



MEDIA RELEASE

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Citizens “BE AWARE, BE PREPARED”

The Mid-Atlantic region has traditionally been impacted by Tropical Storms and Hurricanes between August and October. The Atlantic storm season is currently in full force with multiple storms forming. Residents are encouraged to take steps to prepare their homes, family and community for possible weather conditions associated with tropical weather.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recommends that citizens be prepared to remain in their homes for 72 hours without electricity or running water. It may take this long after a hurricane impacts an area for state and federal aid to respond. Here are some things you can do to prepare before a storm impacts our area.

- Keep flashlights and fresh batteries on hand.
- Stock nonperishable foods and keep a manual can opener handy. The ideal choices are foods that require no cooking, such as canned fruit, peanut butter, and crackers. If you plan to use a charcoal or gas grill for cooking, keep the grill outdoors.
- If your home is connected to a well, store extra water in clean jugs, bathtubs, or laundry tubs.
- If someone in your household depends on electricity to operate life support systems, make plans for alternate sources of power or alternate lodging. Contact the Department of Public Safety at **301-475-4200 Option 6 then Option 3** for assistance.
- Keep a battery-powered radio with fresh batteries and stay tuned to local news bulletins and weather reports.
- Keep your automobile gas tank full in the event that an evacuation is ordered.

- If you plan to use a portable generator, use extension cords to connect what you want to power directly to the generator. Place your generator outside, not in a crawl space or in a basement. Make sure your generator is connected safely; a generator that is not connected safely can cause serious injury or death. When your power comes back on, turn off and disconnect your generator immediately.
- As in preparing for any other emergency, maintain a supply of cash. Credit cards and ATM machines may not work if the power is out.
- Keep fresh batteries in your smoke detectors.
- Make sure that you have a standard phone available. Cordless phones do not work without electricity.

If your power goes out:

- Call SMECO's Outage Hotline (1-877-74-SMECO or 1-877-747-6326).
- Turn off all the major appliances in your home, especially the heat pump. This will prevent damage to the appliances once the power is restored. Then, try not to turn everything back on at once; turn on appliances gradually so the electric demand does not jump suddenly.
- Open the freezer and refrigerator as little as possible. This will help food stay fresh longer.
- Never touch downed power lines or attempt to remove trees from power lines. Contact with live lines may result in serious injury or death. Let qualified SMECO crews handle the clearing and repair work. Please report downed power lines to SMECO immediately.

Another very important aspect to being prepared is being informed by knowing where you will get emergency information before, during and after a disaster. The National Weather Service, National Hurricane Center web-sites and the Weather Channel are great for following a hurricane in the days prior to impact. Local radio and television stations can provide crucial information that you may need such as closures, evacuation orders and where to receive assistance after the storm. St. Mary's County Government Advisories page at www.stmarysmd.com, will keep citizens updated during a disaster and will also keep updates added to the Emergency Information Hotline at 301-475-4911.

In addition, St. Mary's County Government offers CodeRED-Emergency Notification and Severe Weather Warning Systems, which can alert citizens during emergencies, especially severe weather such as a hurricane. Messages can be sent to your home and cell phones and CodeRED now offers text messaging and e-mail alerts. To sign up or update your existing data, visit <http://www.stmarysmd.com/emergencycodered.asp> or

call the Department of Public Safety at 301-475-4200 Option 6 then Option 3. For more information on how to become “Aware and Prepared”, visit www.ready.gov.

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