good idea to leave. Remember, there will be a time during a storm that Emergency Services **WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO YOU**. When the storm gets bad enough, fire trucks, ambulance crews, and police officers will not be driving, therefore if you have someone that has a known medical issue, you should evacuate early.

If you have any questions, or feel uncomfortable with your level of preparedness, start doing your research now. If you need questions answered or would just like to get some more information, please feel free to contact me to help get you prepared. Gilchrist County residents may reach me Monday through Friday 8am-4pm by phone at 386-935-5400, toll free at 1-866-751-1728, or you may visit my office at 3250 N. US Hwy 129 Bell, Fl 32619. If you are not a Gilchrist County resident, you may contact my office and I will provide contact information for your County's Emergency Management Center.

Thank you all and be safe.

Website:

www.gilchristemergency.com