

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 Weather Underground
www.wunderground.com](http://www.wunderground.com)



Sure, there are hundreds of websites out there that deal with weather. Some offer pinpoint forecasts, others large views of atmospheric conditions. However, if you want one-stop shopping for weather, Weather Underground is not a bad choice. While named after the radical 1960's organization, Dr. Jeff Masters established the site in 1995 for the free - and peaceful - dissemination of weather information. Visitors can find a wealth of weather-related information - from tropical forecasts to ski condition reports across the country. There's also a strong

SALLY SAYS

FROM THE DESK OF PINELLAS COUNTY'S EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

Sniffles. Sneezes. Coughs. Aches. Fevers. Yes, as we move to the final months of the Atlantic Hurricane Season, we have to turn our attention to a different one - flu season.

Seasonal influenza returns each year to the United States, typically posing a threat to the very young and the elderly. Seasonal flu can affect between half a billion and a billion people worldwide, and can kill 250,000 to 500,000 victims annually. This flu season is going to be slightly different. With the H1N1 (Swine Flu) virus prevalent in the community, flu season 2009 has gotten off to a very early start. While this new strain of the flu is a concern, you can use the same tactics to prevent both H1N1 and seasonal flu.

Your first step should be to get a flu shot. Vaccines for the seasonal flu are already available at doctors' offices, clinics and many pharmacies, and the H1N1 vaccine should be arriving shortly. The shot exposes your body's immune system to the virus' 'blueprint' allowing it to build the body's natural defenses to later combat the virus. Can you get the flu from a flu shot? Absolutely not. The virus is 'dead' when injected and can't make you sick.

Other key steps to take are to wash your hands frequently (or use hand sanitizer), cover your coughs and sneezes, wipe surfaces down with disinfectants at work and home, and to stay home if you feel sick. While everyone appreciates your dedication to your job, it's better to keep your germs to yourself! The same goes for your kids attending school ... if they become sick, make sure you understand your employer's leave policies to take care of the little ones.

If you do experience flu-like symptoms, there is no need to rush to the nearest emergency room or doctor's office. In fact, your best bet is to call a medical professional first to get instructions on what to do.

Thinking ahead to ensure you have sufficient supplies of food, over the counter medicines to handle symptoms, sports drinks, tissues and hand sanitizer on hand is a smart thing to do. This way, if you get sick, you can stay home and concentrate on recovering rather than trekking to the grocery store.



emphasis on international weather, the ability to bookmark favorite locations and a great deal of educational information available for the reading.

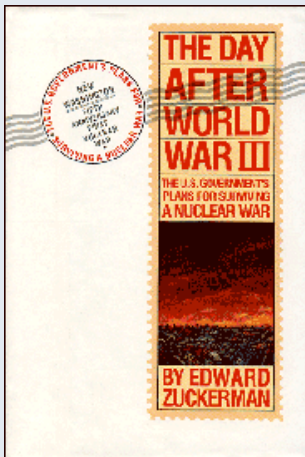


TOM'S BOOK OF THE MONTH

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

The Day After World War III

By: Edward Zuckerman
ISBN: 978-0380699544



This out-of-print book may be a challenge to find, but your detective work will be greatly rewarded. Written in 1984, Zuckerman provides an eye-opening look at the history of atomic weapons, the policies developed to respond to the threat and the civil defense movement's impact on personal preparedness. With information drawn from both American and Soviet sources, this book offers an insightful look back on the fear that gripped both populations during the cold war and the military's need to walk an extremely fine line between aggression and restraint. Besides, it's interesting to read the Post Office's plans to locate missing addressees post-apocalypse. A must read for historians or anyone who can remember the days of Duck and Cover drills.

OCTOBER'S  CHECKLIST



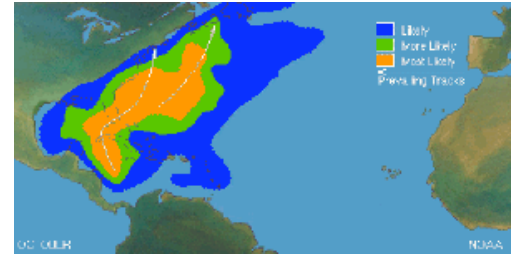
Here are some great flu-related resources out there for you to use:

- Pinellas County's Flu information page:
www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/special_advisory.htm
- Pinellas County Economic Development (Business Info):
www.pced.org/demographics_data/subpage.asp?coop#pandemic
- What are the symptoms?:
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/sick.htm
- How do I care for a family member who is sick?:
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/guidance_homecare.htm
- Pinellas County Health Department's H1N1 page:
www.pinellashealth.com/h1n1swineflu.asp
- Pinellas County School Board's H1N1 page:
www.pcsb.org/news/pcsnews_story_2.html
- Center for Disease Control:
www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu

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OCTOBER STORMS CAN SURPRISE

With a much quieter-than-expected 2009 hurricane season, it might be easy to let down our guard the later we get into the season. October, however, is still traditionally a very busy month for hurricane development in the Atlantic basin.



Also, later-season storms tend to form more in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea instead of halfway around the globe off the coast of Africa. When cold fronts blow out of Canada, bringing cooler air to our neighbors up north, the winds they generate tend to pick Gulf storms up and push them from west to east, making Florida's west coast a sitting duck. Some notable October storms that affected Florida's west coast include:

- The Great Tampa Bay Hurricane of 1921, the last time Pinellas County took a direct hit from a landfalling hurricane (Oct. 20 - 29).
- 1996's Tropical Storm Josephine (Oct 4 - 8) brought a great deal of flooding along the county's beaches, sweeping a tremendous amount of sand onto Gulf Boulevard.
- 2005's Hurricane Wilma (Oct. 15 - 25) also proved that these late-season storms can pack quite a punch. Wilma broke several records, eventually becoming the most intense hurricane ever recorded in the Atlantic basin.

If you haven't yet put together a plan, you can pick up a copy of the Pinellas County Surviving the Storm guide at your local library or city hall, or view it online at www.pinellascounty.org/emergency/hurricaneguide.htm.

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NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

When it comes to dangerous weather, mere seconds may mean the difference between life and death. The National Weather Service offices do an outstanding job monitoring weather conditions, but they can't visually confirm every single hazardous incident.

That's when they turn to their dedicated corps of Skywarn volunteers. Developed in the 1970s, Skywarn is a loose network of people trained in weather observation. They can contact the Ruskin office of the National Weather Service to provide reports of hail, heavy rain and gusty winds. This can provide forecasters with the necessary information to validate what they are seeing





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

- If you are thinking about having a contractor install hurricane shutters, replace your garage door or do any other hurricane preparedness work on your home, now is a great time to start preparing for the 2010 hurricane season. Most contractors book early in the autumn, winter and spring. Do your homework and get your projects completed before next June.

- 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

• Is that a chill in the air? Believe it or not, the average low temperature in the Tampa Bay area drops a full eight degrees from September to October, one of the most significant drops throughout the year. Not quite enough for a sweater, but enough to tell us the long, hot summer is coming to an end.

What's the most popular name for hurricanes in the Atlantic Basin since names were first given to storms in 1954? Think for a minute ... it's Arlene! The name has been used nine times: 1959, 1963, 1967, 1971, 1981, 1987, 1993, 1999 and 2005. Frances was tied with Arlene at eight, but Frances was retired after the busy 2004 season, and Arlene was used the following year, giving it the lead.

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.)



on their radars and the observations help provide additional data to improve forecasts. All of this leads to greater lead-time, giving residents longer warning periods should the weather turn bad.



The National Weather Service offers training for potential Skywarn volunteers. Visit the training page at www.srh.noaa.gov/tbw/TampaBaySkywarnPage.htm for more information.

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HOW TO SANITIZE WATER

A boil-water order can be issued during a heavy rain, a hurricane, a water main break or another significant event that affects the drinking water supply. What that means is that the possibility of some microbial contamination exists for tap water. How do you make your water safe to drink? While there are advanced and expensive filters and specialized water treatment tablets on the market that can accomplish this, homeowners typically rely on one of two ways to sanitize their water supply:



Boiling - Boiling is the most effective way to kill bacteria, viruses and parasites in water. According to the Florida State Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control, bringing a pot of water to a full rolling boil for one minute is enough to kill pathogens and make the water safe to consume. Let the water come to room temperature before drinking, and pour it between two containers to add oxygen to the water - this will improve its taste. A very important thing to remember is that the water must be brought to a full rolling boil before you start counting one minute.

Bleach - Bleach is a less effective way to sanitize water, but can work if you don't have access to power or cooking fuel. Add 1/8 tsp. of common unscented household bleach (check the label, it should say that it contains 5.25% sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water and let the water stand for at least 30 minutes.

Remember, these methods work with water that is clear but possibly contaminated. These methods won't work for sanitizing murky water taken from a ditch, for example.

For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control food and water safety page at www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/foodwater.

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BUILDING HIGHER AND STRONGER IS NECESSARY TO SURVIVE STORM SURGE

Building to the minimum prescribed base flood elevation leaves coastal properties highly vulnerable to storm surge, says the Institute for Business & Home Safety. In a newly released study of property damage caused by Hurricane Ike, IBHS finds that more coastal structures may be vulnerable to disastrous flooding than previously thought, because these homes and businesses are not built high enough to withstand storm surge.



The federal government's National Flood Insurance Program establishes base flood elevations for properties around the country, including here in Pinellas County.

Elevations for homes on Texas' Bolivar Peninsula had base flood elevations set by the NFIP that ranged between 13 feet for homes built in the 1970s to 17-to-19 feet for homes built in 1983 and later.



Click here to follow Pinellas County
Emergency Management on Twitter

THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER

Click here to download. 

To view this online go to
[www.pinellascounty.org/newsletters
/e-lert/hurricane_news.html](http://www.pinellascounty.org/newsletters/e-lert/hurricane_news.html)

However, when Hurricane Ike stuck in September 2008, the only homes on the peninsula that survived the storm surge were elevated to 26 feet - and built to IBHS' Fortified ... for safer living® program's code-plus construction requirements.

Most homes in coastal areas are built to, or slightly above, 100-year base flood elevations. As the IBHS study suggests, building higher - and to a higher standard - is necessary. Download a copy of the full report at www.DisasterSafety.org/hurricane

For more information, visit www.InsuringFlorida.org.

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STORMS IN HISTORY

HURRICANE OPAL, SEPTEMBER 27 - OCTOBER 6, 1995

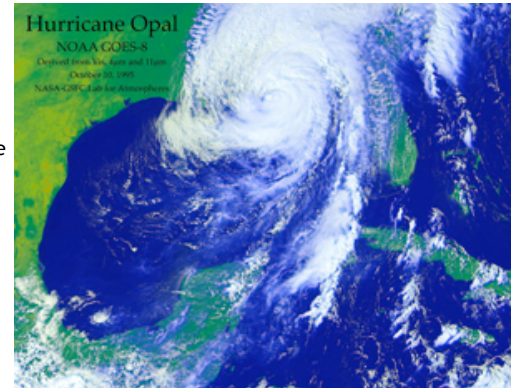
While there is great discussion about the incredibly active 2005 Atlantic Hurricane Season, many people forget about the exceptionally busy 1995 season. After a nearly two-decade-long stretch of very light hurricane activity, it was as if someone had flipped a switch, resulting in what eventually ended up being the third busiest season on record (behind 2005 and 1933).

One of the later storms in the season, Opal initially formed near the Yucatan peninsula in the Caribbean Sea. After sputtering and drifting aimlessly for days, steering currents began to move the storm northward across the Gulf of Mexico. Residents of the Florida panhandle went to bed the night of October 3 looking at the potential impact of a category 1 hurricane, but woke the next morning staring down a dangerous category 4 storm. This rapid intensification took many by surprise, causing officials to have to ramp up evacuation plans already in action. Opal holds the distinction of being the most powerful category 4 hurricane ever recorded. Even though its winds never exceeded 150 miles per hour, its barometric pressure was lower than category 5 storms Hugo (1989), Andrew (1992), David (1979), Anita (1977), Felix (2007) and Carla (1961).

Fortunately, the storm began to weaken before landfall at Santa Rosa Island, doing so as a weak category 3. The storm eventually caused headaches all the way up into Canada, dropping heavy rain and bringing high winds as it passed. The storm claimed 70 victims and caused nearly \$6 billion of damages in 2009 dollars. At the time, it was the second most destructive hurricane on record, just behind 1992's Hurricane Andrew.

Opal was retired as a hurricane name and replaced with Olga for the 2001 Atlantic Hurricane Season.

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



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WE TAKE OUR SHOW ON THE ROAD

Hurricane season is here, and if you're looking for a presentation for your homeowner's association, civic group, church, business or other gathering, Pinellas County can help.

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.
- **Hurricanes for Kids** Hurricane season can be a very trying time for younger family members. Through experiments and easy-to-understand language, your youngsters can find some control over these scary situations.

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?

Watch any weather forecast and you are bound to hear a meteorologist speak about hurricane models or show a 'spaghetti map.' Each map will feature several - sometimes dozens - of potential spaghetti-like paths a hurricane may follow. How are these predictions formed?

While there are many different models out there, they break down into two distinct groups.

Statistical - These models look at the current storm and compare it to a database of storms from previous seasons. Based on how these historical storms moved, the model produces a forecast that, until the late 1980s, was the most accurate.

Dynamic - These models use the immense power of supercomputers to conduct millions of complex mathematical equations to forecast storm paths and intensities. These dynamic models use current weather observations from around the world to calculate potential future developments.

Some of the more commonly used hurricane forecast models include:

BAM (Beta and Advection for Deep, Medium and Shallow air layers), GFDL (Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory) and the National Weather Services Global Forecast System (GFS).

While the hurricane path forecasts have improved dramatically over the past few decades, the models can still have large errors and should not be used to make personal preparedness decisions. Listen to your local authorities and the National Hurricane Center for guidance.

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