

EPI OBSERVER

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH

A Newsletter from the Martin County Health Department
Division of Epidemiology

To Report A Disease

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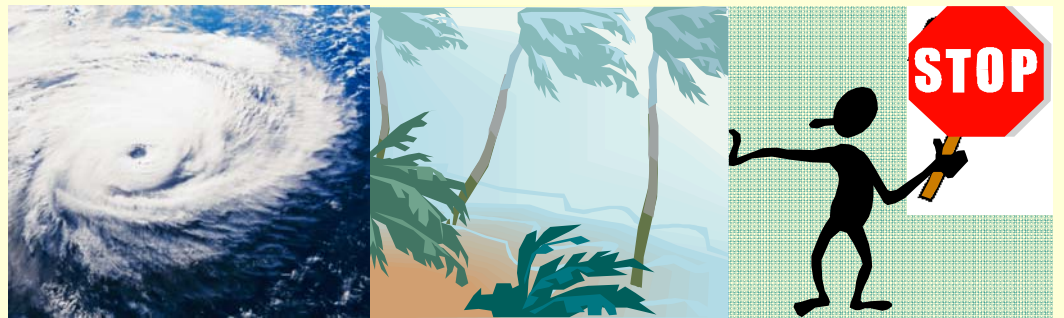
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STOP ILLNESSES AND INJURIES THIS HURRICANE SEASON!

We may not be able to stop a hurricane from coming but we can prevent many of the illnesses and injuries that occur as a result of a hurricane. Many diseases tend to occur when basic sanitation and hygiene needs are not met or have been compromised. Here are some examples of several public health related issues that can be prevented before and after a storm:

Food-borne illnesses can cause vomiting and diarrhea as well as other symptoms that may be severe. These types of illnesses usually occur when perishable food is kept out of storage too long, or foods have become contaminated with un-washed hands, dirty utensils, as well as cross-contamination from other spoiled or improperly stored foods.

Waterborne illnesses can also cause vomiting and diarrhea in addition to other health problems. Waterborne illnesses may occur as a result of using water that has been contaminated from sewage overflow and other wastes.

Animal and insect related hazards such as, insect bites, animal bites, skin infections and other diseases may occur from contact with pests, rodents or stray animals.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is toxic and can be fatal. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is not easily detected. Exposure to the gas may cause headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, confusion, loss of consciousness and death.

Respiratory illnesses, allergic reactions and other health risks can result from standing flood waters and wet materials that are left in the home. This situation can provide a good environment to allow for mold, viruses, and bacteria to grow.

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THIS HURRICANE SEASON... **BE HEALTHY, BE SAFE & BE PREPARED!**

Hurricane season begins June 1st and ends November 30th

Below are some basic safety tips you can follow in order to protect yourself and others from hurricane-related illnesses and injuries.



Before the Storm:

- * Learn about emergency plans, warning signals, evacuation routes, and emergency shelters in your community.
- * Identify and secure your property before the storm hits. For example, secure unstable building materials, trim surrounding trees or shrubs, etc.
- * Be prepared to turn off the electrical power when there is standing water, and/or fallen power lines. Also, turn off gas and water supplies before you evacuate.
- * Make sure you have an emergency supplies kit.
- * Post emergency phone numbers at every phone.
- * Buy a fire extinguisher and make sure your family knows where to find it and how to use it.
- * Get a refrigerator thermometer to be sure you are storing foods at a safe temperature.
- * Freeze water, make ice and have freeze packs available to keep foods cold in case the power goes out for 4 hours or more.
- * Be sure to stock enough drinking water. Keep at least a 3 day supply for family member and pets.
- * Keep rodents and pests away by making sure your food items are properly stored.
- * Ensure you have an adequate supply of your prescription medications.
- * Keep a supply of bug repellent.
- * Make plans to ensure your pet's safety.

If you are in a crowded group setting or shelter:

- * Frequently wash your hands with soap and water. If water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- * If the water is unsafe, use water that has been boiled or disinfected.
- * Practice good basic hygiene.
- * Cover your cough and/or sneeze.
- * Make sure your immunizations and/or your child's vaccinations are up-to-date.



After the Storm:

- * If power outages occur, minimize fire hazards by using battery-powered lanterns and flashlights.
- * Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.
 - Never use generators, grills or other natural gas devices inside your home or outside that is close to windows, doors or vents.
- * If there is a power outage, throw away perishable foods that have been above 40 degrees F after two hours.
- * Group foods together in the freezer to keep them cool for a longer period of time. Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food items cold.
- * Never taste foods to determine if they are spoiled. "When in doubt, throw it out!"
- * Water may not be safe for drinking, washing or cooking.
 - Pay attention to public announcements stating whether or not the water is safe to use.
- * If the water is not safe, you can boil it. If boiling is not an option, use the recommended chemical disinfectants to kill waterborne diseases. (Refer to the EPA and Environmental Health websites below).
- * Do not use contaminated water to wash dishes, brush teeth, wash hands, prepare foods, make ice, or make infant formula.
- * Be sure to wash your hands before and after eating, using the bathroom or after cleaning up materials that may have become contaminated with flood water or sewage.
- * Reduce moisture and humidity in your home by removing any wet items that have come into contact with flood waters.
- * Prevent mosquito-borne illnesses, bug bites and stings
 - Wear clothing that covers most of your skin, using insect repellent properly and clearing standing water (i.e., planting pots, cups, tarps, etc.)
- * Avoid contact with wild or stray animals.



For More Information on Hurricane Safety and Disease Prevention:

American Red Cross

<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster.html>

Hurricane Information Emergency Management/Florida Department of Environmental Protection

<http://www.dep.state.fl.us/mainpage/em/info.htm>

CDC - Hurricanes Health and Safety

<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/hurricanes>

EPA - Drinking Water, Waste Water, and other Hurricane Hazards

<http://epa.gov/naturalevents/hurricanes/>

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