

Emergency Preparedness

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Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday, May 25-31

Save Money Before the Storm

By Laura Southard

Virginia's Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday is May 25-31. Before any tropical storms arrive, you can get ready and save money, too.



Shop May 25-31, during the sales tax holiday, and you won't pay sales tax on supplies for protecting your home and business. Many useful items qualify.

Items on this list have a price of \$60 or less:

- Artificial ice, blue ice, ice packs, reusable ice.
- Batteries, excluding car or boat batteries.
- Portable self-powered light sources (flashlights and lanterns and glow sticks).
- First-aid kits.
- Cellphone chargers.
- Weather Band radios and NOAA Weather Radios.
- Portable self-powered radios, including radios with electrical capability.
- Bottled water of any size, including flavored and carbonated.
- Two-way radios.
- Manual can openers.
- Tarps, plastic sheeting, plastic drop cloths.
- Bungee cords and rope.
- Ground anchor systems/tie down kits.
- Ratchet straps.
- Duct tape.
- Carbon monoxide and smoke detectors, fire extinguishers.
- Empty gas, propane or diesel fuel tanks or containers.
- Water storage containers such as buckets, barrels, canteens, coolers.

Items on this list have a sales price of \$1,000 or less:

- Portable generators and generator power cords.
- Inverters and inverter power cables.

For more, go to www.tax.virginia.gov/site.cfm?alias=STHoliday.

Laura L. Southard is public outreach coordinator with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

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Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA)

By Sulayman Brown

On April 7, 2012, a new alerting system was implemented by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in accordance with the Warning Alert and Response Network (WARN) Act; which was voted into law in 2006.

This program is part of the nationwide implementation of the commercial mobile alert system (CMAS). This system provides federal, state and local officials with the ability to send text-based wireless emergency alerts (WEAs) to most mobile phone users in a specific location throughout the United States during an emergency.

Is Your Phone Ready for WEA?

If you have an older model phone, you may not receive the wireless emergency alerts. Check with your service provider to find out if your phone is WEA-capable. AT&T, Cricket, Sprint, T-Mobile and Verizon all have information about the new alert system on their websites. Search for WEA, wireless emergency alerts, CMAS or commercial mobile alert system to find your provider's list of WEA-capable phones.

There are three types of WEA warnings:

- **Presidential Alerts:** Issued by the president in the event of a nationwide emergency.
- **Imminent Danger Alerts:** Issued about civil danger, civil emergency message, evacuation, hazardous materials warning, local area emergency, radiological hazard warning, shelter in place, etc.
- **Amber Alerts:** Issued about the disappearance of minors.

How It Works

Here's how WEA is designed to work. Emergency-alert origination teams will be located in local and state emergency operations centers. Once it is determined that an alert is necessary, it will be written in 90 characters or less and then transmitted to cellular providers for dissemination.

Because each message will be geo-tagged, it **only will be sent to the people who are in the vicinity of the impacted area**. Note: Currently, if an "imminent danger" WEA message is sent by Fairfax County, it will be broadcast countywide.

WEA will not use the customer mobile number to transmit messages and does not use the GPS location of the device. Instead, WEA broadcasts messages similar to that of radio today.

If you receive a WEA, you are within the geographical location being affected by a safety threat. You should

review the information in the alert carefully and proceed as directed. You **will only receive the WEA if you and your phone are in the targeted location**.

There may be instances where you are within the targeted geographic alert zone but

your phone does not receive the alert. In these cases, your phone may have been receiving its signal from an adjacent area cell site that was not targeted. Most alerts will be re-broadcast several times to reach the maximum number of devices. Once a device has received the alert, it will not accept duplicate or identical alerts.

The Washington, D.C., area, including Fairfax County, is one of the areas where the system is activated. County residents could possibly receive a WEA alert during an emergency. The National Weather Service in Sterling has the capability to send weather-related messages and may broadcast a WEA message regionally.

To learn more, contact the Office of Emergency Management or your wireless service provider.

Sulayman Brown, manager of Fairfax County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), holds the certified emergency management assistant (CEMA) credential from the Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA).



Be Ready for Disasters at Any Age

The likelihood of recovering from an emergency tomorrow often depends on the planning and preparation done today. Each person's abilities and needs are different and should be included in disaster plans.

The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management encourages all Fairfax County residents, particularly the elderly who can be especially vulnerable when disasters strike, to review and update disaster plans.

Some steps you can take include:

- Speak with adult living facility administrators about specific disaster plans.
- Create a network of neighbors, relatives and friends to check on each other during an emergency.
- Keep specialized items ready, including extra wheelchair batteries, oxygen, catheters, medication, food for service animals and any other items you might need.
- Keep a list of the type and model numbers of the medical devices you require. Be sure to make provisions for medications that require refrigeration.

Visit www.ready.gov/seniors for more information and tips. To prepare a family or business emergency plan visit www.ReadyNOVA.org.



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The Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management is available to deliver emergency preparedness presentations to community organizations and homeowners associations. If interested, contact Marcelo Ferreira at 571-350-1013, TTY 711, or via email at marcelo.ferreira@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Marcelo's Minute

Cyber Security



Marcelo Ferreira

“Cyber threat is one of the most serious economic and national security challenges we face as a nation.” – President Barack Obama

This cyber threat has resulted in a cyber security strategy to improve resiliency and to reduce the threat.

According to the FBI and Internet Crime Complaint Center, the top reported offenses included identity theft, non-delivery or non-payment of merchandise, credit card fraud, auction fraud and computer fraud. Everyone can protect themselves and their workplace by following safe practices.

The Fairfax County Department of Information Technology provides the following tips:

- Use strong passwords.
- Maintain separate passwords for different accounts.
- Never connect unauthorized devices to systems (phones, USB drives, etc.).
- Keep your operating system and applications patched and current.
- Keep anti-virus software up to date.
- Never visit untrusted websites or follow links provided by unknown sources.
- Never respond to unsolicited or spam incoming emails.
- Never open attachments received in suspicious emails.
- Never provide personal information to uninitiated online sources.

Additional information is available at:

- www.us-cert.gov/ncas/tips
- www.dhs.gov/topic/cybersecurity
- www.fbi.gov/about-us/investigate/cyber/cyber
- www.whitehouse.gov/cybersecurity

Marcelo Ferreira, OEM community liaison, holds the certified emergency manager (CEM) credential from the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM).

How to be Financially Prepared for Disaster

By the Federal Emergency Management Agency

If a disaster struck your neighborhood, you would only have seconds or minutes to react. Is that enough time to find your homeowners insurance policy, bank account information or back up your financial software? Probably not.

Financial responsibilities don't stop when disasters hit. Even if your house is destroyed, you still must pay your mortgage. And, failing to pay bills or loan payments could wreck your credit just when you need it most.

Some of your neighbors, relatives and friends are prepared. Thousands of Americans just like you have made financial disaster plans and have included their important documents in their home disaster supply kits.

Being financially ready for a disaster is easy. Here are four steps you can take to get started today:

- Visit *Ready.gov* to access tools and resources that will help you prepare financially for emergencies.
- Join the National Preparedness Coalition (<http://community.fema.gov/connect.ti/readynpm/grouphome>) to access a national network of community partners seeking to strengthen disaster preparedness efforts.
- Download the Consumer Action Handbook (www.usa.gov/topics/consumer/consumer-action-handbook-online.shtml), a comprehensive tool that provides guidance on how to recover after a disaster and information on other important financial aspects of your life.
- Visit *MyMoney.gov* for tools and tips on ways to speak with youth on the importance of getting an early start on financial literacy.

When you're financially ready for a disaster you'll be able to get back on your feet faster.

Reprinted from *USA.gov*.



Office of Emergency Management
4890 Alliance Drive, Fairfax, VA 22030
571-350-1000, TTY 711

Are You Tech Ready?

According to the American Red Cross, the Internet – including online news sites and social media platforms – is the **third most popular way for Americans to gather emergency information** and let their loved ones know they are safe.

Make sure you are tech ready during an emergency. Sign up for text alerts from Fairfax County's Community Emergency Alert Network (CEAN) at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/cean. Also connect via Facebook at www.facebook.com/fairfaxcounty and Twitter at www.twitter.com/fairfaxcounty.

You can follow Fairfax County on Twitter for key updates by texting the words and symbol "on @fairfaxcounty" to 40404. You can also get text messages from FEMA sent to your phone by texting PREPARE to 43362 (4FEMA).

Learn more about using technology to prepare for disasters and emergencies at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency/prepare/digital-preparedness.htm or www.ready.gov/get-tech-ready.

Updated Stafford Act Available Through FEMA.gov

The Stafford Act constitutes the statutory authority for most federal disaster response activities especially as they pertain to FEMA and FEMA programs. FEMA, through its Office of Chief Counsel, has produced an updated electronic version of the Stafford Act.

The electronic version contains all changes to the Stafford Act since 2007, including the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (SRIA) of 2013, and is optimized for portable tablet devices.

This e-booklet replaces FEMA P-592 dated 2007. FEMA will not be producing printed versions of this e-booklet. It is available at www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?fromSearch=fromsearch&id=3564.



Fairfax County, Va., publication.

To request this information in an alternate format, call 571-350-1000, TTY 711.

Know What to Do During Weather Emergencies

Weather emergencies, such as tornadoes, floods, and lightning, can occur without a lot of warning. However, you can prepare for different types of severe weather. Helpful information is available at USA.gov: www.usa.gov/Topics/weather.shtml.

One of the basic recommendations to help you prepare for any emergency is to assemble a disaster supplies kit, which includes water, food, a first-aid kit and many other items. Detailed information is at www.ready.gov/basic-disaster-supplies-kit and www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergency.

NOAA's National Weather Service has announced that, starting June 1, the definitions of hurricane and tropical storm watches and warnings will be broadened to allow them to be issued or remain in effect after a tropical cyclone becomes post-tropical, when such a storm poses a significant threat to life and property. To ensure a continuity of service the National Hurricane Center will issue advisories during the post-tropical stage. These changes were motivated by Hurricane Sandy. Learn more at www.nhc.noaa.gov/news/20130404_pa_postTropicalChanges.pdf.

The Spring 2013 edition of the National Weather Service Blacksburg newsletter features the following information: Weather Highlight – Dense Fog on Fancy Gap leads to 96-car pileup; Climate Highlight – Winter 2012-2013 and cold March; 2012 Atlantic Hurricane Season and 2013 Outlook; VA Tech Social Scientist does research at WFO Blacksburg; Latest news in Social Media; Collaboration Efforts with VA Tech and NC State Meteorology; Summer 2013 Outlook; and Severe Weather Season.

Read the newsletter online at www.erh.noaa.gov/rnk/Newsletter/Spring_2013/Spring_2013.pdf.

The Fairfax County Citizen Corps

harnesses the power of individuals through education, training and volunteer service to make communities safe, stronger and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health issues and disasters of all kinds. There are five core programs:



Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS)

Provides support for the police department by incorporating volunteers so that law enforcement professionals have more time for frontline duty. VIPS includes auxiliary police officers, administrative volunteers, and the Citizen's Police Academy. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/police/getinvolved/120711volunteers.htm



Neighborhood Watch

Brings private citizens and law enforcement together to reduce crime and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods. It brings to life the simple concept of neighbors watching out for neighbors. Volunteers may join an existing group or establish one in their neighborhood. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/nw.htm



Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)

The Medical Reserve Corps is composed of medical and non-medical volunteers of the Fairfax County Health Department that could support the Health Department if called upon to prepare for, respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters and emergencies. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/MRC



Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Trains people in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools in basic disaster response skills, such as fire suppression and search and rescue, and helps them take a more active role in emergency preparedness. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/cert.htm



Fire Corps

Volunteers are trained to perform non-operational administrative duties at the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department Headquarters and at volunteer fire stations. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/oem/citizencorps/firecorps.htm



Sandy Retired from List of Storm Names

Sandy has been retired from the official list of Atlantic Basin tropical cyclone names by the World Meteorological Organization's hurricane committee because of the extreme impacts it caused from Jamaica and Cuba to the mid-Atlantic United States in October 2012.

Storm names are reused every six years for the Atlantic and eastern North Pacific basins. If a storm is so deadly or costly that the future use of the name would be insensitive or confusing, the WMO hurricane committee, which includes personnel from NOAA's National Hurricane Center, may retire the name.

Sandy is the 77th name to be retired from the Atlantic list since 1954. The name will be replaced with Sara beginning in 2018.

Sandy was a classic late-season hurricane in the southwestern Caribbean Sea. The cyclone made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane (on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale) in Jamaica and as a 115 mph Category 3 hurricane in eastern Cuba. Hurricane Sandy merged with a frontal system hours before making landfall as a post-tropical cyclone near Brigantine, N.J., and its size and strength caused catastrophic damage all along the mid-Atlantic shoreline.

Because of its tremendous size, Sandy drove a catastrophic storm surge into the New Jersey and New York coastlines.

Preliminary U.S. damage estimates are near \$50 billion, making Sandy the second-costliest cyclone since Katrina to hit the United States. There were at least 147 direct deaths recorded across the Atlantic basin due to Sandy, with 72 of these fatalities occurring in the mid-Atlantic and northeastern United States.

Sandy caused the greatest number of U.S. direct fatalities related to a tropical cyclone outside of the southern states since Hurricane Agnes in 1972.

More information is online at www.noaanews.noaa.gov/stories2013/20130411_sandynameretiredt.html.

Extended Range Forecast of Atlantic Seasonal Hurricane Activity and Landfall Strike Probability for 2013

In their latest forecast, the Colorado State University Department of Atmospheric Science anticipates that the 2013 Atlantic basin hurricane season will have enhanced activity compared with the 1981-2010 climatology.

The tropical Atlantic has anomalously warmed over the past several months and it appears that the chances of an El Niño event this summer and fall are unlikely. They anticipate an above-average probability for major hurricanes making landfall along the United States coastline and in the Caribbean.


<http://hurricane.atmos.colostate.edu/Forecasts/2013/apr2013/apr2013.pdf>

A replay of the webinar, "Starting Early: Financial Preparation for Disasters and Emergencies," co-hosted by the Financial Literacy Education Commission and Operation Hope, is available at www.ready.gov/community-preparedness-webinar-series-financial-preparation.

The program looked at the often overlooked aspect of disaster preparedness – finances – with information on:

- Programs designed to protect and empower consumers.
- Advice on who to contact and what to do regarding finances before, during and after emergencies.
- Resources for financial preparedness and protecting and rebuilding finances after a disaster.

For more information on financial preparedness, visit www.ready.gov/financialpreparedness.



Fairfax County and Northern Virginia residents can use the family and business emergency planners at www.ReadyNOVA.org.

Fire Safety Focus – Escape Planning

Escape Planning

Smoke alarms can only warn of danger. You must then take action to escape. Unless you act quickly and effectively, the extra warning time provided by alarms could be wasted.

The best way to ensure that your family will do the correct things in an emergency is to have an escape plan and practice it.

The important factors in a home fire evacuation plan are:

Immediately leave the home

Do not waste any time saving property. Call the fire department (call 9-1-1) from a neighbor's home. Take the safest exit route, but if you must escape through smoke remember to crawl low under the smoke.

Know two ways out of each room

If the primary way out is blocked by fire or smoke, you will need a second way out. This might be a window onto an adjacent roof or by using an escape ladder (tested and approved by a recognized testing laboratory). Practice escaping by both the primary and secondary routes to be sure that windows are not stuck and screens can be taken out quickly. Windows and doors with security bars need quick release devices to allow them to be opened quickly in an emergency. Practice escaping in the dark.



Feel the door

When you come to a closed door, use the back of your hand to feel the top of the door, the doorknob and the crack between the door and door frame to make sure that fire is not on the other side. If it feels hot, use your secondary escape route. Even if the door feels cool, open it carefully. Brace your shoulder against the door and open slowly. If heat and smoke come in, slam the door and make sure it is securely closed. Use your alternate escape route.

Have an arranged meeting place

If you all meet under a specific tree or at the end of the driveway or front sidewalk, you will know that everyone has gotten out safely and no one will be hurt looking for someone who is already safe. Designate one person to go to a neighbor's home to phone the fire department.

Once out, STAY OUT!

Never go back into a burning building for any reason. If someone is missing, tell the firefighters. They are equipped to perform rescues safely.

This information was reprinted from the City of Fairfax, "Fire Safety Message of the Month" via the city's eMAS system (<https://emas.fairfaxva.gov/index.php?CCheck=1>).



When in Doubt, Throw it Out

After flooding, identify and throw away food that may not be safe to eat.

- Throw away any food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water.
- Throw away food that has an unusual odor, color or texture.

- If the power has been off for four hours or more, throw away foods in your refrigerator.
- Throw away any canned foods that are bulging, opened or damaged.

Remember... "When in doubt, throw it out!" Learn more: www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm076881.htm.

Read All About It: CERT in Action

Get the latest news about community emergency response teams (CERT) nationwide in the CERT national newsletter. This publication offers updates on the CERT program, highlights successes of local programs on the ground and provides valuable information for current and prospective CERT programs.

In the latest issue of the national CERT newsletter, you will find stories representing the efforts of CERT programs in four states (California, Delaware, Missouri and Oklahoma). These CERT programs all support emergency preparedness, disaster response and hometown resiliency in their own and in some cases, neighboring communities. This edition includes stories on CERT volunteers responding to a traffic accident, a destructive tornado and apartment fires.

To view the full CERT newsletter and past issues, visit www.fema.gov/community-emergency-response-team-national-newsletter.

Stay Safe on Roadways During a Tornado

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), nine percent of people killed by tornadoes between 1985 and 2008 were in their cars.

If you are in a car during a tornado, you should take the following actions:

- Stay in the car with the seat belt on. Put your head down below the windows; cover your head with your hands and a blanket, coat or other cushion, if possible.
- If you can safely get lower than the level of the roadway, leave your car and lie in that area, covering your head with your hands.
- Do not get under an overpass or bridge. You are safer in a low, flat location.
- Never try to outrun a tornado in a car or truck.

For more tips on what to do when a tornado strikes, visit www.ready.gov/tornadoes.

Reprinted from FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

U.S. Fire Administration

Reducing Residential Arson

National Arson Awareness Week May 5-11, 2013

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) theme for the 2013 Arson Awareness Week was “Reducing Residential Arson.” The goal for this year’s Arson Awareness Week, held May 5-11, was to provide all residents with strategies to combat arson in their neighborhoods.

Even though the recognized week is past, important tools and tips to reduce residential arson are online at USFA’s website, www.usfa.fema.gov/aaw.

2013 Preparedness Awards

The application period for the 2013 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness (ICP) Awards is now open. Please nominate outstanding individuals, organizations, citizen corps councils and programs working to make our communities safer, stronger and better prepared for any disaster or emergency event.

The ICP Awards application period is open through June 5, 2013. All submissions must feature achievements taking place between Jan. 1, 2012 and June 5, 2013. Email applications to citizencorps@fema.gov.

A panel of judges from the emergency management industry will select the winners in these categories:

- Outstanding State Citizen Corps Council Initiatives.
- Outstanding Local Citizen Corps Council Initiatives.
- Outstanding Community Emergency Response Team Initiatives.
- Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness.
- Preparing the Whole Community.
- Awareness to Action.
- Community Preparedness Heroes.

Winners of the 2013 FEMA Individual and Community Preparedness Awards will be announced this fall. They will be FEMA’s honored guests at a community preparedness roundtable event in Washington, D.C.

Visit the awards page on the Ready.gov website – www.ready.gov/citizen-corps-awards – for more information on how to apply.