

HAMPTON VA

FOR THE RECORD

Top priority during a storm is protecting lives

Sept. 7, 2017 - When it comes to hurricanes or other natural disasters, the city's top priority is protecting lives. City staff makes plans for a range of options, depending on the type of storm, from opening a day shelter to partnering with other localities to shelter residents outside of Hampton.

If city leaders recommend or order an evacuation of one or more zones in the city, the city will typically open a public shelter. These shelters are designed to keep occupants safe, but don't provide the most comfortable accommodations. People who have the means to stay with family or friends or in a hotel during an emergency should plan to do so.

After the storm passes, the top priority is clearing the main roads so police and fire personnel can get through in emergency situations.

The city assists residents by compiling forecasts, preparing news updates, making sure city property is prepared, organizing safety and recovery efforts and more. Making individual emergency preparations and decisions, along with repairs on private property, are individual responsibilities.

Read more at www.hampton.gov/ForTheRecord

FAQ – BEFORE A STORM

Q: How can I get information about the disaster and local plans?

A: There are many ways:

- Sign up for notifications at www.hampton.gov/notifyme. If you select “top news” and “emergency alerts,” you can get an email or text message when notifications are posted to the web site. You can also get an electronic newsletter compiled by the city by signing up at: www.hampton.gov/enews.
- Watch the city's social media accounts: Facebook (www.facebook.com/HamptonVA/) and Twitter (@cityofhampton). We can also post to NextDoor, (though you must register by neighborhood, and we can't view all posts).
- Download the city's website app (search for Hampton_VA in app stores), or the 311 app (311 Hampton VA in stores), which will send notifications and which you can use to report downed trees, flooded roads, etc.)
- Connect with the Hampton Police social media, including Facebook and Twitter.
- Call 311 (727-8311 from a cell phone) to report problems and get answers to questions.

- Local TV stations will usually broadcast locality information, and some will also partner with radio stations to get information out.
- The Hampton University station, WHOV 88.1 FM, will broadcast Hampton-specific information in a disaster.
- After a disaster that causes an extended power outage, the city has plan to print information and distribute it in yellow distribution boxes and public sites in affected areas.

Q: When would evacuations be ordered, if they are going to be ?

A: There isn't a set timetable. The National Hurricane Center says it has high confidence on forecasts three days out, but beyond that, a storm's path is subject to major changes. Even in the three-day window, forecasters identify a wide potential path often referred to as the "cone of uncertainty." Small changes in water current or temperature can make a big difference in a storm. Generally, it is best to leave 72 hours before landfall - if possible - to avoid traffic jams and to have reasonable access to fuel for your vehicle.

Q: Where are the shelters that will be opened , and when will they open ?

A: Those decisions are made based on several factors: Storm path and intensity; flooding levels; and timing. Many buildings used as shelters are schools and require coordination with school officials. Frequently, the city will offer a shelter that is pet-friendly. Residents should watch Hampton.gov or the city's Facebook page to see if and when shelters will be available.

Q: What should we bring if we go to a shelter?

A: Everyone should have a "hurricane kit" - whether they remain at home, go to a shelter or stay with friends. Among the items it should include are: Toiletries and personal hygiene items; water (1 gallon per person per day for 3 days); food (3 -5 day supply of non-perishables); manual can opener/paper plates/utensils; clothing (include rain gear & sturdy shoes); blankets & pillows; first-aid kit; medications in the original bottle (7 days' worth); moist wipes; flashlight & extra batteries; battery-operated or hand-crank radio; cash/ID cards; important documents in waterproof package (insurance information, etc.); toys/books/entertainment; car charger and backup chargers (for cell phone). If you have a pet, include a crate or cage, food, medications and more water.

Q: Won't they have all that at the shelter?

A: Shelters will have some basic necessities, but residents are encouraged to bring what they can.

Q: Is there transportation to shelters?

A: Most residents should be able to get to a shelter by whatever means they get around town. However, if you have special needs and require transportation, call 311 (or 911 if it's life-threatening).

Q: What if I have special needs?

A: Residents who have medical needs, require electricity, can't tolerate heat and humidity, or have limited mobility, etc. may want to consider finding a place to stay well in advance of any city-announced plans. Residents who live in mobile homes or areas that regularly flood should also make their own decisions based on their specific circumstances.

Q: What does it mean if a "state of emergency" is declared?

A: The legal declaration allows the city to get assistance from the state and federal governments and to suspend some normal operations. It is also a signal to the public that the event is potentially very serious.

Q: How does the city handle evacuations?

A: There are various levels. City officials may recommend that people who live in certain areas - usually the lowest-lying areas - voluntarily leave. They may also issue a mandatory evacuation order for that zone, or the two most vulnerable zones.

Q: How do I know what zone I am in?

A: All the hurricane zone maps have been updated this year in partnership with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management. You can go to their site - www.knowyourzoneva.org and type in your address where prompted. You can also view a map of the entire city [online](http://hampton.gov/DocumentCenter/View/18803) at <http://hampton.gov/DocumentCenter/View/18803>.

Q: What if an evacuation is mandatory and I don't leave?

A: We will do our best to notify areas of the city that evacuation is mandatory. At a certain point in a hurricane, first responders will be ordered off the roads and into shelters for their own safety. Residents who refuse to evacuate should not assume that rescuers will be available to get them as conditions worsen.

Q: Where should I go if I don't go to a shelter?

A: The city can't really answer that for you. Watch the projected path of the storm. Some come up through North Carolina inland and have flooding events south of here or in Richmond; others affect mainly the coast. If you go to a hotel, look for one that is in an area with underground utilities or has a generator; allows pets if that's important; or is near amenities you require. Where do you have friends or family? Everyone may find different answers to that question. Also remember that in a hurricane coming up along or through the North Carolina coast, the Outer Banks and Virginia Beach may have already been evacuated already, causing some hotels to be full.

Q: What about protecting my home and property?

A: There are some tips on the city's website about things you can do before the storm. See <http://www.hampton.gov/1679/Before-a-disaster>. Sometimes people are afraid to evacuate because they worry about looting. During past evacuations, such as Hurricane Irene in 2011, curfews were ordered in evacuated areas and police patrols were increased. It is also illegal to drive on flooded roads in a manner that pushes water up into homes.

FAQ - AFTER A STORM

Q: I have a tree on or through my roof , threatening my house, or on my fence . What do I do?

A: Call your insurance agent immediately and tell them the nature of your damage. Trees that are on or through a roof are a higher priority than a tree across a fence or down in your yard. Take photos and document the damage. Safely take whatever steps are necessary to prevent water and wind from entering your home and making the damage worse. Make sure you and your family are safe. Your agent will be able to tell you if the damage is covered.

Q: What if it 's a tree that fell from my neighbor 's property or the city right-of-way?

A: removal of the part of that tree that is on your property is your responsibility. Many insurance agents can help by recommending contractors who accept insurance payments. Many policies also cover temporary living expenses if you can't stay in your house.

Q: What if there is a tree across a road?

A: Immediately after a storm - as soon as it's safe - city public works crews will begin inspecting the roads. They will start with main roads first. You can help by calling 311 (727-8311) to report the problem, or reporting it on the city's Facebook page. Just realize that roads are cleared based on helping the largest number of people or reaching someone with a life-threatening condition. Many downed trees are tangled with electrical lines. City crews can't clear those until a Dominion Power employee ensures the power is cut off.

Q: What if my ditch is flooded?

A: There will be flooding all over the city. It doesn't mean there's a problem with your ditch - it likely means there is nowhere for the water to flow because the connecting waterway is also flooded and backing up into the ditches.

Q: What if the sewer is backed up?

A: Please report it to 311 but understand that we may not be able to fix it immediately. If the backup is caused by the system being overloaded with stormwater, that will go down on its own. Eventually. We realize it's not a good answer, but sometimes nature has to help clear backups.

Q: What if my home is flooded?

A: If you have flood insurance, contact your insurance agent. Be extremely careful around floodwaters, which can contain contaminants. Check out these tips for damaged homes (<http://www.hampton.gov/671/If-Your-Home-Is-Damaged>) and specifically flooded homes (<http://www.hampton.gov/1692/After-a-flood>)

Q: How long does refrigerated or frozen food last if the power goes out?

A: There are many things to be aware of as far as safety after a disaster. There are safety tips about food, generators, chain saws, water, etc. here: <http://www.hampton.gov/1682/After-a-disaster>

Q: How do I get rid of trees and flooded material from the garage or house?

A: The city will resume trash collection as soon as possible. However, a disaster may generate more volume than crews can handle. The city's policies are: Separate bulk trash from recyclables like branches and put them side-by-side at the curb. The maximum amount of bulk trash that will be collected is generally 10 cubic yards per week (about the size of a small pickup truck). Please do not block roadways with debris because emergency services need access. Contractors who remove trees are responsible for disposing of them; the city won't pick them up.

However, the extraordinary volume of waste after a disaster can take weeks to collect. Contractors may not be able to dispose of trees if there are so many they can't get into the yard waste areas. During emergency events, the city has a contract with a private firm to grind extra tree material; however, it may take up to a week for them to arrive and set up operations.

The city will resume trash and recycling collection as soon as possible, with a priority for household waste or items that could attract rodents or cause other health issues.

Q: What about household chemicals or toxic materials ?

A: Do not put household chemicals, hazardous or toxic materials at the curb. It would be dangerous to put them in the landfill or the waste-to-steam plant. If you need to dispose of gasoline, paint, insecticides, household cleaning products, they must be taken to a household chemical collection site. Collections are held five times a year in Hampton, but Hampton residents can take items to collections in neighboring localities. See the dates at: <http://www.vppsa.org/hhc.htm>

Many of the waste collection staff also helps with clearing roads of trees and sand and clearing and securing public property. Check with 311, hampton.gov, or the city's social media to get updates on the status of trash collection.

Q: What if my power is out?

A: It's quickest to report those at www.dom.com if you can get to the internet. You can also call Dominion to report downed power lines at: 866-366-4357. Stay away from downed power lines and assume they are live. Here are some tips:

<https://www.dominionenergy.com/outage-center/downed-power-lines>

Q: What about gas lines or water lines?

A: Damaged gas lines should be reported to Virginia Natural Gas at (866) 229-3578. Damaged water lines should be reported to Newport News Waterworks at (757) 926-1000.

Q: Should I call the city if I have damage?

A: If you have damage, please deal with your insurance first, but also call 311 (727-8311). The city has damage crews who tally up the level of damage in the city, and can coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Inspectors will look at your home, and let you know if it's not safe for you to be there. Also, city crews

documenting damage can help you later, when you need information for the insurance company or paperwork/permits for repairs or rebuilding.

Q: How long will the power be out?

A: We don't know. Dominion will work as quickly as they can. It may take longer if the storm damages multiple localities along the coast and crews have to spread out than if outages are limited to a few areas. After Hurricane Isabel, parts of the city were without power for two weeks. After a major storm in 2003 - the area's worst storm since 1933 - many stores, banks, restaurants and gas stations installed generators and backup systems.

Q: How will we get information if the outage is extended and we don't have TV, Internet or phones?

A: The city has a plan to place yellow plastic publication boxes in various areas to distribute fliers and other information. As parts of the city regain power, there will be places where you can get a meal or buy ice; or places you can charge phones and use the wifi. We will re-open libraries and community centers as we can, but that will be made on a case-by-case basis.

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