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PREPARING TO EVACUATE COASTAL AREAS IN ADVANCE OF A HURRICANE

MEMA Offers Hurricane Preparedness Tips

FRAMINGHAM, MA – As part of its hurricane preparedness initiative, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is urging residents who live or work in one of the state's coastal communities, or near a river or other waterway that is connected to the ocean, to develop home and business evacuation plans and be prepared to evacuate areas that may be inundated with flood waters as a result of an approaching hurricane or tropical storm.

Storm surge and large battering waves generated by tropical storms and hurricanes often pose a greater threat than wind to life and property during tropical storms and hurricanes. In areas at risk of storm surge flooding, evacuation to high ground in advance of a powerful storm making landfall may be the only way to avoid injury or death from storm surge.

"If evacuation is necessary because of an approaching hurricane or tropical storm, residents and workers in an evacuation zone must respond quickly, responsibly and safely," states MEMA Director Kurt Schwartz. "Public safety officials closely monitor these storms as they move towards New England, and evacuation decisions will be announced well in advance of landfall so that people have sufficient time to move to safety."

Keys to successful evacuations include ensuring that residents of, and workers in coastal communities monitor approaching storms, receive evacuation orders in a timely manner, have home and business evacuation plans, and follow those plans when evacuation orders are issued.

Plan Ahead for an Evacuation

- If you reside or work in a coastal community, contact your municipal emergency management agency or other local officials to learn about the risks of coastal flooding in your community and neighborhood. To learn whether you live, work or will be vacationing in a designated hurricane evacuation zone, use the 'Know Your Evacuation Zone' interactive map which is located on MEMA's website at

http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/emergencies/hurricanes/hurricane-evacuation-zones.html.

- If you are located in a designated evacuation zone, you should be prepared to evacuate well before a hurricane or tropical storm makes landfall.
- Know how to receive emergency information, including recommendations or orders to evacuate.
    - Sign up for your community's emergency alerting system.
    - Monitor news broadcasts.
    - Download *Massachusetts Alerts* to your smartphone. This is a free app from the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.
    - Follow MEMA on *Twitter* or *Facebook.*
    - Follow your local emergency management agency, and other local public safety agencies on social media.
- Make a Family Emergency Plan. . If you must evacuate, know where you will go, how you will get there, what you will bring. Make sure that your plan includes provisions for children, seniors, and family members with disabilities or medical issues. Include your pets in your Family Emergency Plan. While service animals will be allowed inside shelters, household pets are not allowed in all shelters. Go to MEMA's Pets and Animals in Emergencies webpage at http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/be-prepared/pets for additional tips. Remember: "If you go, they go!
- Assemble an emergency kit. Keep your supplies in an easy-to-carry kit that you can take with you in case you must evacuate.
- If you or a family member may require special assistance to evacuate, ask local officials about special assistance programs or registries.
- If you undergo routine medical treatments or receive home health services, work with your service providers in advance to understand their emergency plans and to find backup providers that you might use in an emergency.
- Keep your car fueled if an evacuation seems likely. Gas stations may be closed during an emergency, or unable to pump gas during power outages.
- If you do not have personal transportation or a way to evacuate (such as public transportation), make transportation arrangements with family, friends or your local government.

If Asked to Evacuate

- Listen carefully to instructions and information from public safety officials and evacuate immediately.
- Gather only essential items and remember to take your emergency kit. Remember you may be away from home for up to a few days.
- Tell your family emergency contact where you are going.
- Advise family members who are outside the area not to return home.
- Wear appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes.
- If you go to a shelter, notify staff of any special needs you or your family may have.
- If designated evacuation routes are established, follow the routes; other routes might be blocked. Expect heavy traffic.
- Do not return to the evacuation area until the evacuation order is lifted.
- Do not call 9-1-1 unless you have an emergency. Call your local non-emergency number, or 2-1-1 for non-emergency information or questions.

If you have enough time before you leave

- Elevate valuable items to higher points within your home in case of flooding.
- Secure outdoor items (lawn furniture, grills, hanging plants, trashcans, awnings, toys, etc.) or move them indoors.
- Close and lock windows and doors.
- Turn off lights and appliances.
- Turn off water, electricity, and gas (if instructed to do so).
- Check with neighbors to see if they need assistance.

Visit www.mass.gov/ready for comprehensive preparedness tips and information.

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA's staff of professional planners, communications specialists and operations and support personnel is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management. By building and sustaining effective partnerships with federal, state and local government agencies, and with the private sector - individuals, families, non-profits and businesses - MEMA ensures the Commonwealth's ability to rapidly recover from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating threats and hazards, enhancing preparedness, ensuring effective response, and strengthening our capacity to rebuild and recover.

For additional information about MEMA and Hurricane Preparedness, go to www.mass.gov/mema. Continue to follow MEMA updates on *Twitter* at www.twitter.com/MassEMA; *Facebook* at www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA; and *YouTube* at www.youtube.com/MassachusettsEMA.

Massachusetts Alerts: To receive emergency information on your smartphone, including severe weather alerts from the National Weather Service and emergency information from MEMA, download the *Massachusetts Alerts* free app. To learn more about *Massachusetts Alerts*, and for information on how to download the free app onto your smartphone, visit: www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp.