

Charleston County News Release

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Hurricane Season Begins Today — Are YOU Ready?

Charleston County wants citizens to know their responsibilities and can help them get prepared for this year's hurricane season.

Most people know that June 1 marks the beginning of the 2007 hurricane season. And most people have probably heard the predictions for this year, so they realize that there is real potential for a storm to hit the East Coast. But are most people prepared? Are *you* prepared?

Cathy Haynes, Director of Charleston County's Emergency Preparedness Division, wants residents to get their family's emergency plan in place and put together their emergency supply kit prior to a storm. Now is the time to do so.

"Charleston County is always preparing for a storm and working with other local and state agencies to do so, but everyone has an individual responsibility to get prepared and make sure their family has a plan," Haynes said. "Anyone who lives along the coast is strongly encouraged to make travel arrangements in advance of an evacuation order."

Haynes also reminds the public that they should try to leave town if at all possible.

"Because of the low-lying areas in our county, we will never have enough safe shelter space for all of the residents who live here. Therefore, we encourage everyone who has the means to leave town to do so and to consider shelters as a last resort," Haynes said.

Those who have the ability to leave should do so as early as possible.

"You don't have to wait until a voluntary or mandatory evacuation order is issued," Haynes said. "If you can, leave as early as possible to make your trip easier and to help relieve the traffic congestion on our roads."

The public can go to www.charlestoncounty.org and click on the "Are You Ready?" banner on the front page of the Web site to download:

- **The 2007 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide (in English or Spanish)**
- **The 2007 Disabilities Emergency Guide**

Information in the Hurricane Preparedness Guide include:

- Evacuation information and routes
- Shelters in Charleston County
- What to do if you don't have transportation – **NEW! Pick-up point signs are being posted around the county. Learn now where you need to go!**
- Definitions and what you need to do during hurricane watches, warnings, and tropical storms
- What you need if you have to bring your pet to the pet shelter
- Preparations for your home and your family before the storm
- What you need to have in your emergency supplies kit
- What to do after a storm, including safety measures and handling debris
- A family communications plan form to fill out
- Important phone numbers

This year, Charleston County is also undertaking a large campaign to educate citizens who don't have transportation about new blue signs indicating Evacuation Pick-up Points. In the event of a mandatory evacuation, busses will transport citizens from the pick-up points to the nearest available Red Cross Shelter.

The signs are currently being posted throughout the county at all 75 pick-up point locations.

Charleston County is using a grassroots effort to get the word out about the Evacuation Pick-up Points. The new pick-up point list was sent to over 1,000 Charleston County non-profit organizations, such as senior centers and soup kitchens; government agencies, such as Social Services and the local Social Security Administration office; places of worship and neighborhood associations.

In the letter, Charleston County asked these groups to make copies of the list and emergency contact information to post in their lobbies and to distribute to their clients and patrons.

“It is vital for residents in our community who don’t have transportation to know where their nearest pick-up point is before the next hurricane approaches our coast,” Haynes said. “It takes all of us working together to make sure our citizens and neighbors are prepared and safe.”

- Written by Jennie R. Davis -