

MARCH 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/knowyourzone.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

Really Ready

www.fas.org/reallyready



In 2003, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security launched Ready.gov, a one-stop Web destination for residents to develop an emergency plan. In 2006, the Federation of American Scientists took a thorough look at the information presented on the site and noticed a number of inconsistencies, contradicting instructions and out-of-date information. Using sound psychological and sociological techniques, the FAS created the Really

SALLY SAYS

FROM THE DESK OF PINELLAS COUNTY'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus hit the nail on the head when he said, "The only thing constant is change." This expression holds true when it comes to preparations for the arrival of potential disasters such as hurricanes. As new family members arrive, grown members leave home and homes are bought and sold, residents have the responsibility to adjust their plans to meet their new situations.

In much the same way, emergency planners in cities, counties and states across the country are adjusting their plans and planning materials based on new technology and greater experience with natural and man-made disasters.

This year, two major changes will be taking place in how we prepare for hurricane season. First, the National Hurricane Center has increased confidence in its hurricane track forecasting to the point where they will now issue earlier tropical cyclone watches and warnings. An article later in this edition of E-Lert gives all the details on this change.

The other change will take place in Pinellas County's hurricane evacuation maps. New, more refined information on land elevations and an improved Sea Lake and Overland Surge from Hurricanes (SLOSH) model, that determines the potential storm surge threats, have given us a more accurate look at the risks we face here in Pinellas. Also, storms such as Hurricane Ike have given analysts greater cause to plan for a storm that can bring tremendously high surge values at a lower intensity.

Currently, our staff is working closely with national, state, regional and local partners to ensure that the maps are drawn to accurately depict where surge is expected. Our plan is to have these new maps available in April and to share them with you through revised hurricane preparedness guides and on the county's website, www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/knowyourzone.htm. Your new



Ready website to round out the information provided at the Department of Homeland Security's Ready.gov website. The hope of the ReallyReady.org site's designers is to have the Department of Homeland Security address the particular concerns and make the necessary corrections on their site.



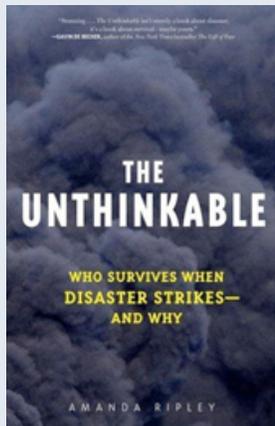
TOM'S BOOK OF THE MONTH

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

The Unthinkable: Who survives when disaster strikes - and why?

By Amanda Ripley

ISBN- 13: 978-0307352903



When emergency planners think about disaster response, they often take a look at the sociology of how people as a group respond to disaster. However, as Ripley points out in her exceptionally well-written book, there is a tremendous amount of psychology to study in the individual's personal response to risk and crisis situations. With personal stories pulled from the accounts of survivors of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, September 11, Hurricane Katrina and other disasters, she describes the arc of behavior that all of us go through when faced with imminent danger: disbelief, then deliberation, then action. By

evacuation levels will also be available on your Pinellas County utility bill.

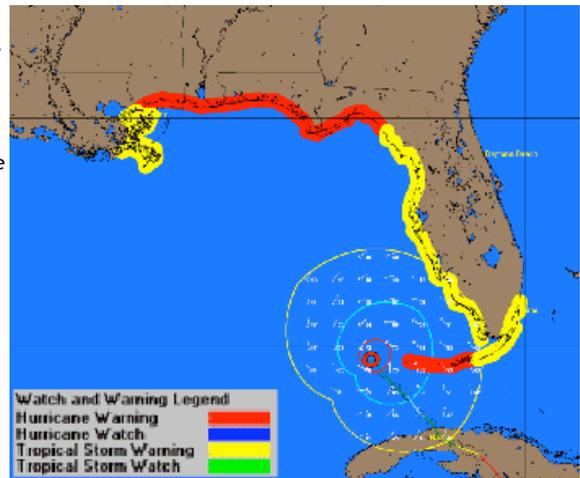
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HURRICANE WATCH AND WARNING TIMES CHANGE

Starting this hurricane season, the National Hurricane Center will provide greater lead time in tropical cyclone watches and warnings.

The NHC has determined that with the ever-increasing population along the United States coastline, communities need more time to prepare for tropical cyclones. Advances in observational capabilities, more powerful computers and forecaster tools over the past two decades have enabled the NHC to make more accurate track forecasts. Over the past 15 years, average NHC forecast

track errors have been cut in half. As a result of this progress, tropical storm and hurricane watches and warnings for threatened coastal areas will be issued 12 hours earlier than in previous years. What that means is a Tropical Storm/Hurricane Watch will be issued 48 hours in advance and a Tropical Storm/Hurricane Warning will be issued 36 hours in advance.



Given these new forecast warning points, what will generally happen is that a hurricane warning will be issued but an evacuation order will not follow for several hours, and until an evacuation is ordered, shelters are not opened. That's why it's important that during an event you watch news broadcasts and check Pinellas County's website at www.pinellascounty.org/emergency to get the latest information on evacuation orders and shelter status.

It's also important to remember that the time to start planning for a disaster is now, not when the watches or warnings are issued. By then, stores will be crowded and may have sold out of the items you need most, you won't have the time to review your insurance policies with your agent to ensure they provide adequate coverage and all the time lost on long lines or finding scarce resources will only delay your completion of your emergency plan, whether that involves evacuating or sheltering in place.

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INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR JEWELRY AND OTHER VALUABLES

A standard homeowner's policy includes coverage for jewelry and other precious items such as watches and furs for losses caused by all the perils included in your policy such as fire, windstorm, theft and vandalism. However, there are special limits of liability for these items to keep coverage affordable. That means the standard homeowners policy may provide only \$1,500 of coverage. If you have valuables that would be difficult to replace, there are two ways you can increase coverage: by raising the limit of liability or "scheduling" your individual pieces through the purchase of "floater"



studying how we respond to risk and danger, emergency planners can create new, more effective methods of communicating the need for preparedness and the proper response.

MARCH'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.
- March is an excellent month to start combing sales circulars and store websites for specials on products you need for your survival kit. By adding a few cans of food, a new first aid kit or a crank-charging radio now, you will be more prepared for hurricane season.
- 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

March 20 marks the arrival of spring with the Vernal Equinox. While day and night are technically the same length, daytime will last approximately 14 minutes longer than night because Earth's atmosphere bends - or refracts - the light.

It is 94 days from the June solstice to the September equinox, but only 89 days from the December solstice to the March equinox. The seasons are not of equal length because the Earth's orbit is elliptical - not a true circle. This means that the Earth is closer to the Sun in the northern hemisphere's winter, making it move faster because of the Sun's gravitational pull. In the northern hemisphere's summer, Earth's orbit is at its farthest from the Sun, which slows down the planet's orbital speed.

TUNE IN TO PCC-TV

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



policies.

Raising the limit of liability is the cheapest option; however, there may be a limit on the amount you can claim for the loss of any individual piece, say \$2,000, when the overall limit is \$5,000. Scheduling each item may cost more in premiums, while offering broader protection than what a homeowner's insurance policy provides. That's because the floater policy covers losses of any type, including accidental losses—such as dropping your ring down the kitchen drain or leaving an expensive watch in a hotel room. Before purchasing a floater, the items covered must be professionally appraised.

Visit www.InsuringFlorida.org for more information.



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STORMS IN HISTORY

SNOWPOCALYPSE, FEBRUARY 5 - 7, 2010

The winter of 2009/2010 will go down in history as one of the most bizarre. The Winter Olympics in Vancouver were contested in record-breaking warmth. Florida shivered through one of the coldest - and longest lasting - cold snaps ever recorded. And the snow fell in the Midwest and Northeast. And fell. And fell.

Snowpocalypse, also known as the First North American Blizzard of 2010, was preceded by an earlier blizzard on December 19, 2009, which pummeled the Mid-Atlantic area with nearly two feet of snow and brought hazardous conditions throughout the Midwest and South-Central states.



Much of that snow was still on the ground when a powerful storm system came ashore in California on February 1. The storm tracked completely across the southern tier of the United States, eventually moving into the Gulf of Mexico. As with hurricanes, once over the relatively warm waters of the Gulf, the storm quickly gathered strength. Meanwhile, another low-pressure area tracked just south of the Great Lakes, bringing snow through that region.

Once both low-pressure areas approached each other, the stronger system to the south absorbed the energy of the northern system. This took place just off the coast of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, over the warm Gulf Stream waters. Once this happened, the combined low-pressure areas rapidly deepened, or "bombed," bringing tremendous snowfall to the Mid-Atlantic states. Washington, D.C.; Baltimore and Philadelphia each received about two feet of snow at the tremendous amount of up to three inches an hour. Colesville, Maryland, recorded the greatest snowfall during this event, a whopping 40 inches.

Snow plows struggled to reopen roads in this record-breaking storm, and snow couldn't just be plowed out of the way ... it had to be loaded into dump trucks and hauled to out-of-the-way locations where it could melt without disturbing vital transportation corridors.

Oh, and just four days later, another blizzard paid the same areas a visit, dumping another 12 - 24 inches on top of what had already fallen.

The combined totals of the three storms shattered records for cities such as Baltimore; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia and Atlantic City.

Read more about this incredible storm at Wikipedia's Snowpocalypse entry en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_North_American_blizzard_of_2010.

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.)



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



[Click here to follow Pinellas County Emergency Management on Twitter.](#)

THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

[Click here to download.](#) 

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

While we aren't expecting any blizzards here in the Tampa Bay area, these storms serve as a reminder for residents to remain prepared for dangerous weather and service interruptions. Nonperishable food, water, batteries, medications and other essentials are critical when the weather turns bad.

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WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Imagine visiting a casino in Las Vegas. You mosey over to the craps table and start to watch the action. The shooter gets a pair of dice from the stickman and shakes them in her right hand. What is the likelihood that the shooter will get snake eyes (*two ones*)? It's actually one in 36, because there are only 36 possible combinations of numbers that can show when the dice are rolled. Based on this information, you should expect to see one snake eyes every 36 rolls of the dice.

If you understand this, you have a basic working knowledge of probabilities - a way of expressing knowledge or belief that a given event will occur in a defined amount of time.

In weather, this is a very important concept when it comes to forecasting. Whether considering the chance of thunderstorms on a summer day or the arrival of a hurricane, determining the likelihood of something happening gives residents an idea of the risks they face.



For instance, based on statistics pulled from the hurricane record which stretches back to 1856, the Tampa Bay area can expect to see a category 3 storm pass within 75 miles of our shores once every 18 years.

Does this mean that you can mark your calendar and plan on the arrival of a category 3 storm every 18 years like clockwork? Not exactly. Let's go back to our craps table in Vegas. You may sit at the table and watch three straight hours of rolling and never see snake eyes come up after a roll. If you leave the table to go take in dinner and a show, you might assume (*incorrectly*) from your relatively small sample size that snake eyes never occurs at the table. However, another day, you may see four snake eyes rolled in five minutes. Variables such as the way the dice are held, how fast they are thrown, the composition of the table surface, temperature and humidity of the air and thousands of others factors come into play.

With hurricanes, the speed of the trade winds, water surface temperature, existing weather in other parts of the world and thousands of other factors come into play as well. When people live in an area and don't experience a direct landfall from a hurricane for decades, they may assume that hurricanes never affect their locale.

Since it is impossible to predict the exact landfall point and intensity of a storm months in advance, it's important to prepare as if this will be the year we will be affected by a hurricane. Stacking the odds of survival in your favor is a smart bet!

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