

When disaster strikes

INSIDE:
Tips for staying safe
Your town's emergency contacts

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EMERGENCY

Be prepared for extreme weather events

By Ryan Blessing
rblessing@norwichbulletin.com
(860) 425-4205

Getting people to prepare for an emergency is a tough sell, according to emergency management officials in Eastern Connecticut.

This summer's mostly calm and sunny weather locally has pushed the thought of terrible weather events to the back of people's minds. But officials want the public to be ready for disasters and emergencies that can happen at any time.

The start of September marks the traditional active period for hurricanes and other tropical weather to affect southern New England, including Connecticut. This year's string of heat waves could mean a worse time for us if a hurricane were to hit, Norwich Emergency Management Director Gene Arters said.

Water temperature is a key driver of hurricane development, he said.

"Hurricanes feed off of warm tropical water and usually weaken as they move north into cooler waters," Arters said.

That pattern could be broken this year, as water up the Eastern seaboard and in Long Island sound has had more time to warm up and stay warm.

"We're entering the peak part of hurricane season," Plainfield Emergency Management Director Paul Yellen said. "People become numbed a little bit after we haven't had a big storm in a few years."

Preparation for a big storm or other event is a daily activity for emergency management personnel. It usually involves a year-round regimen of training and of raising public awareness.

"We're getting more calls to visit housing complexes,



Connecticut is heavily forested and when tropical storms or hurricanes hit the state trees come down, causing massive power outages, as in Tropical Storm Irene and the October snowstorm, both in 2011. BULLETIN FILE PHOTO

more speaking engagements," Arters said. Recent wildfires this summer in California and flooding in Louisiana have made the public more aware of the severity of natural disasters, he said.

One challenge of the Norwich area is the sheer number of different languages spoken here - as many as 36, according to Arters.

"And you have people who have never experienced a hurricane or blizzard in their lives," he said.

Officials recommend residents and homeowners have no less than 72 hours, or three days' worth, of emergency supplies to get through a power outage.

And of all the tips, checklists and advice for getting through a disaster such as a hurricane or blizzard, one is most important, Arters said.

"If you heed the directives of local officials, you'll get through it just fine," he said.

Connecticut also has another problem if a hurricane hits: it is

well-forested.

Arters said a major Category 3 or higher hurricane would bring down more than 70 percent of Connecticut's trees. That's also the conclusion of a state panel formed to look at plans for responding to storms in the wake of Tropical Storm Irene in 2011 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

By comparison, 1-2 percent of Connecticut's trees came down in Irene in August 2011, causing 90 percent of the 800,000 power outages in that

storm, according to the report.

Trees have the potential to bring down power lines throughout the state for weeks, and not just in a hurricane. Winter ice and snow that's heavy enough could also do it, as it did on a smaller scale in the October 2011 snowstorm. Since then, the state Department of Transportation and major utilities such as Eversource have been proactive about

SEE EXTREME, 4



Norwich Public Workers clean up falling trees on Old Canterbury Turnpike after Super storm Sandy in 2012. BULLETIN FILE PHOTO

Storm prep

Before the storm

Home-use medical devices

If you are a home medical device user, it is important that your device works during a power outage and that you have a plan in place to ensure you know what to do.

By completing the U.S. Food and Drug Administration booklet with the help of a healthcare professional, "Home Use Devices: How to Prepare for and Handle Power Outages for Medical Devices that Require Electricity," you will have an established plan to obtain and organize your medical device information, take necessary actions so that you can continue to use your device, have the necessary supplies for the operation of your device, and know where to go or what to do during a power outage. Remember to update this booklet as your treatment, doctors, caregivers, or personal contacts change.

Storm tips

Here are some other preparations that you can make before a storm hits.

- Build an Emergency Kit with essential items to meet the unique needs of your family. To help build your kit, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a detailed checklist available.

- Stock up on non-perishables, such as canned goods and pet food, and make sure you have adequate medical supplies and prescriptions for yourself and your pets.

- Pick up some paper goods: paper plates, paper towels, plastic ware.

- Turn the temperature controls on your refrigerator and freezer to the coldest setting to keep food cold in the event of a power outage.

- Fill several large containers with water for drinking and also fill the bath tub so you have water to flush your toilet.

- Keep flashlights, batteries, candles and matches on hand and make sure they are available throughout the house.

- Have a battery-powered radio available.

- Make sure you have fresh batteries that are the correct size for the flashlights and radio. Be sure there's a first aid kit in

the house.

- Fill your car with gasoline since you don't know where you'll have to go. Your car can also be a good place to get warm, as long as you keep it well ventilated and don't go to sleep while it is running.

- Be prepared to cook outside. You can use charcoal or propane grills or even a camping cook stove if the power goes out. However, never bring grills inside!

- Have extra gasoline on hand if you own an electric generator.

- Place a list of emergency numbers near a phone (landline, since cordless phones don't work during outages) and in your mobile phone: Red Cross, fire, police, family doctor.

- Invest in an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS). During a momentary power outage, the UPS will continue to provide power to your personal computer. (A UPS is not designed to operate a computer indefinitely, only long enough to allow users time to save their work and shut down properly.)

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EXTREME

From Page 3

clearing branches that hang over highways and roadsides.

"The cutting program has been extremely beneficial," Arters said.

Yellen said it's not so much the hurricanes and blizzards — big storms with five or six days of advance notice — that concern him. Quick-moving and powerful localized storms are in some ways a greater threat because of their unpredictability.

"They can roll right through and bring tornado activity, and I could be in another town like Norwich and be completely unaware," he said.

That's why he and his colleagues take a broad planning approach to dealing with disasters, and then tailor their response as needed.

"You can't fully prepare for every single possible event," he said.



Heavy snow can also cause power outages and other emergencies. BULLETIN FILE PHOTO



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STORM PREP

From Page 4

Hurricanes & other severe weather

If a severe weather or hurricane warning is put into place, and the storm becomes imminent, take the following precautions. Some of the items below can be done well in advance of a storm, while others should be done a day or two a major storm is forecast to impact your area.

- Tape, board or shutter windows and glass doors.
- Secure all outdoor objects that could become airborne by high winds.
- Tie down mobile homes or unmoored boats, or move them to a safe location.
- Wedge sliding glass doors to prevent them from lifting from their tracks.
- Load up a cooler with ice and food you can use during the first hours of an outage.
- In the winter, close off unused rooms to conserve heat.

Open curtains and shades to let sunlight in; close them at night. Stock up on firewood.

- Plug sensitive computer and electronic equipment into surge suppressors or surge protectors. A surge suppressor diverts excessive electrical energy away from your equipment to an electrical “ground” where it disappears without doing any harm.

During a storm

Power outages do happen and when they do, Eversource works diligently to safely and quickly restore our customers’ power. Here are some important considerations for staying safe during an outage:

- Report a power outage online or call your utility.
- Be attentive to severe weather warnings.
- Leave your home if authorities order an evacuation, especially if your home is in an area that floods easily.
- In frigid weather, if your power is likely to be out for more than a few days, you may want to call your plumber and ask about draining your home’s water pipes



Blizzards are another weather event that can cause problems, including power outages. BULLETIN FILE PHOTO

so they don’t freeze and burst.

- Your automobile is a good place to charge your cell phone or stay warm during a storm, as long as you keep it well ventilated and don’t go to sleep while the motor is running.

■ You can always cook outside on a grill or camping cook-stove. However, never bring grills inside!

- Foods in your refrigerator and freezer should be consumed quickly, particularly in the event of a potentially lengthy outage, before they have a chance to spoil. If the temperature is cold enough outside, food can always be placed in a cooler outside to prevent it from spoiling.

■ If you don’t have surge protectors/suppressors, unplug your sensitive equipment. Voltage irregularities can occur for any number of reasons during or after a storm, especially if there has been damage on or near your home. The safest thing to do is to unplug any sensitive electrical devices (TV, VCR, stereo, microwave, computer, answering machine, garage door opener, etc.).

Downed power lines

- Always make sure to stay

away from downed wires and trees that might have wires caught in them.

- Report any downed wire you may see by calling us or local emergency personnel.

■ Stay clear of all fallen tree limbs and electrical wires as well as anything they are touching - such as puddles and metal fences. Assume all downed wires are “live” and stay away.

■ If you’re in a vehicle and downed wires are on the car or across the road, stay in your car until emergency crews arrive to handle the energized wires. It is safe to use a cell phone while inside your car.

- Keep your distance from any downed power line.

■ Don’t drive over downed lines, and if a downed line is in or near water, keep your distance from the water, even a little puddle.

Generators

If you’re using a back-up or emergency generator, follow these safety guidelines to ensure everyone’s safety:

- Never install a generator inside a home or in any other enclosed space—even if windows

are wide open.

- Generator exhaust contains carbon monoxide, a poison you cannot see or smell. Using a generator indoors can kill you within minutes.

■ Locate a generator well away from your home, making sure exhaust cannot easily enter in through windows or doorways.

■ Never try to power your house by plugging a portable generator into a household outlet. This can feed electricity back into the power lines—enough to electrocute a line worker, or a neighbor on the same circuit.

■ The safe way to connect a generator to your existing wiring is to have a licensed electrical contractor install a transfer switch. When improperly installed, home generators of any size - even small ones - can backfeed enough power onto the electrical grid where it is “stepped up” to very high voltages.

Emergency shelter

If you or your family need heat, air conditioning, power and a more comfortable place to wait out a power outage, particularly in very cold or very hot weather, you can call

your local fire or police department or local Red Cross chapter to locate an emergency shelter.

After the storm

Even after a storm has passed, it is important to remain alert to potential hazards that could have resulted from an outage or storm. Here are some potential safety hazards to be on the look-out for:

■ If you have to drive, watch out for trees and wires in the roadway. Do not drive across a downed power line. Treat all nonworking traffic lights as stop signs and proceed cautiously at intersections.

■ Stay clear of all fallen tree limbs and electrical wires as well as anything they are touching—such as puddles and metal fences.

■ Notify local fire, police, and electric utility officials about downed power lines.

■ Do not enter damaged buildings with flame lanterns, candles or lighted cigarettes because there may be gas leaks.

■ Plug in and then turn on your appliances one at a time to avoid a power surge.

Source: Eversource.com

When Mother Nature does her worst, we do our best!



When a major storm hits, keep in mind the following safety tips:

- Assume any downed utility wire is energized and dangerous - call NPU at 860-887-2555 to report any downed wire.
- If you are going to use an electrical generator, be sure to have it installed by a licensed electrician and always follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- If you smell gas or suspect a gas leak or hear a hissing or blowing sound near your gas pipes, leave your home immediately and call 9-1-1.
- If you or someone in your home requires electricity for medical equipment, be sure to arrange for an alternate power source. Based on the severity of a storm, emergency shelter with electrical service may be available.

In the event of a utility service emergency, Norwich Public Utilities is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

860-887-2555

Please do not use email or social media to report utility emergencies.



173 North Main Street, Norwich, CT 06360 norwichpublicutilities.com 860-887-2555

GLOBAL WARMING

Is this what CLIMATE CHANGE looks like?

By Chris Mooney
The Washington Post

In San Bernardino County, California, 82,000 people were ordered to leave their homes Aug. 17 as an explosive wildfire “hit with an intensity that we hadn’t seen before,” as one fire official said, and surged across 30,000 acres.

It followed dramatic flooding in Louisiana that the Red Cross termed our “worst natural disaster” in this country since Hurricane Sandy four years ago. Thirteen have been killed and 40,000 homes damaged — and those numbers could get worse.

The same week as the Louisiana and California disasters, the Alaskan village of Shishmaref voted to permanently relocate as the barrier island on which it rests is threatened by rising seas.

It all seems more and more of a pattern — from worse than 1 in 1,000 year floods in South Carolina to 2015 floods in Texas and Oklahoma that scientists later said had been enhanced by global warming.

And it’s certainly not just here in the United States: In a dramatic wildfire evacuation, more than 80,000 people fled Fort McMurray, Canada, in April, terrorized by an early-season northern wildfire that grew to more than 1 million acres in size.

So is this what climate change looks like — more and more people displaced?

“You’d find no scientist would disagree with the fact that a changing climate is and will continue to put people out of their homes,” said Greg Holland, a hurricane and climate expert at the National Center for Atmospheric Research. Holland said that far and away the most obvious reason for this is rising seas swallowing coastal zones, as in the case of Shishmaref. “As far as sea level rise is concerned,



People wade in water near flood damaged homes in Highland Ridge Subdivision in Youngsville, La on Aug. 14. Torrential rains swamped parts of southern Louisiana, causing widespread flooding. SCOTT CLAUSE/THE DAILY ADVERTISER VIA AP

there’s zero doubt about it,” he said.

As for weather extremes related to such factors as rain and heat, Holland continued, “the consensus documents are saying they will increase in number and intensity, and are already increasing in number and intensity, and so there will be areas, it’s hard to pinpoint which one, where it just may be not worth your while to remain there, because things get hit so often.”

As is repeated ad nauseam, attributing any individual disaster to climate change remains tricky, especially in real time. Floods happen regularly in even a normal climate, and fires can start from human carelessness or even arson. Moreover, their damage is made worse by people living ever closer to what is called the “wildland urban interface,” which puts them in the way of fires. Climate change didn’t cause sprawl.

While such climatic factors as heat, drought and earlier seasonal snowmelt surely exacerbate matters (for fires),



David Key looks at the back yard of his flooded home in Prairieville, La., on Aug. 16. Key, an insurance adjuster, fled his home as the flood water was rising with his wife and three children and returned afterwards to assess the damage. AP PHOTO/MAX BECHERER

it’s hard to say that they pulled the trigger. Still, in a year in which every single month so far has set a new global temperature record, experts seem more willing than ever to get past the “climate change didn’t cause this” qualifier and talk about the trends that we’re now seeing.

“Displacement from fires

and floods is not a new phenomenon,” said Alex de Sherbinin, a geographer at Columbia University’s Earth Institute who focuses on the human implications of a changing planet. “However, the question is whether the frequency, spatial area, intensity and duration of such events is increasing under

climate change.”

“Evidence suggests that they are indeed increasing along many of these dimensions, and that the number of people displaced by these events is growing in parallel,” de Sherbinin continued. “There are ongoing efforts to attribute specific events to climate change — and that work needs to continue — but climate researchers have documented that the risk of such events would be expected to increase under a changing climate.”

And of course, the biggest threat is across the world and especially in developing countries that can’t bounce back from disasters in the way that the United States can.

“Future climate change projections indicate that previously unprecedented extreme weather events may become the norm rather than the exception and it is widely agreed that such events — in combination with other drivers of population exposure and vulnerability — will amplify the risk and challenges of displacement over the 21st century,” notes a recent report from the office of the United Nations’s high commissioner for refugees. It said that an average of 22.5 million people per year in recent years have been displaced by “sudden-onset, weather-related hazards,” 95 percent of them in developing countries.

Indeed, when it comes to the Louisiana floods, one climate researcher, Kevin Trenberth of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, opined by email that it was “pathetic” that reports he’d seen on the event weren’t mentioning climate change.

According to Trenberth, for every degree Celsius of warming, the atmosphere is capable of holding 7 percent more water vapor. No wonder, then, that more intense heavy rain (and snow) events have been long

CHANGE

From Page 8

predicted as the world warms, and indeed, a trend toward more precipitation in the most extreme events has already been documented in the United States, according to the U.S. National Climate Assessment.

“The fact that Louisiana had a flood, I really would never attribute to global warming,” Holland said. But it’s the magnitude of this particular flood that stands out, he continued.

“The 1,000-year return period in the area is 20.7 inches,” he said. “They had over 30 inches. So I would say that with Louisiana, the actual intensity almost certainly had a contribution with global warming.”

The United States has, admittedly, seen even worse disaster events than this year: Hurricane Sandy in 2012 displaced 775,000 people, according to the International Displacement Monitoring Center.

But there’s a case to be made that there is a role for climate change in this, too: Seas, after all, were higher when Sandy arrived than they would have been for the same storm in 1912, meaning that at least some of the resultant flooding and displacement might have been avoided.

As Holland’s comments suggest, rising seas are clearly and directly caused by a warming planet, and they don’t come and go like weather events. They just keep coming, and when they swallow up land, it doesn’t come back again.

No wonder then that the issue of climate change displacement has so far tended to focus on low-lying coastal areas or islands, where it has arguably already become unsustainable to site some communities. The United States has announced recently that it will spend millions of dollars to relocate members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe, who live on the Isle de Jean Charles amid Louisiana’s vanishing coastal wetlands. That disappearance, in turn, is driven by land subsidence and the cutting up of the wetlands by industry, but also, again, rising seas.

In coastal Alaska, meanwhile, it isn’t just Shishmaref — the tiny Arctic village of Kivalina, too, is wrestling with whether it will have to move. It also lies on a barrier island that is facing more severe coastal inundation in storms as sea ice retreats.

Around the world, climate relocations are also underway or already completed.



On Aug. 17, firefighters scramble from flames after a wildfire blew up near Zermatt Drive and Pacific Crest in Wrightwood, Calif. As flames overtook the pine forests surrounding Wrightwood, only half of the residents in this picturesque mountain town heeded the evacuation orders. Californians are increasingly ignoring the orders, growing accustomed to wildfires as the region faces what could be the most hazardous season yet. DAVID CRANE/LOS ANGELES DAILY NEWS VIA AP

Fiji, for instance, has relocated a village called Vunidogolo to higher ground.

Yet the topic of how climate change can displace people tends to be more widely discussed outside of the United States than within it, which means that we are behind on the conversation.

“This is merely a foretaste of what will happen in the decades to come on a

much more massive scale,” said Michael Gerrard, who directs the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University. “Few places have undertaken serious planning that ultimately there’s going to have to be, and I’m talking about decades, large-scale movement inland in many coastal areas.”

“These events are overwhelming



A firetruck passes scorched cars and trailers burned by a wildfire in Phelan, Calif., on Aug. 19.

AP PHOTO/NOAH BERGER

our governmental capacity to respond, which is then causing people to be displaced,” added Robin Bronen, a human rights lawyer who focuses on climate displacement in Alaska at the Alaska Institute for Justice. “And it’s not only our governmental capacity, but it’s also the ways that we’ve lived, where we have built our communities in places based on one relatively stable climate, that we think we’ve understood, and then have the capacity and technology to adapt to.”

One group taking the link between climate and disasters seriously is the insurance industry, as well as the reinsurance industry. Both, not surprisingly, have a reason to look at aggregate shifts in risks, and how those in turn produce trends in insured losses.

A recent report by the mutual insurance company FM Global, for instance, drew on Trenberth, Kerry Emanuel of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and other climate researchers to assess changing disaster risks related to increased rainfall in the United States.

So no: No disaster, and no resultant displacement, is “caused” by climate change. On the other hand, when you look at the big picture, there are clear reasons to worry.

“You can’t attribute specific events to climate change, but this is the kind of thing that will happen with greater probability,” Gerrard said. “That’s the standard line, and is accurate.”

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

Generators

A generator can be a great backup plan if the power goes out, but it must be used safely. Taking the proper precautions can help protect you, your family, your neighbors and our crews working to restore power.

Buying

Ensure that the generator you purchase is the right size for your needs, and is only used to power essential appliances or equipment.

Installation

Generators, no matter the size, should always be installed by a licensed electrician and connected to your home's wiring through a special transfer switch. This ensures electricity produced by the generator does not back-feed into our electrical lines, endangering the lives of utility line technicians.

Proper Use

- Always run the generator outdoors and as far from the house as possible.
- Make sure the generator is kept away from doors, windows and air vents to avoid potentially fatal carbon monoxide poisoning. Installing a carbon monoxide detector in your home can help you avoid a buildup of these toxic fumes.
- Turn off the main power switch in your home before operating the generator.
- Gasoline is highly flammable. Be sure that the generator is turned off before adding fuel.
- Keep children and pets away from the generator at all times.

■ All equipment and appliances being powered by the generator should be turned off before the generator is shut down.

■ Your generator should always be turned off while sleeping and when you are away from home.

Outdoors

Although electricity is very safe when used properly, plenty of potential electrical hazards can be found around your home and property. To ensure your safety, please keep the following outdoor electrical safety tips in mind.

Call Before You Dig

If you're planning a project that involves any type of digging, you are required to notify Call Before You Dig at 811 or 800-922-4455 at least 48 hours before you begin digging to have the location of any underground utilities marked.

This free service can protect you from unintentionally hitting underground utility lines, which can cause harm to you and those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood and potentially make you liable for fines and repair costs.

- Stay clear of power lines
- Stay away from downed wires and fallen trees that could have wires caught in them.
- Don't touch anything or anyone that's touching a downed wire.
- Assume all wires are energized.
- Know where power lines are at all times.

■ Contacting an overhead wire with your body or a conductive object like a ladder, pole or roofing material can cause serious injury or death. Accidents can happen even without contact, so always maintain a safe distance of at least 10 feet.

Proper landscaping

■ Trees and tree limbs that interfere with power lines pose a major outage risk during storms, so avoid planting tall-growing trees under power lines.

■ Avoid landscaping around ground mounted utility equipment. During an outage our restoration crews may need to access this equipment.

Indoors

Electricity is such an integral part of our daily lives that it can be easy to take it and its hidden dangers for granted. As a power provider, safety first and always is our number one priority, both for our customers and our employees. The following tips will help you and your family use electricity safely.

Electrical safety basics

- Your body can be a conductor of electricity. Take extra care to avoid touching bare wires, faulty appliances, or electrical outlets.
- If you are unsure whether a wire or electrical appliance is energized, always assume it is.
- In the event that a loved one is injured in an electrical accident, immediately unplug or

shut off the power source. Never touch someone who is in contact with an electrical current until you know for certain that the power source has been shut off or unplugged.

■ Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher on every floor of your home. Never attempt to put out an electrical fire with water.

■ Keep water and wet hands away from electricity and all electrical appliances when in use.

■ Install outlets with a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) in rooms where water and moisture are present, such as in a kitchen or bathroom.

Use electrical cords wisely

- Regularly check wires and extension cords for signs of wear, and repair or replace those that are frayed or cracked.
- Prolonged use of extension cords can cause overheating and fire.
- Cords should never be nailed or stapled to a wall or placed under carpeting.

Throughout your home

- Cover unused wall outlets with plastic safety caps to protect small children and pets.
 - Never overload outlets by using multiple adapters or power strips, which can result in a fire.
 - Unplug appliances while cleaning or repairing them.
 - During a lightning storm, turn off your television set or other appliances.
- Source: Eversource.com*

CARBON MONOXIDE

Whether you heat your home with oil, natural gas, propane, coal or wood, your heating system can produce carbon monoxide (CO) if it is not working properly or inadequately vented.

Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and tasteless but very toxic. Signs indicating the presence of carbon monoxide in the home include stuffy, stale or smelly air, very high humidity or soot coming from a fireplace or heating system.

Carbon monoxide is also produced from internal combustion devices such as cars and small gasoline engines.

What are the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning?

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are often confused with those of influenza, with the highest incidence of poisoning occurs during the flu season.

Symptoms can include headaches, dizziness, nausea, unclear thinking, shortness of breath, weakness, vision problems, and loss of muscle control. High concentrations of carbon monoxide can lead to unconsciousness, brain damage or death.

However, victims may experience only one or a few of these symptoms - if any. You should suspect the presence of carbon monoxide if symptoms tend to disappear when you leave the building.

What should you do if you suspect the presence of carbon monoxide?

Alert your family, employees or workers and exit the area immediately. Open the windows and doors on your way out, if you are able to do so.

If carbon monoxide is detected by your alarm, exit the area immediately, and call 911 to notify your local fire department.

Have your heating equipment inspected by your fuel supplier or a licensed heating contractor to ensure it is in good working order.

How can you reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning in the home?

"Tune up" your heating system annually by using a licensed heating contractor, your gas company, or a fuel supplier to ensure it is in good working order. This check should be done before the busy heating season.

Carbon monoxide detectors should also be installed on every floor of your home, and working properly.

Also check your chimney or vent pipes for blockage annually. If a blockage exists, contact a chimney sweep immediately.

Source: Eversource.com

GAS SAFETY

Smell of gas

Natural gas is one of the safest sources of energy available.

Natural gas is non-toxic, colorless, tasteless, and odorless. A distinctive, pungent odor, similar to rotten eggs, is added so that you can recognize it easily and know if natural gas is escaping.

If you smell gas

- MOVE to a safe location

■ DO NOT smoke, strike a match, use telephones including cell phones, switch on/off appliances, lights or even a flashlight in the area where you smell gas. These items can produce sparks that might ignite the gas and cause an explosion.

■ DO NOT assume that someone else will report the condition.

■ CALL Eversource immediately at 877-944-5325.

■ Provide the exact location, including cross streets.

Appliances

Whether you are cooking, heating water, drying clothes or heating or cooling your home - natural gas is a versatile fuel option. When used properly, natural gas is safe, efficient and reliable. Follow these helpful tips for continued safe use and enjoyment of your appliances:

- The flame on your gas appliances should burn with a clear blue color. A yellow

SEE GAS, 20



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Elaine Ferris, Office Manager

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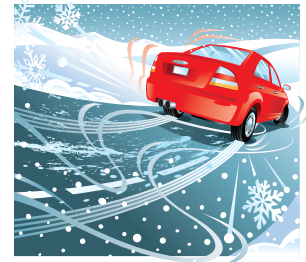
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NC00219504



Hurricane Preparation

Surroundings

Bring in any loose items, such as garbage cans and lawn furniture, and pick up any debris in the yard that can act as a projectile during high winds, before a storm arrives.

Trees

Trim your risk of damage by cutting weak tree branches, along with branches that are positioned over structures, which could be broken off by high winds and cause property damage. Learn more about reducing tree damage.

Roofs

Inspect your roof and overhang to look for signs of wear or damage. Have your roof inspected to make

sure the roof sheathing is well-connected. Learn more about how to strengthen your roof against high winds and wind-driven rains.

Attached Structures

Have porches, carports, entryway canopies and storage sheds inspected to make sure they are firmly attached and in sound structural condition.

Sump Pumps & Drains

Inspect sump pumps and drains to ensure proper operation. If a sump pump has a battery backup, make sure the batteries are fresh or replace the batteries. Generators... Prepare and test your generator BEFORE a storm strikes.

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- Dayville 860-774-8549
- Norwich 860-886-5498
- Woodstock 860-928-7928

NC00219501

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS

Blumenthal, Murphy warn state to be ready

By Wes Duplantier
New Haven Register

NEW HAVEN — With federal weather experts saying this year's hurricane season could be the worst since 2012, local officials and Connecticut's U.S. senators came together last month to urge residents to be prepared for storms that might hit the state.

Speaking in the city's Emergency Operations Center on Orange Street, Sens. Richard Blumenthal and Chris Murphy, said the state has made a great deal of progress since 2012 but that homeowners and business owners must take steps to protect their families and properties from potential storms.

"These weather events are becoming the new normal and we need to prepare for them," said Blumenthal, D-Conn. "We're entering peak hurricane season. Get ready. Be prepared. Readiness and preparedness can help save lives and dollars."

Their advice comes as the National Ocean and Atmospheric Agency is predicting the most active hurricane season since the one that brought Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Irene crashing onto Connecticut's shores.

In an Aug. 11 forecast, the NOAA said their forecasters now expect a 70 percent chance of 12 to 17 named Atlantic storms, including 5 to 8 hurricanes and 2 to 4 major hurricanes.

That's above the seasonal average of 12 named storms, six hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

"With images of Superstorm Sandy still fresh in our minds in Connecticut, it's critically important we stay vigilant, that we are prepared so that we can assure residents that we're working to protect their property and interests," New Haven Mayor Toni Harp said.

Among the preparations New Haven has made are improvements to improvements to its shoreline infrastructure, particularly in the Annex and East Shore neighborhoods, as well as a greater understanding of the city's evacuation plans if storms like Sandy or Irene were to crash ashore.

During Sandy, for instance, New Haven was told to prepare for a Category 3 hurricane because of the potential storm surge.

"You could only imagine what that would've required for an evacuation,"



Tropical Storm Irene downed trees across the state in August 2011, including these in the parking lot of the Samuel Huntington School on West Town Street in Norwich. BULLETIN FILE PHOTO

Deputy Director of Emergency Management Rick Fontana said. "We got that pretty late in the game and we missed out on a couple of areas that should've been evacuated. We've learned that we should go one step higher and we've always prepared for the worst and been able to scale back."

But Fontana said the city also relies on the work of several local agencies that pull together when a form hits including the fire and police departments, the city engineer, public works crews, the parks department and the health department.

That collaboration, Fontana said, is one reason why there was no loss of life in the city in either Sandy or Irene, which the city sees as a point of pride. "We had damage but it could've been a lot worse," he said.

Blumenthal and Murphy both said they want Washington to do more about climate change, which they cited as a major factor in the increasing number and severity of storms.

And the senators said they will hold Washington's feet to the fire if another big storm strikes Connecticut. The

state's congressional delegation has worked to secure millions to rebuild from Irene and Sandy but the senators said they will make sure that FEMA and other agencies respond promptly and without bureaucratic red tape if the state ends up facing more catastrophic storm damage.

"But we've also learned that this has to be about both the government at the local and state level making investments in coastal protection. It also has to be about getting individual homeowners ready for these storms," Murphy said.

Murphy and Fontana each laid out specific steps people can take to protect themselves and their property. Among them:

- Make sure that trees are cut back to prevent them from falling and causing power outages
- Make an evacuation plan if a severe storm is headed to the area
- Invest in a secondary power source, such as a generator, in case power does go out
- Assemble an emergency kit the includes food, water, flashlights and

other supplies in case infrastructure is damaged or disabled for several days

■ Visit Ready.gov ahead of a storm to make sure that any last-minute precautions are taken, as needed.

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, who wasn't at Friday's event, said in a statement that the state's work with FEMA and the tens of millions of dollars in federal aid it has received put it in stronger position to withstand future storms.

But she also urged people to be prepared.

"We know all too well the force with which hurricanes can strike our region and by preparing ahead of time, we can better respond to these natural disasters when they hit," DeLauro, D-Conn., said.

At the Emergency Operations Center, Blumenthal noted the great disparity in damage caused by Sandy; some towns were hard hit while others were largely spared. But Blumenthal said that's a reminder why it's important for people all across the region to get ready.

"Everybody needs to be prepared," he said. "There's no picking where the most severe and strongest parts of the storm will hit."

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A TOWN-BY-TOWN GUIDE TO EMERGENCY RESOURCES

In all emergencies, residents should dial 911 to reach police, fire or ambulance for immediate assistance. Power outages can be reported to Eversource at (800) 286-2000; if you smell natural gas or have an emergency, please call (877) 944-5325 immediately. If you have wildlife emergencies or complaints call DEEP at (860) 424-3333.

ASHFORD

www.ashfordtownhall.org

Animal Control: Christine K.

Abikoff, (860) 487-4402

Emergency Management Director: Michael L. Gardner, (860) 487-4400.

Emergency Shelter: Senior Center, Ashford Elementary School, Mansfield Community Center

Fire Chief: Wayne Fletcher, (860) 429-9862

Fire Marshal: Richard Whitehouse, (860) 429-6222

First Selectman: Michael J. Zambo, (860) 487-4400.

Health District: Eastern Highlands Health District, (860) 487-4412 or (860) 429-3325, Ext. 3901.

Police: Troop C, (860) 896-3200
The Town of Ashford has a list of residents to check on in the case of emergencies, such as storms, power outages, or extreme heat. If you or someone you know would like to be checked on, or you know of someone who is housebound, living alone, elderly, or who has a medical condition that may need to be checked on, please call one of the following to be added to our list — Sheila Grady at the Senior Center, (860) 487-5122; Agent for the Elderly (leave message at Selectmen's office at (860) 487-4400; or Melissa McDonough, Ashford Social Services Director, (860) 487-4417.

BOZRAH

www.townofbozrah.org

Animal Control: 1-800-236-1987

Emergency Management Director: Thomas E. Main, Jr., (860) 625-0658

Emergency Shelter:

Fire Chief: Ryan Sholes, (860) 887-9474



Do not drive through flooded roads.

Fire Marshal: Thomas E. Main Jr., (860) 625-0658

First Selectman: Glenn S. Pianka, (860) 889-2689

Health District: Uncas Health District: (860) 823-1189, Ext. 112

Police: Troop K, (860) 295-9098

BROOKLYN

www.brooklynct.org

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Chairman: Kevin Filchak, (860) 779-3411

Emergency Shelter: Brooklyn Middle School, 119 Gorman Road

Fire Marshal: Doug Kramer, (860) 779-3411, Ext. 32

First Selectman: Richard Ives, (860) 779-3411, Ext. 11

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health: (860) 774-7350

Police: TFC Trotter, (860) 779-9008; Troop D, (860) 779-4900

CANTERBURY

www.canterburyct.org

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director: Luther Thurlow, (860) 546-9242

Emergency Shelter: Dr. Helen Baldwin Middle School, 45 Westminster Road

Fire Chief: Warren Robinson, (860) 546-9807

Fire Marshal: Paul Yellen

First Selectman: Roy A. Piper, (860) 546-9693

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health, (860) 774-7350

Police: Troop D, (860) 779-4900 or 911

CHAPLIN

www.chaplinct.org

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director: Jim Randall, (860) 455-3912

Emergency Shelter: Chaplin Elementary School, 240 Palmer Road

Fire Chief: Christopher Bray, (860) 455-9481

Fire Marshal: Noel Waite, (860)

450-6089

First Selectman: Matthew Cunningham, (860) 455-0073, Ext. 310

Health District: Eastern Highlands Health Department, (860) 429-3325

Police: Resident TFC Paul Black, (860) 455-2069; Troop D, (860) 779-4900

COLCHESTER

www.colchesterct.gov

Animal Control Officer: Bill Paul, (860) 917-0567

Emergency Management Director: Reed Gustafson, (860) 537-7285

Emergency Shelter: Bacon Academy, 611 Norwich Ave.

Fire Chief: Walter Cox, (860) 537-2512

Fire Marshal: Sean Shoemaker, (860) 537-7284

First Selectman: Art Shilosky, (860) 537-7220

Health District: Chatham Health District, (860) 537-7214

Police: Resident Trooper Supervisor Sgt. Martin Martinez, (860) 537-7500; Troop K, (860) 465-5400

EASTFORD

www.townofeastford.org

Animal Control: Denis Day, (860) 377-6635

Emergency Management Director: Deborah Richards, (860) 974-0133

Emergency Shelter: Regional shelter; location to be determined when needed.

Fire Chief: Gordon Spink, Jr., (860) 974-0630

First Selectman: Arthur Brodeur, (860) 974-0133, Ext. 3

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health, (860) 774-7350

Police: Troop D, (860) 779-4900 or 911

FRANKLIN

www.franklinct.com

Animal Control: Regional Animal Control Facility, (860) 642-6379 or (860) 480-1104

Emergency Management Director: William Eyeberse, (860) 705-1116

Emergency Shelter: Franklin Firehouse, 5 Tyler Drive

Fire Chief: Mark Nall, (860) 642-7772

Fire Marshal: Eric Deschamps, (860) 234-0154

First Selectman: Richard Matters, (860) 642-6055, Ext. 16

Health District: Robert Powitz, (860) 388-0893

Police: Troop K, (860) 537-7500 or 911

GRISWOLD

www.griswold-ct.org

Animal Control: Shea Cavacini, (860) 213-1534 or Robert Hanson, (860) 376-3964

Emergency Management Director: Fred Marzac, (860) 376-7060, Ext. 107

Emergency Shelter: Griswold Volunteer Fire Department, 883 Voluntown Road

Fire Marshal: Fred Marzec, (860) 376-7060, Ext. 107

First Selectman: Kevin Skulczyk, (860) 376-7060, Ext. 201

Health District: Uncas Health District, (860) 823-1189

RESOURCES

From Page 14

Police: Resident trooper, (860) 376-2583 or Troop E, (860) 848-6500

HAMPTON

www.hamptonct.org

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director: Dan Meade, (860) 455-9132

Emergency Shelter: Town Hall, 164 Main St.

Fire Marshal: Noel Waite, (860) 450-6089 or

(860) 234-8716

First Selectman: Allan Cahill, (860) 455-9132, Ext. 2

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health, (860) 774-7350

Police: Troop D, (860) 779-4900

KILLINGLY

www.killingly.org

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director: Sean Hendricks, (860) 779-5335

Emergency Shelter: Killingly Intermediate School, Upper Maple Street

Fire Chief: Gerry Marcheterre, (860) 450-6783

Fire Marshal: Randy Burchard, (860) 779-5318

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health, (860) 774-7350

Police: Resident trooper, (860) 779-3900; Troop D, (860) 779-4900

Town Council Chairman: David Griffiths, (860) 774-0321

Town Manager: Sean Hendricks, (860) 779-5335

LEBANON

www.lebanontownhall.org

Animal Control: Regional Animal Control Services District, Michael Murphy and Scott Trahan, (860) 642-6379 or (800) 236-1987 (for emergencies only)

Emergency Management Director: Byron Lennox, (860) 642-7111

Emergency Shelter: Lyman Memorial High School, 917 Exeter Road

Fire chief: Norm Leclerc and John Lyon, (860) 642-7546

Fire marshal: Scott Schuett, (860) 208-6089

First selectman: Betsy Petrie, (860) 642-2011 (2)

Health District: Uncas Health District, (860) 823-1189

Police: Resident trooper Collin Konow,



Norwich Public Utilities makes repairs after Tropical Storm Sandy.

(860) 642-2011 (6) or Troop K, (860) 537-7500

LEDYARD

www.town.ledyard.ct.us

Animal Control: Cristina Davis, (860) 464-9621

Emergency Management Director: Russell Shaw, (860) 464-8705

Emergency Shelter: Regional shelter; location to be determined when needed.

Fire chief: Jonathan Mann, (860) 464-9222

Fire marshal: James Mann, (860) 464-6858

Health District: Ledge Light Health District, (860) 448-4885

Mayor: Michael Finkelstein, (860) 464-3221

Police: Chief John Rich, (860) 464-6400

LISBON

www.lisbonct.com

Animal Control: Regional Animal Control (860) 642-6379 or (emergencies) (800) 236-1987

Emergency Management Director: Jon Arpin, (860) 625-0026

Emergency Shelter: Lisbon Central School, 15 Newent Road

Fire Chief: Mark Robinson, (860) 376-2558

Fire Marshal: Richard Hamel, (860) 234-3173

First Selectman: Thomas W. Sparkman, (860) 376-3400

Health Director: Albert Gosselin, Jr., (860) 832-1189, Ext. 113

Police: Resident TFC Michael Browning, (860) 376-8868, Ext. 5001

MONTVILLE

www.townofmontville.org

Animal Control Officer: Christian Swanson, (860) 848-3529

Emergency Management Director: Raymond Occhialini, (860) 848-6781

Emergency Shelter: Regional shelter; location to be determined when needed.

Fire Marshal: Raymond Occhialini, (860) 848-6781

Health District: Uncas Health District, (860) 823-1189

Mayor: Ronald K. McDaniel, (860) 848-6778

Police: Lt. Leonard Bunnell, (860) 848-7510 or Sgt. James Smith, Resident State Trooper

NORTH STONINGTON

www.northstoningtonct.gov

Animal Control: Karcher Deshefy and Krystin Maine, (860) 287-2197

Emergency Management Director: Gary Baron, (860) 535-2877, Ext. 33

Emergency Shelter: Stonington High School, 176 South Broad St., Pawcatuck

Fire Chief: Charles Steinhart V, (860) 535-0937

Fire Marshal: George Brennan, (860) 599-3829

First selectman: Shawn P. Murphy, (860) 535-2877, Ext. 10

Health Director: Frank Greene, (860) 484-1922

Police: Resident trooper, (860) 535-1451 or 911

NORWICH

www.norwichct.org

Animal Control: Michele Lombardi, (860) 887-5747

Emergency Management Director: Gene Arters, (860) 887-1018

Emergency Shelters: John M. Moriarty School, 20 Lawler Lane, Teachers' Memorial Middle School, 15 Teachers Drive, Uncas School, 280 Elizabeth St. Ext., Kelly Middle School, 25 Mahan Drive (serves as special needs shelter for persons with disabilities).

Fire Chief: Kenneth Scandariato,

Fire Marshal: James Roberts, (860) 887-2780

Health District: Uncas Health District, (860) 823-1189

Mayor: Deb Hinchey, (860) 823-3743, (860) 887-4646 or (860) 608-2165

Police: Chief Patrick Daley, (860) 886-5561, Ext. 130.

PLAINFIELD

www.plainfieldct.org

Animal Control: Karen Stone, (860) 564-8547 (911 if an emergency)

Emergency Management Director: Paul Yellen, (860) 230-3013

Emergency Shelter: Plainfield High School, 87 Putnam Road

Fire Marshal: Paul Yellen, (860) 230-3013

First selectman: Paul E. Sweet, (860) 230-3001

Health District: Northeast District, (860) 774-7350

Police: Chief Michael G. Surprenant, (860) 564-0804

POMFRET

www.pomfretct.gov

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director: Derek May, (860) 974-0191

Emergency Shelter: For information on the town's shelter, visit <https://www.facebook.com/Pomfret-Emergency-Operations-Information-123781501108872/>

Fire marshal: Raymond J. Allen, (860) 974-0186

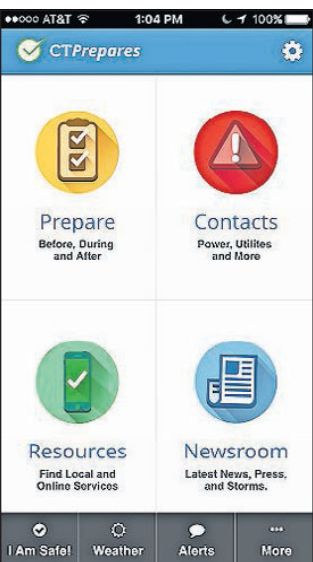
First selectman: Craig Baldwin, (860) 974-0191 or (860) 214-9755

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health: (860) 774-7350

Police: Troop D, (860) 779-4949

HARTFORD

State launches emergency alert mobile app



Last month, Gov. Dannel P. Malloy launched a new emergency preparedness mobile application for Connecticut residents that provides information and alerts in emergency situation, and also helps residents prepare in advance of an emergency.

The “CT Prepares” app, which can be downloaded to most smartphones, incorporates and integrates text messaging, email, and social networking, allowing residents to communicate with family members during an emergency. Real-Time notifications, including emergency news, state office closings, and public safety messages, can be sent directly to

the device, providing up-to-the-minute information for residents.

“We are constantly planning and constantly preparing to remain one step ahead of potential emergency situations,” Malloy said. “This is yet another tool in our goal to be as resilient as we can be as a state. As we have seen in past storms and emergency situations, communication is critical. The CT Prepares app will no doubt help us in that effort by providing residents with critical information during emergencies. I encourage residents to download this app to their mobile devices.”

“With just a keystroke, anyone can download the CT Prepares

app to their mobile devices and in a matter of a minute, be better prepared for any disaster or emergency they may face,” state Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection Commissioner Dora Schriro said. “And that’s especially important as we approach the height of this year’s hurricane season in Connecticut.”

Other features of the app include:

- Send an “I’m Safe” message to contacts via email, text, and social networks

- View real-time alerts for emergencies, weather and traffic

- View current and extended National Weather Service forecasts

based on current location

- Access Connecticut Emergency Management Agency news and events

- View emergency preparation guides for different types of emergencies

- Locate Connecticut Emergency Management contacts and other useful emergency resources

The app can be downloaded for free from the iTunes Apple Store for Apple devices and Google Play for Android devices by searching the keyword “CT Prepares.” It was developed jointly by the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection and Connecticut Interactive.

RESOURCES

From Page 15

PRESTON

www.preston-ct.org

Animal Control: Patti Daniels, (860) 887-8091 (in case of emergency, call 911)

Emergency Management Director: Tom Casey, (860) 917-4900

Emergency Shelter: Preston Plains School, 1 Route 164

Fire Chief/Marshal: Tom Casey, (860) 917-4900

First Selectman: Robert Congdon, (860) 887-5581, Ext. 105 or (860) 917-6631

Health Director: Frank Greene, (860) 887-5581, Ext. 103

Police: TFC Timothy Paige or Trooper Armando Bettini, (860) 887-8232 or (860) 848-6565, Ext. 5040, or Troop E, (800) 953-7747 or (860) 848-6500

PUTNAM

www.putnamct.us

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director:

Edward Perron, (860) 942-7760

Emergency Shelter: Putnam Elementary School, 33 Wicker St.

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health: (860)

774-7350

Fire Marshal: Norm Perron, (860) 963-6803 or (860) 377-6928

Mayor: Tony Falzarano, (860) 963-6800

Police: Chief Rick Hayes, (860) 928-6565

SALEM

www.salemct.gov

Animal Control: (860) 917-0567

Emergency Management Director: Donald Bourdeau, (860) 859-3873, Ext. 451

Emergency Shelter: Salem School, 200 Hartford Road

Fire Chief: Rick Martin, (860)

859-0942 or James Savalle, (860) 859-1743

Fire Marshal: Donald Bourdeau, (860) 859-3873, Ext. 451

First Selectman: Kevin Lyden, (860) 859-3873, Ext. 110

Public Health: Uncas Health District, (860) 823-1189

Police: Resident troopers TFC Seery and TFC Konow, (860) 859-2507; Troop K, (860) 537-7500

SCOTLAND

www.scotlandct.org

Animal Control: Nancy Bard, (860) 455-5016

Emergency Management Director: Ernest Mellor, (860) 450-9198

Emergency Shelter: Scotland Community Center, 47 Brook Road

Fire Marshal: Dana Barrow, Jr. (860) 423-8712

First Selectman: Daniel D. Syme,

(860) 456-7797, Ext. 1

Health District: Eastern Highland Health District, (860) 429-3325

Police: Troop D, (860) 779-4900

SPRAGUE

www.ctsprague.org

Animal Control: (860) 642-6379 or (800) 236-1987 (emergency)

Emergency Management Director: Robert C. Tardif, (860) 884-2874

Emergency Shelter: Sayles School, 25 Scotland Road

Fire marshal: Richard A. Hamel, (860) 822-3000, Ext. 220

First selectman: Catherine A. Osten, (860) 822-3000, Ext. 202

Health District: Uncas Health District, (860) 823-1189

Police: Resident State Trooper Brian Sumner, (860) 848-6500, (860) 848-6565, Ext. 5073; 911 for emergencies

STERLING

www.sterlingct.us

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director: Don Buell, (860) 564-2148

Emergency Shelter: Town Hall, 1114 Plainfield Pike

Fire Chief: Brian Glaude, (860) 564-7435 or Peter Capobianco, (860) 564-7425

Fire Marshal: (860) 564-2074

First Selectman: Russell M. Gray, (860) 564-2151

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health, (860) 774-7350

Police: Resident trooper, (860) 564-7896

THOMPSON

www.thompsonct.org

Animal Control: Merry Bennett, (860) 923-1055

Emergency Management Director: Stephen Benoit, (860) 923-9320

Emergency Shelter: Quinebaug Fire Station, 710 Quinebaug Road, Quinebaug

Fire marshal: Rick Hayes, (860) 923-9561

First selectman: Ken Beausoleil, (860) 923-9561

Health District: Northeast District Department of Health, (860) 774-7350

Police: Troop D, (860) 779-4900

VOLUNTOWN

www.voluntown.gov

Animal Control: Northeast Regional Animal Control, (860) 774-1253

Emergency Management Director: Jody Grenier, (860) 376-0475

Emergency Shelter: Voluntown Fire House, 205 Preston City Road

Fire marshal: Jody Grenier, (860) 376-0475

First selectman: Robert A. Sirpenski, (860) 376-5880

Health District: Uncas Health

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Police: Troop E, (860) 848-6500

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Fire marshal: Michael Licata, (860) 465-3044

Health District: North Central District Health Department, (860) 745-0383

Mayor: Ernie Eldridge, (860) 423-8215

Police: Willimantic Police Department, Chief Lisa Maruzo-Bolduc: (860) 465-3135

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NC-00218493

ENVIRONMENT

Rain bombs are coming for your town

By Eric Roston
Bloomberg news

Evidence shows that the sky is coming down on our heads—the watery part of it, anyway, in larger and larger cascades. In part, it’s our own fault.

The past two months have seen some doozies just in the U.S. The Empire State Building was struck by lightning twice on July 25 during a storm that brought an inch of rain down in what felt like a single sheet.

At least 23 people died in West Virginia flooding in June. At its peak on June 23, more than 8 inches to 10 inches fell within half a day—a once-every-1,000 years rain storm. Storms in May and early June dropped five times as much rain as normal near Houston, seriously challenging the definition of normal. More than a dozen people died. It was the city’s fifth major flood in just over a year. (Rainfall is trending higher nationally, though paving over much of Texas probably doesn’t help.)

Eight people died in Louisiana flooding last month when 23 inches of rain fell in 2 days, another 1,000-year rain event.

The most dramatic recent image came from Bruce Haffner, a Phoenix TV helicopter pilot, who snapped what looks very much like a 20-megaton hydrogen bomb exploding. This is informally known as a “rain bomb.”

“Rain bomb” is an informal name given to what meteorologists know as a “wet microburst.” They are supposed to happen rarely; conditions must be just right. A thunderstorm runs into a dry patch of air that sucks some moisture away. The air underneath the storm cloud cools, making it more dense than the air around it.

The cooler air begins to drop into even warmer air and then accelerates. When the faucet really flips on, air can blast out of the sky at more than 115 miles per hour. It deflects off the ground



In this aerial photo over Hammond, La., a flooded church is seen from heavy rains inundating the region on Aug. 23. AP PHOTO/MAX BECHERER

and pushes winds outward, at or near tornado strength. The Phoenix event above was actually a “macroburst,” with a radar footprint wider than about 2.5 miles, said Amber Sullins, chief meteorologist at ABC-15 News.

Scientists understand the mechanics of small-scale phenomena such as rain bombs, tornadoes, and severe thunderstorms. The past few years have seen modest improvements in projections of how these storms might behave in a changing atmosphere, region-by-region.

“The research showing rain events for us being less frequent but more intense, due to climate change, seems to be our new reality,” Sullins said.

What’s known with much

greater confidence by climatologists is that storms should continue to intensify. There’s little question that by stockpiling water vapor, the atmosphere is building a worldwide arsenal of “rain bombs”—or, if you like, wet microbursts, macrobursts, or just your typical, Noah-scale deluges. And unlike, say, the study of climate change and its relationship to war, why the sky keeps falling is clearer:

- Human activity has increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the air by more than 40 percent above pre-industrial levels.

- The CO₂ and other climate pollutants trap more heat in the atmosphere.

- A hotter atmosphere holds

more water—about 4 percent more for every degree-Fahrenheit rise in average temperature.

- More water vapor and energy in the system mean more intense storms. And lots, and lots, and lots of water.

From 2001 to 2012 (the right-most green bar shown above), once-every-five-year storms occurred 40 percent more often than normal for the U.S., or about every three years. In 2015, these five-year storms happened 80 percent more frequently than expected, according to Ken Kunkel, a scientist with NOAA’s National Centers for Environmental Information.

It’s not just that the amount of rain is increasing; the amount of extreme rain is increasing. All

over the Earth’s land masses.

The year 2010 had 88 percent more broken records than might have occurred in a stable climate, according to a study last year by German researchers. From 1981 to 2010, 12 percent more record-breaking rainstorms occurred worldwide than would have happened without human influence. “This implies that over the last 30 years, roughly one in ten record-breaking events would not have occurred without climate change,” they wrote.

Scientists can’t say where the next rain bomb may land. They still don’t know where lightning will strike next. But it’s clear from wide-ranging research that human activity has weaponized the atmosphere.

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GAS

From Page 10

flame may indicate that your burner isn't operating efficiently.

- Look for the blue ENERGY STAR seal when purchasing a gas appliance. It certifies that the equipment design meets strict safety standards.

- Keep your appliances clean and maintained. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for care and operation.

- Because natural gas needs oxygen to burn properly, be sure to keep the area around your furnace and water heater clear of items that could block air circulation.

- Signs of poor ventilation include indoor wetness (condensation, especially around chimneys), an unusual smell that doesn't go away, sick houseplants, soot in your home, yellow or wavering flames, and a pilot light that keeps going out.

- Keep papers, cleaning fluids, glue, gasoline, varnish, paints, curtains and rags away from furnaces, water heaters, ranges and dryers.

- Warm your children not to play near or around gas appliances, especially fireplaces, stoves, ovens and furnaces. If possible, have a UL approved fire extinguisher in your home.

- Keep flues and chimneys clear. Have your flue pipe and chimney checked by your heating contractor to make sure they're not

blocked with nests, branches, ivy etc.

- In the winter, keep your meter, regulator vents and any outdoor piping free of snow and ice.

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- If your flame is yellow, have a qualified technician perform any needed adjustments. Never try to fix gas burners yourself.

Winter tips

Did you know snow and ice can damage gas meters and pipes?

Simply using a broom to keep gas service equipment clear during the winter can help ensure safe use of natural gas.

Chimneys and vents for gas appliances should also be cleared following a major snow or ice storm to enable proper venting and prevent equipment malfunction and carbon monoxide poisoning. Make sure to locate your vents before the first storm of the season.

Here are some more winter gas safety tips:

- Remove snow and ice from the meter or appliance vent pipe carefully with a broom or by hand. Do not use a shovel because it can damage the meter.

- Do not shovel snow up against the meter or vent pipe.

- Remove icicles from overhead eaves and gutters to assure dripping water does not splash and freeze on the meter or vent pipes.

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PREPAREDNESS

No hurricanes lately? Don't get complacent

By Jason Samenow
The Washington Post

Hurricanes, large and small, have eluded U.S. shores for record lengths of time. As population and wealth along parts of the U.S. coast have exploded since the last stormy period, experts dread the potential damage and harm once the drought ends.

Three historically unprecedented droughts in landfalling U.S. hurricanes are presently active.

A major hurricane hasn't hit the U.S. Gulf or East Coast in more than a decade. A major hurricane is one containing maximum sustained winds of at least 111 mph and classified as Category 3 or higher on the 1-5 Saffir-Simpson wind scale. (Hurricane Sandy had transitioned to a post tropical storm when it struck New Jersey in 2012, and was no longer classified as a hurricane at landfall, though it had winds equivalent to a Category 1 storm.) The streak has reached 3,937 days, longer than any previous drought by nearly two years.

Twenty-seven major hurricanes have occurred in the Atlantic Ocean basin since the last one, Wilma, struck Florida in 2005. The odds of this are 1 in 2,300, according to Phil Klotzbach, a hurricane researcher from Colorado State University.

Florida hasn't seen a hurricane of any intensity since 2005's Wilma, which is shocking considering it averages about seven hurricane landfalls per decade. The current drought in the Sunshine State, nearing 11 years, is almost twice as long as the previous longest drought of six years (from 1979-1985).

Sixty-seven hurricanes have tracked through the Atlantic since Florida's last hurricane impact. The odds of this are about 1 in 550, Klotzbach said.

Even the entire Gulf of Mexico, and its sprawling coast from Florida to Texas, have been



It's been 10 years since a major hurricane has made landfall in the United States. NASA

hurricane-free for almost three full years, the longest period since record-keeping began 165 years ago (in 1851). The last hurricane to traverse the Gulf waters was Ingrid, which made landfall in Mexico as a tropical storm, in September 2013.

Scientists have no solid explanation for the lack of hurricane landfalls. The number of storms forming in the Atlantic over the past decade or so has been close to normal, but many have remained over the ocean or hit other countries rather than the United States.

A study published by the American Geophysical Union in 2015 said the lack of major hurricane landfalls boiled down to dumb luck rather than a particular weather pattern. "I don't believe there is a major regime shift that's protecting the U.S.," said study lead author Timothy Hall from NASA.

A "recurring" area of low pressure near the U.S. East Coast in recent years may have repelled

some storms, argue Klotzbach and Brian McNoldy, a hurricane researcher at the University of Miami. But McNoldy still says "luck is really 99 percent of it [the drought]."

Adam Sobel, a climate scientist at Columbia University, cautions that the drought in no way invalidates global warming predictions or the expectation that storms will grow more intense in future decades. The "notion that the hurricane drought in the Atlantic has somehow disproved the consensus projections of climate science is wrong, because the drought is still a relatively short-term fluctuation in a single basin, while the projections are for long-term global trends," he writes on his blog.

And as impressively long as the various droughts are, McNoldy said there have been numerous storms that have almost ended each of them in recent years.

So the drought is hanging on by a thread. A single major hurricane striking Florida's Gulf

Coast, McNoldy said, would break all three standing droughts simultaneously.

■■■

It's only a matter of time before the luck reverses and storms start bombarding the U.S. coast again.

Growing coastal populations and lack of recent hurricane activity, from Florida to Texas, raise concerns about the nation's readiness.

"Hurricanes are going to hit the U.S. again and people are going to be shocked by the magnitude of the disaster," said Roger Pielke Jr., professor of environmental studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The Associated Press reports Florida's coastal communities have added 1.5 million people and almost a half-million new homes since 2005, the last time there was an onslaught of storms.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration projects that by 2020, the U.S. coastal population will have reached 134 million people, 11

million more than in 2010.

"Hurricane damage and destruction is a direct function of how much accumulated wealth there is," Pielke said. "We've put a lot of stuff along the coast. If we're in this 10-year drought, loss potentials in some places may now be two times higher than it was a decade ago."

Experts are conflicted as to whether residents — after a long break from dealing with hurricanes — will be well-prepared when the next storm threatens.

Kim Klockow, a visiting scientist at the National Weather Service who studies meteorology and social behavior, said one major concern "is that communities might not be as practiced in getting prepared simply because they haven't had to do it in a while."

But she said she doesn't think residents will tune the storm threat out. "I'm not sure if the long period of calm will make them less concerned," Klockow added.

Gina Eosco, a social scientist who works with National Weather Service through the consulting firm Eastern Research Group, agrees with Klockow. "Coastal residents are savvy," she said. "They understand that by living on the coast they are taking some risk. An individual does not necessarily need direct experience to decide to evacuate or prepare for a hurricane."

Still, Pielke said consequences are inevitable for out-of-practice communities. "You can do all the talking and planning you want, but until you go through a hurricane, you don't know what you're up against," he said. "The lessons of inexperience are pretty costly."

Eosco offered this advice: "I cannot overstate the importance of preparing before a storm happens. This starts with a conversation. Each resident with experience should share it with their new neighbors."

■■■

Brian McNoldy and Phil Klotzbach contributed to this post.

WARMEST YEAR ON RECORD

10 startling facts about climate in 2015

By Jason Samenow
The Washington Post

Last year was unequivocally the warmest year on record for Earth. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Tuesday released a 300-page report documenting the historic warmth as well as scores of other aspects of 2015's climate.

The hefty report, State of the Climate in 2015, was produced by more than 450 scientists from 62 countries around the world — more than any previous edition.

Every direct indicator of temperature described in the report leaves no doubt that 2015's global surface temperature towered over any year preceding it. Numerous other climate indicators related to temperature exhibited characteristics consistent with such historic warmth.

2015's exceptional warmth was fueled by a record-challenging El Niño event, in which warmer-than-normal tropical Pacific Ocean waters infused heat into the atmosphere, and by record-setting concentrations of heat-trapping gases from human activity.

Here are the 10 most impressive findings from this report:

1. The global temperature was the highest on record.

2015's global average temperature surpassed the record set just the year before by more than 0.1 degrees Celsius. For the first time, the temperature surpassed preindustrial levels by more than 1 degree Celsius.

2. The average ocean surface temperature was warmest on record.

The average temperature over the ocean was 0.33-0.39 Celsius above average, besting the previous average by 0.10-0.12 Celsius. These warm waters fueled much higher than



In this Aug. 12 photo, a group of tourists walk in front of the Pastoruri glacier in Huaraz, Peru. The melting of glaciers like the Pastoruri has put cities like Huaraz, located downslope from the glacier about 35 miles away, at risk from what scientists call a glacial lake outburst flood. AP PHOTO/MARTIN MEJIA



Hank, a quarter horse from Paris, Ill., stays close to a fan keeping cool inside a barn at the Illinois State Fair grounds in Springfield, Ill. NASA calculates that Earth broiled to its hottest month in recorded history: last July. PHOTO/SETH PERLMAN, AP FILE

normal global tropical cyclone activity.

3. Upper ocean heat content was highest on record.

Five difference data sets showed record high amounts of

heat stored in the upper layer of the ocean averaged around the globe.

4. Global sea level was highest on record.

Oceans expand as they warm,

causing the sea level to rise. In addition, melting ice sheets and glaciers add to sea level. The sea level in 2015 was about 2.75 inches higher than 1993 average.

Over the past two decades, sea level has risen at a rate of 0.15 inches per year.

5. The El Niño event was among the strongest on record.

"By most measures, the 2015¹⁶ El Niño was one of the strongest on record, on par with those of 1982-83 and 1997-98," the report states.

In addition to elevating global temperatures to record territory, the El Niño raised sea levels, intensified Pacific tropical cyclone activity, and led to drought in the parts of the tropics increasing wildfires and the release of carbon dioxide.

Drought area, globally, was the highest since the 1980s.

6. Greenhouse gases were highest on record.

The atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide, for the first time, surpassed 400 parts per million in modern record. Methane and nitrous oxide, additional heat-trapping gases released into the atmosphere through human activity, also set record highs.

7. Record number of major tropical cyclones in Northern Hemisphere.

The 31 major tropical cyclones that developed in the Northern Hemisphere crushed the previous record of 23 set in 2004. Major tropical cyclones refer to hurricanes and/or typhoons that reach at least Category 3 on the 0-5 Saffir-Simpson wind scale.

Incredibly, 26 tropical cyclones reached Category 4 or 5 intensity, surpassing the previous record of 18.

8. Arctic sea ice had its lowest maximum extent

In February, 2015, the maximum sea ice extent in the Arctic was 7 percent below the 1981-2010 average, and the smallest on record. Temperatures in the Arctic land surface averaged over the year tied for warmest on record with 2007 and 2011, 2.8 degrees Celsius (5 degrees Fahrenheit) above temperature in the early 20th century.

9. Glaciers continued shrinking

2015 marked the 36th straight year of alpine glacier retreat globally.

10. Extreme temperatures were most extreme on record.

"Regionally, the frequencies of warm days and warm nights were the highest on record in western North America, parts of central Europe, and central Asia," the report states. It added that 2015 had the fewest number of unusually cool days on record.

The report is available online and will be published by the Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society.

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