

FEBRUARY 2010

SURVIVING THE STORM... IT'S EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

COUNTY CONNECTION

Hurricane & Safety News: E-Lert



INBOX

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

Pinellas County Emergency Management: (727) 464-3800 | www.pinellascounty.org/emergency

Find your evacuation level: (727) 453-3150 | www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/knownyourzone.htm

Register for special needs transportation: (727) 464-3800 | www.pinellascounty.org/forms/special-needs.htm

Follow Pinellas County Emergency Management on Twitter: twitter.com/PinellasEM

Sign up for the Community Notification Service to receive text emergency information on your cell phone: (888) 689-8905

Set your Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) equipped all-hazards alert radio for Pinellas County: Enter code 012103

If you know of someone who would like to receive the E-Lert newsletter, have them visit www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/subscribe.htm

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WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

Katrina Cottages

www.katrinacottagehousing.org



As is the case in Haiti after the recent catastrophic earthquake, sheltering survivors of a disaster is a top priority. Not just for the short term, but for years to come. After Hurricane Katrina devastated the north Gulf coast, planners across the country wondered if there

SALLY SAYS

FROM THE DESK OF PINELLAS COUNTY'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

The recent catastrophic earthquake in Haiti is a disaster that few residents had prepared for. Haiti, the poorest nation in the western hemisphere, is familiar with hurricanes and had seen devastation many times in its history. Most recently, the island was raked by four storms during the catastrophic 2008 hurricane season.

While Florida is not in any high risk of experiencing an earthquake, we have to remember that not every potential disaster we face will give us the days of warning time we can expect from the National Hurricane Center. We are still in an El Niño weather pattern, meaning that we can still expect a greater possibility of severe weather this winter. On top of that, we are just entering the most dangerous time of the year for tornadoes in Florida. You can see that disaster could come calling with minimal warning.

Since it will be difficult to get supplies after a disaster, it's crucial that you maintain a level of supplies to last you and your family for five to seven days. Since we are not living in an impoverished island nation, this amount of supplies may seem excessive at first glance. However, given the uncertainties of supply after such an event, it's doubtful that anyone would be complaining about having too much food and water on hand.



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WE STILL NEED YOUR HELP!

The E-Lert survey is still up and waiting for your vote. We are using your input to help guide us as we



wasn't a better way to provide shelter. Something safer and more durable than a relief trailer. Enter the Katrina Cottage. These modest yet dignified structures were designed by a group of a dozen architects. Designed so their construction elements could be transported with a minimum number of trucks, they are rated to withstand the high winds of future hurricanes. Small yet efficient floor layouts allow for efficient living spaces and for additions to be built on as necessary.

continually improve the content and reach of this electronic emergency management newsletter. Participating in the survey is easy and should take only a few moments of your time to complete. Just visit www.pinellascounty.org/surveys/communications/elert.htm and click the Begin Survey button at the bottom of the screen.

There is also space to enter your own comments and suggestions on how to improve the E-Lert as we enter its fourth year of publication.



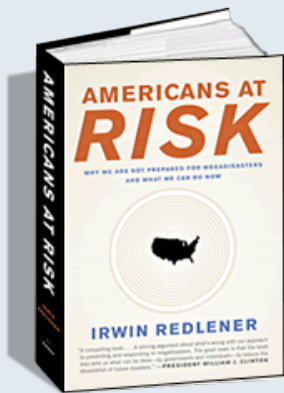
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TOM'S BOOK OF THE MONTH

What is Pinellas County's Hurricane Preparation Specialist Tom Iovino reading this month?

Americans at Risk: Why we are not prepared for megadisasters and what we can do now
By Irwin Redlener
ISBN-13: 978-0307265265



Getting ready for a natural disaster should be a piece of cake. Lay in supplies, train responders, provide the right equipment and educate the public about the risks they face. Yet as natural disasters take place, many of the simple tasks and elementary lessons are forgotten. Redlener takes an intriguing look at the lessons Americans have learned about disaster preparedness and dissects the response to recent incidents. He also offers four chilling scenarios of potential disasters and demonstrates how

"AND AWAY WE GO"

When a local state of emergency exists, there are many times when seeking a safe place in your home and staying put is the best option. However, if you have to evacuate your home to the prospect of an incoming storm surge, chemical spill or other hazard, it's important to have a Go Kit standing by.

What should you have in your Go Kit? Yours will be unique to you and your family, but there are some basics that you should have on hand. These include:

- Your home and auto insurance numbers and contact information
- An updated phone contact list of friends, relatives, doctors and other important contacts.
- Personal toiletries
- A spare change of clothes and footwear
- A small supply of cash



Other essentials, such as a few days' supply of your prescription pills, infant formula and diapers, and pet food can round out your kit.

You might also want to consider stashing a small supply of items in your car's trunk, ready to go in case of an emergency. This includes:

- Case of drinking water in bottles
- Small supply of easy-to-eat nonperishable food, like granola bars
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a NOAA weather radio
- Flashlight and extra batteries or a hand-crank model
- First aid kit
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers

If you don't own your own vehicle, some of these items can be placed in a bag in an easy-to-access location in your home. This way, if you have to evacuate, you will at least have the basics with you in those first crucial hours, and then you can start working toward getting back to normal after the danger has passed. For information about how to build your own Go Kit, visit

www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/prepareahead.htm.

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a lack of creativity in the planning phase can have dire consequences, putting lives in the balance.

FEBRUARY'S CHECKLIST



- Even though we are no longer in hurricane season, carefully monitor weather forecasts daily to stay up to date on the latest conditions.
- Buy a weather alert radio and know how to operate all of its functions. This small device can give you the time to save your life if hazardous weather approaches.
- Pinellas County Emergency Management is also tweeting on Twitter. You can follow these updates at twitter.com/PinellasEM at your computer or on your cell phone. Configure your Twitter account by following the settings link on the Twitter page.

WEATHER FACTS OF THE MONTH

No, you weren't imagining it. The start of this past January was unusually cold for an unusually long time. How unusual?

From January 2 - 13, the high temperature in St. Petersburg never exceeded 60 degrees. This streak of 11 consecutive days crushed the previous record of eight set in December of 1995.

The previous record at Tampa International Airport was seven days in January of 1956.

Record daily lows were set the morning of January 11 across the state as far south as Miami and Key West.

TUNE IN TO PCC-TV

Inside Pinellas Today is a daily look at the news, events and happenings from around



Pinellas County. Inside Pinellas Today is designed to help you stay informed and get connected with your Pinellas County government. (New shows Monday, Wednesday and Thursday at 4:35 p.m.)

WHY MINIMUM AUTO INSURANCE COVERAGE MAY NOT BE ENOUGH

Natural disasters affect not only buildings, but automobiles, too. It is just as important to have the right kind and amount of automobile insurance as it is to have proper coverage for your home. One of the biggest mistakes people make with car insurance is purchasing only the legally required minimum amount of liability for their car. In today's litigious society, buying only the minimum amount of liability means you are likely to pay more out-of-pocket – and those costs may be steep. Florida law requires vehicle owners to carry a minimum of \$10,000 of personal injury protection and \$10,000 of property damage liability.



Chances of having a car accident when responding to a natural disaster may increase because street signs and signals are often destroyed. The insurance industry and consumer groups generally recommend a minimum of \$100,000 of bodily injury protection per person and \$300,000 per accident. You should always have enough insurance to cover the value of your car, especially if you owe money on it. The more expensive your car, the more coverage you should have.

Visit www.INSURINGFLORIDA.org for more information.

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STORMS IN HISTORY

THE GROUNDHOG DAY TORNADO OUTBREAK, FEB. 2, 2007

February lies in the middle of the deadliest part of Florida's tornado season. In 1998, the state experienced its deadliest tornado outbreak, which killed 42 central Florida residents. Just nine years later, the dangerous weather conditions were once again in play on the Florida peninsula. Temperatures were well above normal for early February in Lake, Sumter and Volusia counties, and a strong cold front was expected to bring the potential for severe weather as it passed the area.



As the storms raged overhead in the early morning hours of Feb. 2, a powerful supercell thunderstorm formed. As it made its way across the peninsula, it spawned three tornadoes – two of them dangerous EF3 tornadoes. The trail of devastation stretched 70 miles, from Wildwood in Sumter County to the Intercoastal Waterway in Volusia County. All told, the storms claimed 21 lives, injured 76 and caused \$218 million in damages.

Just as with the 1998 outbreak, the area was advised of the tornado potential earlier the previous day, the storms struck in the early hours of the morning and the majority of damage occurred in



The E-Lert is a production of the Pinellas County Communications Department.



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THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

Click here to download.

To view this newsletter online go to www.pinellascounty.org/newsletters/e-lert/hurricane_news.html

mobile homes. This deadly incident added emphasis to the need for every home to have a weather alert radio. These devices receive weather alerts from the National Weather Service and set off an alarm, giving residents the maximum alert time when dangerous weather threatens.

The three tornadoes from this incident were also the first rated on the Enhanced Fujita scale, which replaced the original scale established in 1971. This new scale puts a greater emphasis on property damage as an indicator of storm intensity.

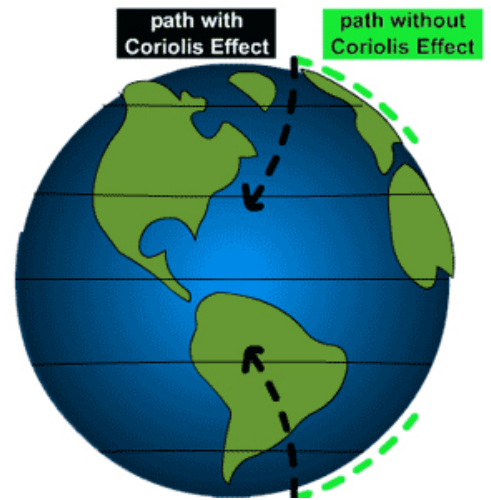
For more information on the Groundhog Day Tornado Outbreak, visit the information page at www.srh.noaa.gov/mlb/?n=020207 run by the National Weather Services' Melbourne office.

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WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

When you look at a weather satellite image, you'll most often notice that the clouds don't run in a straight line, but instead move in curves. In extreme cases such as hurricanes, you will see the clouds wrap completely around the middle of the storm. Why do they do that?

This motion is caused by the Coriolis Effect. First described by French scientist Gaspard-Gustav Coriolis, it explains the effect of the Earth's rotation on moving objects. To get a better idea of how this works, imagine that there are two baseball players – a pitcher standing at the North Pole and a catcher at the Equator. The pitcher, who just so happens to have incredible arm strength, throws one monumental fastball to his catcher. The pitch leaves his hand traveling due south, but the Earth is rotating counterclockwise under it. When our catcher sees the ball, it will appear to trail off toward the west – a ball, not a strike, for sure.



In much the same way, air moves toward areas of low pressure in a relatively straight line. However, since the Coriolis Effect is working on it, the air actually spirals around low pressure areas. That's why hurricanes rotate counter-clockwise north of the Equator, but clockwise south of it.

Why is the Coriolis Effect so important? Hurricanes need to spin in order to draw warm moist air in to get their power and expel the drier, cooler air into the upper atmosphere. In places where the Coriolis Effect doesn't impart a spin, hurricanes can't develop. Where does this happen? Since these similar storms spin in opposite directions in the northern and southern hemispheres, the place where you can find little spin is near the Equator. Even though there is plenty of warm water, humid air and other favorable conditions, very few storms develop or travel within five degrees of latitude to the Equator.

Just an aside, many people attribute the direction which water runs down the drain to the Coriolis Effect – assuming that water drains one way in the northern hemisphere and the other in the southern hemisphere. While it does have some effect, it is very small. The shape of the drain, the way the drain pipes are installed and the force of gravity have a much greater effect on water flow. To learn more about the direction water runs down the drain, visit the Straight Dope's page at www.straightdope.com/columns/read/149/do-bathtubs-drain-counterclockwise-in-the-northern-hemisphere.

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Visit the Pinellas County government website at www.pinellascounty.org.