**Hurricane Hazards**

Living in Southwest Florida means that each year from June 1 through Nov. 30, residents are at risk of being impacted by a hurricane. Previous hurricane seasons are not accurate indicators of the risk each year. Whether the season’s activity is forecast to be a “higher than average,” “average,” or “lower than average,” the risk is the same. It only ever takes one hurricane to affect the community.

**Wind**

Hurricanes are categorized by sustained winds of 74 mph to 157mph. Wind is dependent, to some degree, upon the local building codes in effect, how well and how long they have been enforced.

**Tornados**

Tornados may form in the rain bands of a hurricane and cause significant damage. Tornados are commonly found in the right front quadrant of the storm. These tornados are not as intense as those in the Midwest tornado belt, but they can inflict tremendous damage with little or no warning.

**Storm surge**

Storm surge is an abnormal rise of water generated by a storm that moves ashore prior to and during a hurricane making landfall. As the storm makes landfall, inundation levels (depth of water above ground level) of 2 to 30 feet may occur along the coastal areas, and major rivers of Southwest Florida. This is enough to inundate most populated areas.

Due to the low elevation and proximity to beaches and other tidal waters (rivers, creeks and canals), potentially fatal storm surge and large, crashing waves are the most extreme dangers. The foundations of some homes may fail under the stress of storm surge as well.

The surge waters that came up quickly will recede very slowly. That water, and the ground, will be contaminated with chemicals and raw sewage. Electricity will be out for a long time and even when restored, many houses will be unable to receive power due to the damage sustained in the storm. Tap water, if available at all, will be unsafe for drinking, bathing or cooking.

Streets, major roads and bridges will sustain heavy damage, or fail entirely, due to surge and waves. Roads that remain will be covered in flood water, debris or both. These same problems will delay emergency responders as well, compounding problems.

Every part of the county is at risk from storm surge depending on the size and direction of the storm.

**Heavy rain**

During the past 30 years, freshwater flooding has caused more drowning deaths than storm surge flooding. Torrential rains associated with slow moving, or stationary, tropical storms and hurricanes on average can produce 16 inches of rain within a 24- to 36-hour period. Heavy rains can create massive health problems and have a disastrous effect on a community’s ability to recover quickly.

**When a hurricane or tropical storm threatens Southwest Florida**

As a hurricane or tropical storm moves closer to Southwest Florida, your local Emergency Management Agency will be activated. Emergency Management personnel will remain in frequent contact with the National Hurricane Center and the local National Weather Service office to closely monitor the development and progress of the hurricane or tropical storm.

Your local Emergency Management Agency will utilize the area media outlets to provide frequent updates on the storm, recommend emergency protective actions, and issue evacuation order.