



Gloucester Department of Community Engagement and Public Information

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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County Officials Urge Residents to Prepare Before a Storm Hits

Gloucester County Emergency Management officials are urging residents to be prepared for emergencies as the region moves into the spring severe weather season. The U.S. National Weather Service has deemed next week (March 14-20) to be Severe Weather Awareness Week, and Virginia's annual Statewide Tornado Drill will take place on Tuesday, March 16 at 9:45 a.m.

Next week is also Flood Awareness Week. "This coming week is an ideal time to prepare for potential flooding ahead of spring rains and the upcoming hurricane season," said Brent Payne, Gloucester's Floodplain Administrator. "It is our hope that our residents will be informed about their own properties' flood risks and the need for flood insurance."

Gloucester County is committed to increasing flood insurance enrollment among at-risk homes and businesses, and strongly encourages flood insurance for any resident or business owner within the 100-year flood zone. "It is important to keep in mind that many houses in Gloucester outside of the 100-year flood zone are also at risk for storm-related flooding," Payne added.

Payne said he is available to residents to help them determine their flood risks and answer any questions. He can be reached by calling 804-693-5480 or by e-mail at bpayne@gloucesterva.info. To

purchase flood insurance or to determine what your cost would be, contact FEMA's National Flood Insurance Call Center at 1-800-427-4661 or e-mail floodsmart@fema.dhs.gov.

Other Ways to Prepare for Severe Weather

"Now is the time, if you have not already, to sign up for CodeRED so that you will be alerted when a dangerous situation is imminent," said Jane Wenner, Gloucester's Assistant Emergency Services Coordinator. CodeRED is a free, emergency notification service that sends critical communications and emergency information through phone calls, text messages, e-mails, social media and the CodeRED Mobile Alert app. To sign up, visit www.gloucesterva.info/409/CodeRed.

Community awareness is also a valuable tool in preparation for emergencies and the aftermath of troubling situations. "It is important to check in on your neighbors even before an emergency happens," Wenner added. Oftentimes, elderly or disabled neighbors may not have the means to obtain an emergency kit.

With the COVID-19 pandemic still impacting the globe, it is suggested to have masks (one per person) and hand sanitizer in emergency kits in case a quick evacuation needs to be made. Other items to include in an emergency kit are:

- Water (one gallon per person per day for at least three days)
- Food (at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food)
- Battery-powered or hand-cranked radio and a NOAA Weather Radio with a tone alert
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- First Aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Can opener
- Personal hygiene items

It is also recommended to maintain at least a weeks' supply of prescription medications and store all valuables and insurance papers in a waterproof container in a safe area of your home.

Finally, families should develop an emergency plan. This includes determining escape routes and a central meeting location, planning for pets and special needs, and planning for either sheltering in place or to evacuate.

Gloucester's Department of Emergency Management has full information packets available to residents to help them prepare for a disaster or emergency. For more information, contact the office at 804-693-1390 or visit www.gloucesterva.info/365/Emergency-Management. For more information about Severe Weather Awareness Week, visit <https://www.weather.gov/akq/SevereWeatherAwareness>.

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