



FEMA

News Release

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FEMA NEWSDESK: 413-787-4335
MEMA PIO Contact: 508-820-2002
SBA PIO Contact: 404-606-0696

BE PREPARED FOR FUTURE DISASTERS – GET READY NOW

WESTFIELD, Mass. – Severe weather forecasts are issued year-round for conditions in Massachusetts. Floods and tornadoes can occur in the spring and summer while the fall and winter seasons can produce crippling snow and ice storms.

Storm systems will continue to develop and affect the region. The Commonwealth has already taken several bad hits this year: a severe winter storm on Jan.11-12, tornadoes on June 1 and heavy flooding from Tropical Storm Irene from August 27-29. More severe weather systems will strike this area; it's a matter of when, not if. Disasters will happen again...**Get Ready Now.**

Officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) urge residents throughout the state to focus their attention on the weather, assemble and keep disaster emergency preparedness kits close by and be ready to evacuate at a moment's notice if notified by local officials to leave their homes.

Put together a disaster kit and store it in a portable container in case of evacuation. The kit should include:

- At least a three-day supply of food and bottled water for each family member
- Manual can opener
- Battery-powered radio and flashlights with extra batteries
- First aid kit with family members' medications and prescription information
- Hygiene and personal care items
- Emergency contact list and phone numbers
- Copies of important papers including insurance policies and bank account information
- Emergency money – preferably cash – or credit card
- Keep a full tank of gas in your vehicle
- Don't forget additional supplies for infants, older residents, and those with functional needs.
- Pet supplies (if applicable)

Putting together a disaster preparedness kit only takes a short time. It can mean the difference between having the basic necessities and being uncomfortable, or quite possibly in serious trouble.

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It's important to develop a family disaster plan and know how to stay safe during an emergency.

- Discuss what your family will do when a disaster is pending and where you will go in an evacuation – to a shelter, hotel or to stay with family or friends. Don't forget about pets and plan in advance what to do with them. Have a kit containing supplies needed for their care ready to go. Check with local officials to find out which shelters will accept pets.
- Know and review your evacuation route.
- Develop a family communication plan. Identify a friend or relative in another state or city to serve as a point of contact in case family members are separated

Be prepared for future disasters. Stay informed about weather conditions...including the potential for flooding...and know the risks involved.

- Purchase and program a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio to receive watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service. NOAA weather radios range in price from \$30 to more than \$100, depending on features, and can be purchased at any retail store that sells electronics.
- Determine the risk and take the necessary precautions.
- Never drive through water.
- Take action to reduce potential water damage. Consider flood insurance as well as property insurance against strong winds. Review your insurance coverage with your insurance agent, and update your coverage amounts as necessary. Consider elevating utilities or appliances – even the entire home.
- Focus on protecting and reinforcing the roof, windows and garage against strong winds. Keeping these in place could lessen overall damage during straight-line winds or a tornado.
- Install “hurricane straps” – very effective during tornado activity - and shutters.
- Consult a building contractor, home improvement store or go to the following websites: www.fema.gov and www.ready.gov.

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