



Charleston County News Release

Release Number: 3448

Date: May 31, 2012

Hurricane Season Begins — Are YOU Ready?

Charleston County Government's official 2012 Hurricane Preparedness Guide and Disabilities & Special Needs Emergency Preparedness Guide. Note change in shelter information!

June 1 marks the beginning of the 2012 hurricane season, but are most people prepared? Are you prepared?

The [Charleston County Emergency Management Department](#) wants residents to get their family's emergency plan in place and put their emergency supply kit together prior to a storm. Residents are also encouraged to "like" the department's Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/EMDChasCo> so they can have immediate access to new information in the event of an emergency.

Now is the time to get ready, and it's easy with the help of the new 2012 Charleston County Hurricane Guide. **The public can go to www.charlestoncounty.org and click on the "Are You Ready?" banner on the front page of the County's website to download, print and share:**

- The 2012 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#))
- [The 2012 Disabilities and Special Needs Emergency Preparedness Guide](#)

"Charleston County Government 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," said Cathy Haynes, Charleston County Emergency Management Department's Chief of Operations. "Churches and civic groups can also help by printing the guide for those who do not have access to the Internet. Our entire community needs to help spread the word."

In anticipation of an evacuation order, which can only be given by the governor, Haynes also reminds the public that they should plan to leave town if at all possible, and everyone along the coast is strongly encouraged to make travel arrangements well in advance.

"Because of the low-lying areas in our county, we will never have enough safe [shelter space](#) for all of Charleston County's residents," said Jason Patno, Charleston County Emergency Management Director. "Therefore, we encourage everyone who has the means to leave town to do so and to consider shelters only as a last resort when they have nowhere else to go."

Also, those who have the ability to leave should do so as early as possible.

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

Citizens who do not have transportation should learn where their nearest evacuation pick-up point is located. The evacuation pick-up points are noted by blue signs with a hurricane and bus symbol, and are located across the county at many CARTA bus stops and popular areas like schools, churches and shopping centers. In the event of a mandatory evacuation, buses will transport citizens from the 79 pick-up points to the nearest available [Red Cross shelter](#).

"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."

The [procedures for opening shelters](#) have changed for the 2012 hurricane season. Rather than having a list of shelters in advance, emergency shelters will be determined with the approach of a hurricane to South Carolina. In the event of a hurricane or other major disaster, residents are asked to monitor local media outlets for a current list of open shelters. During an evacuation, listen for emergency alerts on the radio and look for road signs for shelter information.

Information in the 2012 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide includes:

- What to have in your emergency supplies kit
- Evacuation information and routes out of Charleston County
- Shelter procedures
- What to do if you don't have transportation – *look for pick-up point signs posted around the county!*
- Definitions and what you need to do during hurricane watches, warnings and tropical storms
- Rules to know and items to bring if you and your pet need to stay at the pet shelter
- Preparations for your home and your family before the storm
- What to do after a storm, including safety measures and handling debris
- A family communications plan form to fill out
- Important phone numbers, including ones that will be activated in the event of an emergency

The 2012 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide will also run throughout hurricane season on Comcast's education and government channel 60.

- Get emergency information on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/EMDChasCo> -
- Follow "ChasCountyGov" (www.twitter.com/ChasCountyGov) on Twitter -

- written by Jennie Flinn -