

American Red Cross Urges Residents to Prepare for Hurricane Hannah

Columbia, SC, September 2, 2008 –The American Red Cross urges everyone to dust off their disaster supplies kit and get better prepared for Hurricane Hannah and the variety of disasters such as high winds, flooding and tornadoes that may accompany it.

“By taking three basic preparedness actions you can get “Red Cross Ready” for disasters and other emergencies 1) Get a kit, 2) Make a plan and 3) Be informed,” said Greg Parks, programs and services director, American Red Cross of Central South Carolina. “Your local Red Cross chapter is here to help you get prepared for specific disasters like hurricanes. Even if you took action to prepare last hurricane season, it’s important that you revisit and update your communication plan and check your disaster supplies kit for expired items.”

The American Red Cross recommends the following preparedness actions:

Get or assemble a disaster supplies kit:

Gather enough emergency supplies to meet your needs. A portable kit, stored in a sturdy, easy to carry, water resistant container should have enough supplies for three days. The Red Cross also recommends having at least two weeks worth of supplies at home and to keep a smaller kit in the trunk of your car. Check your kit and replace the stock every six months. Whether you purchase a kit for \$60 at www.centralescrcross.org, call (803) 540-1200 to make a purchase or choose to build your own, your three-day kit should include:

- A three-day supply of water (one gallon per person, per day) and ready-to-eat non-perishable foods, such as tuna fish, peanut butter, crackers, canned fruit, juice boxes, etc.
- A manual can opener.
- A battery-powered or hand-crank radio, flashlight and plenty of extra batteries
- A first aid kit and reference guide
- Prescription and non-prescription medication items
- Copies of important documents, including birth certificates, insurance policies and social security cards.
- Cash. ATMs and credit cards won’t work if the power is out.
- Special items for infant, elderly or disabled family members
- A change of clothes for everyone, including long-sleeved shirts, long pants and sturdy footwear
- One blanket or sleeping bag per person
- Emergency tools, including tools to turn off utilities.
- An extra set of home and car keys
- An extra pair of glasses or contact lenses, extra batteries for hearing aids
- Pet supplies

Prepare a Personal Disaster and Evacuation Plan

The American Red Cross urges each and every household to develop a household disaster plan.

- Meet with your family to create a plan. Discuss the information you have gathered and why it is important to prepare for a disaster.
- Identify two meeting places; One right outside your home in case of a sudden emergency, like a fire, and one outside your neighborhood in case you can't return home.
- Be sure to make advanced preparations for your pets. Be aware that pets may not be allowed in shelters. Contact hotels, motels, family members and animal shelters to see if they would allow pets in a disaster situation. Keep a contact list of "pet friendly" locations. If you are asked to evacuate, take your pets with you.
- Choose an out-of-area emergency contact person. During or after a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance, especially if local phone lines are overloaded or out of service. Family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone must know your emergency contact person's phone number and email address.
- Tell your family about the Safe and Well web site accessible at all times via www.redcross.org. The Safe and Well Web site is an Internet-based tool that allows those directly affected by a disaster to let their loved ones know of their well-being. People within a disaster affected area are able to select and post standard "safe and well" messages. Concerned family members who know the person's phone number (home, cell, or work) or a complete home address can search for the messages posted by those who self-register.
- Show and explain to each family member how and when to turn off the water and electricity at the main switches. Turn gas off only if instructed by local authorities. Remember, if the gas is shut-off, only a professional can turn it back on.
- Plan your evacuation route. Download the S.C. Emergency Management Division 2008 Hurricane Guide for a map of evacuation routes, shelter locations and helpful tips at www.scemd.org. Use local maps and identify alternate evacuation routes from home, work and/or school. Know where you are going and how you plan to get there before you leave home.

Be informed:

- Find out how local authorities will contact you during a disaster. Listen to local media broadcasts or NOAA Weather Radio for the latest storm conditions and follow the advice of local authorities.
- If you are told to evacuate, do so immediately. You may choose to evacuate sooner than alerted if you think you may need additional time.

Know what to do if a hurricane WATCH is issued:

- Listen to weather updates from your battery-powered or hand-cranked radio.
- Bring in outdoor objects such as lawn furniture, hanging plants, bicycles, toys and garden tools, anchor objects that cannot be brought inside.

- Close all windows and doors. Cover windows with storm shutters or pre-cut plywood.
- If time permits, and you live in an identified surge zone, elevate furniture or move it to a higher floor to protect it from flooding.
- Fill your vehicle's gas tank.
- Check your disaster supplies kit to make sure items have not expired.

Know what to do if a hurricane WARNING is issued

- Listen to the advice of local officials, and leave if they tell you to do so.
- If in a manufactured home, check tie-downs and evacuate as told by local authorities
- Secure your home by unplugging appliances and turning off electricity and the main water valve
- If you are not advised to evacuate, stay inside, away from windows, skylights and glass doors
- Do NOT use open flames, such as candles and kerosene lamps, as a source of light
- If power is lost, turn off appliances to reduce damage from a power surge when electricity is restored

For more information regarding how individuals and families can prepare for disasters or to purchase emergency preparedness and first aid kits, visit www.centalscredcross.org or call (803) 540-1200.

The American Red Cross shelters, feeds and counsels victims of disasters; provides nearly half of the nation's blood supply; teaches lifesaving skills; and supports military members and their families. The Red Cross is a charitable organization – not a government agency – and depends on volunteers and the generosity of the American public to perform its humanitarian mission.