

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

The National Weather Service's
Storm Prediction Center
www.spc.noaa.gov



The National Weather Service runs the National Hurricane Center to track tropical systems. In much the same way, they also run the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma, for potentially severe weather. The meteorologists at the SPC review hundreds of weather reports from around the country to provide timely and accurate forecasts and weather watches for severe thunderstorms and tornadoes over the

SALLY SAYS

FROM THE DESK OF PINELLAS COUNTY'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

From the No News is Good News category, what a quiet hurricane season 2009 has turned out to be. Preseason forecasts called for an average season, but the activity was certainly much less than expected. One of the reasons for our less active year has been the El Niño event that has set up in the tropical Pacific Ocean. All of the energy that warmer water has given to the atmosphere has ripped developing storms apart.

Given that El Niño can help our hurricane situation, you'd think there was nothing bad about it. However, an El Niño's benefit in one season can prove to be a liability in another.

When an El Niño event happens, the energy that rips the hurricanes apart in the summer gives the jet stream - and the storms that form along it - a quick boost in intensity. Suddenly, that warm and dry winter and spring we had this year may look completely different as we head into 2010.

First, we can expect a significantly wetter winter and spring. Anyone who remembers the exceptionally wet winter and spring of 1997 can tell you what kind of torrential rains an El Niño can cause. Also, the deadly tornado outbreaks of 1983, 1998 and 2007 took place during El Niño years.

Even though our quiet hurricane season may be ending, it pays to stay prepared in case we do experience bad weather. Get a weather alert radio and be sure it's set up properly to receive severe weather alerts. Keep your batteries and flashlights handy, as well as a battery-operated or hand-crank radio to listen to weather news should the power go out.

For a list of tornado specific preparations, visit the Pinellas County Emergency Management tornado website at www.pinellascounty.org/tornado.



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NAME THAT NIMS

contiguous United States. The SPC also monitors heavy rain, heavy snow and drought conditions across the U.S. and issues specific advisories for those hazards.



TOM'S BOOK OF THE MONTH

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

Weather for Dummies

By: John D. Cox

ISBN-13: 978-0764552434



What's going on up there when the rain falls, when the wind blows, when the clouds roll in and the lightning flashes? This is an excellent general information book about the how's, why's and where's of weather around the globe. Written in easy-to-understand language and lavishly illustrated, you can go from sky-watching newbie to well-versed in weather. This is a great guide to making sense of the baffling turmoil of the ever-changing skies above.

NOVEMBER'S CHECKLIST



- Since we are still in hurricane season, carefully monitor weather forecasts daily to stay up to date on the latest conditions

- Cycle your battery supply. If you have

NAME THAT NIMS

Many valuable lessons were learned on the morning of September 11, 2001. We are vulnerable to disasters of any shape or size. Life is worth celebrating every day, because it can be lost in the briefest of instants. And people who assist in emergency response needed a better way to communicate with each other and arrive at a scene to address the issue at hand.



To help put this lesson into practice, then-President George W. Bush signed the Homeland Security Presidential Directive No. 5. This document stated that emergency managers around the country adopt the Incident Command System structure already effectively in use by California wild fire teams. The overall system that governs response is called the National Incident Management System.

The chief benefit of NIMS is that no matter where help comes from after an incident, every agency on site will be working within a similar structure. This way, significantly less time is spent on figuring out who does what and gets relief workers into position much earlier. Other areas that are not typically addressed in older emergency plans - finance and administration, for example - are required planning areas to ensure that no necessary steps are omitted.

While it may seem as if the NIMS system applies only to major disasters involving a major nationwide response, it is also flexible and scalable for any incident. For example, NIMS principles can be put into place after something as large as the impact of a major hurricane or as small as a town's Independence Day parade.

Your Pinellas County Emergency Management department is fully NIMS compliant and is fully prepared to cooperate with other organizations should disaster happen far from home ... or in our own backyard.

For more information on this system, visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency's NIMS information page at www.fema.gov/emergency/nims.

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NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

When a disaster happens, there are a great number of volunteers who flood into the area to help with the recovery. While each volunteer is driven by the same selfless motives, each comes to the scene with their own specific skills, interests and desire to help. That's why coordinating these volunteers - to put the right people in the right situations to do the most good - is such a critical part of planning for disasters.



The United Way of Tampa Bay, with its large number of non-profit agencies and established coordination system, is one of the key players in preparing for and recovering from a disaster. Working closely with state and local officials, the United Way helps to ensure volunteers are safe, accounted for and working together smoothly to ensure the most people are helped.

For more information about the United Way volunteer program, visit www.uwtb.org/subpages/Volunteer_Tampa_Bay.asp.

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WHAT EXACTLY DOES MIAMI-DADE CERTIFIED MEAN?

If you are thinking about improving your home to better handle hurricane winds, no doubt you have heard about Miami-Dade certified products. What exactly does that mean for you?



older batteries in your survival kit, use them in toys, radios and other battery-operated gadgets you give during the holiday season and buy new ones through the winter and spring to restock.

- Take a look at the food in your survival kit. If the expiration date is approaching soon, either use the food in your daily cooking or donate it to a local food bank. You can buy new supplies to replace the older ones.

- 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

- The highest surface wind speed ever officially recorded is 231 mph during a gust at the Mount Washington Observatory in New Hampshire on April 12, 1934. The anemometer was later tested by the U.S. National Weather Bureau and confirmed to be accurate.



- A higher wind speed recorded in Guam at 236 mph during 1997's Typhoon Paka was declared invalid because the instrument was damaged during the storm and could not later be checked for accuracy.

- Wind speeds within certain atmospheric phenomena (such as tornados) may greatly exceed this value but have never been accurately measured. The figure of 316 mph during the F5 tornado in Moore, Oklahoma, is often quoted as the highest measured surface wind speed but it was measured by Doppler radar (which is only able to provide an estimate) and was measured 100 feet above ground.

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.)

After all, your home is in Pinellas County.

After Hurricane Andrew struck south Florida in 1992, Miami-Dade County inspectors carefully analyzed the damage that this category 5 storm caused. Some building products fared well, while others performed poorly. To ensure a high quality of building materials to safeguard residents and improve the likelihood that new structures could withstand powerful storms, Miami-Dade County began an extensive certification and testing program. Manufacturers now have to demonstrate their products can handle a hurricane's intense winds. These tests include checks for the product's ability to deflect large and small missiles, ability to stand up to extreme wind pressure and air flow resistance, among others. Only after an acceptable performance could a product bear the Miami-Dade certification.



In 2002, Florida adopted a uniform statewide building code to help fortify new buildings. The new standard incorporates many of the groundbreaking ideas Miami-Dade developed, including a similar product certification process that now applies to all 67 counties in Florida.

For more information on the Miami-Dade certification process or to verify a product number, visit: www.miamidade.gov/buildingcode/pc_approval.asp.

For more information on the state's certification process or to verify a product number, visit: www.floridabuilding.org/pr/pr_default.aspx.

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KNOW YOUR STUFF WITH A HOME INVENTORY

Quick five-second test: Name the make and model of all the TV sets you own. Few people would be able to do so. That gives you a very good reason why a home inventory would come in handy. Taking the time to compile a comprehensive home inventory will help if you ever need to file an insurance claim. The Insurance Information Institute offers free software that allows you to create a room-by-room inventory of your home's contents. You are able to securely store the inventory online, too, so you can access it anywhere, any time.



Go to www.KnowYourStuff.org to start the inventory and view the video on the benefits of creating a catalog of your home's contents. You can back up the detailed list of your possessions with photos or a videotape. Keep one copy of the photos in your home and another in a location where they won't get damaged by a storm.

Having an inventory also enables you to take advantage of tax deductions for losses that are not covered by insurance.

For more information, visit www.InsuringFlorida.org.

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STORMS IN HISTORY

HURRICANE LENNY, NOVEMBER 13 -





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



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THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

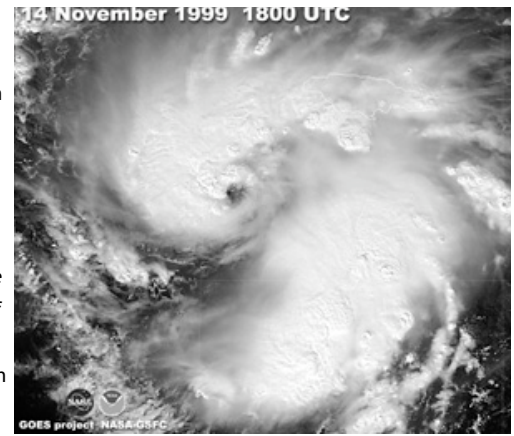
Click here to download. 

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

23, 1999

Powerful category 4 hurricanes are just seen in the heart of the season, right? If that's what you think, you would be sorely mistaken.

What would eventually become Hurricane Lenny started as a puff of clouds in the western Caribbean, one of the last areas of the tropical Atlantic basin to cool off at the end of the season. As with most late-season storms, Lenny sputtered its way to tropical storm, then to hurricane intensity.



After passing south of Jamaica, the storm surprised forecasters by developing a well-organized center of circulation. The barometric pressure dropped and the winds rose dramatically, eventually peaking at 155 mph - the upper limit of Category 4 intensity. The storm plowed through St. Croix and its extensive winds caused tremendous damage in Saint Martin, Anguilla, Saint-Barthélemy, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Antigua, Barbuda and Montserrat.

What surprised forecasters most was the direction the storm was traveling - west to east. This direction is opposite of the normal direction for hurricanes, which led the National Hurricane Center staff to start calling the storm 'Wrong Way Lenny.'

Tragically, the storm went on to cause \$420 million in damages and claim 17 victims in the Caribbean. The name Lenny was retired and will never be used again for another storm.

For more information about Hurricane Lenny, visit the Wikipedia page at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hurricane_Lenny.

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WE TAKE OUR SHOW ON THE ROAD

Hurricane season is now in its last month, but it's not over yet! If you're looking for a presentation for your homeowner's association, civic group, church, business or other gathering, Pinellas County can help. Oh, and June 1, 2010? Well, that's only seven months away...



Currently, there are four hurricane-related presentations that can be requested:

- **Hurricane 101** What are hurricanes? How do they form? What are their effects? Get the basics on these dangerous tropical storms.
- **Does it Take a Category 5?** Everyone in Florida worries about the next 'big one.' But does a hurricane have to be a monster to do major damage? See what damage storms of all Saffir-Simpson categories are able to do.
- **Busting Hurricane Myths** Learn the dangers of some commonly held beliefs about hurricanes. Not only will you find the real story, you may also save your life when a storm comes.
- **Becoming Storm Savvy** Once hurricane season 2009 ends, it will be an excellent time to start planning improvements to make your home more storm worthy. Learn why the winter and early spring are excellent times to build a survival kit and to make necessary plans.

To schedule a speaker, call Pinellas County's Speakers Bureau at (727) 464-3000. Remember, knowledge is power. We can't do anything about the weather, but by knowing what to do when bad weather threatens, you can gain control over your personal safety.

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WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Auntie Em! Auntie Em!



Who could ever forget the cry of Dorothy Gale as she and her adorable dog Toto were swept into a magical tornado that transported them to the Land of Oz.

While the tornado in the Wizard of Oz was a great plot movement device, real tornadoes can be terrifying, destructive and deadly. While they can occur any time during the year in Florida, they are most likely to occur during one of three times:



- During the landfall of a hurricane or other tropical system as the high winds interact with land
- From the turbulent air aloft during a violent thunderstorm
- During a strong winter storm drawing power from the fast jet stream winds

While they may be more numerous during the summer and fall with thunderstorms and hurricanes, the ones that touch down during winter and early spring storms in Florida are the most powerful and deadly.

Single tornadoes from one thunderstorm are the most commonly seen scenarios. If one particularly large thunderstorm generates several tornadoes during its lifetime, this is considered a tornado family. And if a larger scale storm system generates several tornadoes over a wide geographical range, this is called a tornado outbreak. The largest tornado outbreak took place in April 1974, when a powerful, widespread storm system dropped 148 tornadoes across the Midwest in only 18 hours, killing more than 300 people.

As with hurricanes, tornado intensity is measured on a numbered scale. The Enhanced Fujita scale goes from EF0 - a very weak storm - to EF5 - an exceptionally powerful storm with winds exceeding 200 miles per hour. Most tornadoes in Florida are considerably weaker than those experienced in 'Tornado Alley' (Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, eastern Colorado and South Dakota).

Tornadoes do not give the same duration of warning that hurricanes do, so it's very important to have a weather alert radio in your home. This device sits quietly most of the time, but will emit a loud alarm if the National Weather Service office in Ruskin indicates that hazardous weather is nearby. A weather alert radio will give you the longest possible warning time to get yourself and your family to safety.

For more information about tornadoes, visit the Wikipedia tornado page at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tornado.

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