



**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS  
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND SECURITY**



**MASSACHUSETTS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

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**MASSACHUSETTS PREPARES TO ENTER THE 2016 HURRICANE SEASON**

FRAMINGHAM, MA – Today marks the official start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season which runs from June 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>. While historically the vast majority of tropical storms and hurricanes that have impacted our region occurred during the months of August and September, it remains important to begin preparing yourself, your family, your home and assets, and your business now. Over the next few months the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) will be disseminating important preparedness information to increase awareness of the possible impacts of a hurricane or tropical storm and ensure the continued safety of our citizens and property.

On May 26<sup>th</sup>, MEMA hosted the 2016 Massachusetts Hurricane Preparedness Conference. The full-day conference brought together close to 400 emergency management and public safety professionals to share ideas and best practices to enhance the Commonwealth's readiness for the upcoming hurricane season.

While the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) seasonal outlook predicts a normal number of hurricanes this season, it is important to remember that it only takes one storm to severely impact an area. Additionally, it is important to note that hurricanes and tropical storms can impact the entire Commonwealth, not just coastal regions. For example, Tropical Storm Irene produced devastating flooding in Central and Western Massachusetts. Therefore, all Massachusetts residents need to prepare for the possibility of a hurricane impacting Massachusetts this season. To learn more about the hazards associated with hurricanes and tropical storms, visit the MEMA's hurricane webpage: [www.mass.gov/mema/hurricanes](http://www.mass.gov/mema/hurricanes).

“The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency is offering personal hurricane preparedness tips to all citizens of the Commonwealth,” stated MEMA Director Kurt Schwartz. “The three most important steps you can take to prepare for a hurricane, as well as other disasters, are to build an emergency kit, create a plan and stay informed.”

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## **Build an Emergency Kit**

Building an emergency kit is an important component of personal preparedness. It is particularly important during hurricane season, as there is the threat of extended power outages, flooding, and impassable debris-covered roads. Emergency kits should include items that will sustain you and your family in the event you are isolated for three to five days without power or unable to go to a store. While some items, such as bottled water, food, flashlight, radio and extra batteries, first aid kit, sanitation items and clothing should be in everyone's kit, it is important to customize the kit to meet your needs and the needs of your family. Consider adding medications, extra eyeglasses, contact lenses, dentures, extra batteries for hearing aids or wheelchairs, and other medical information and supplies such as an oxygen tank, lists of allergies, medications and dosages, medical insurance information, and medical records. Additionally, your emergency kit should include supplies for your pet, such as food, pet carriers and other supplies, medications, and vaccination and medical records. For a complete emergency kit checklist, visit: <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/be-prepared/kit/>.

You should also consider making a mobile "go-bag" version of your emergency kit in case you need to evacuate to a shelter or other location. At least annually, check your kit for any food, water, batteries, or other items that may need to be replaced or have expired.

## **Create a Family Emergency Communications Plan**

Families should develop a Family Emergency Communications Plan in case family members are separated from one another during a hurricane or other emergencies. The plan should address how you will communicate with one another and how your family plans to reunite after the immediate crisis passes. A Family Communications Plan helps ensure everyone's safety and minimize the stress associated with emergencies: <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/mema/be-prepared/plan/>.

Plans should include the name of a relative or friend who has agreed to serve as the Family Emergency Communications Plan contact person. Ideally, this person should reside out-of-state to increase the likelihood that they are not impacted by the same event. As part of a Communication Plan, you should create a personal support network and a list of contacts that include caregivers, friends, neighbors, service/care providers, and others who might be able to assist during an emergency. Keep the list of contacts in a safe, accessible place (particularly if your cell phone is lost or dead) and make sure everyone within your family knows the name, address and telephone number of the Family Communications Plan contact person. It is important to remember that text messages are often a viable means of communication when telephone service is disrupted during and after a disaster.

To ensure you will be able to reunite after a disaster, it can be helpful to designate two meeting areas for family members – one within your community (your primary location), and one outside of your community (your alternate location). An emergency may impact your neighborhood or small section of your community, so a second location outside of your community may be more accessible to all family members.

## **Stay Informed**

It is important to identify ways to obtain information before, during and after a hurricane. MEMA encourages people who live or work in a coastal community to "Know Your Zone". Go to [www.mass.gov/knowyourzone](http://www.mass.gov/knowyourzone) to use the interactive map on MEMA's website to find out if your home or place of work is in a hurricane evacuation zone. Prior to a tropical storm or hurricane making landfall, local or state officials may call for people who live or work in designated evacuation zones, which are areas at risk of storm surge flooding, to evacuate.

It is also important to closely monitor media reports and promptly follow instructions from public safety officials as a storm approaches. Information on severe weather watches and warnings will be available from media sources, the National Weather Service, a NOAA all-hazards radio, and on your cell phone. These warnings can provide valuable and timely information. It is important to learn whether local authorities will use other communication and alerting tools to warn you of a pending or current disaster situation and how they will provide information to you before, during and after a disaster. Some communities have local tools to alert residents.

Additionally, MEMA utilizes *Massachusetts Alerts* to disseminate critical information to smartphones. *Massachusetts Alerts* is powered by a free downloadable application that is available for Android and iPhone devices. Learn more about *Massachusetts Alerts* at [www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp](http://www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp).

Before and during a major storm, call Mass 2-1-1 if you have questions or need information on emergency resources. Mass 2-1-1 is the Commonwealth's primary non-emergency telephone call center during times of disasters and emergencies. 2-1-1 is free to the public, available 24 hours a day/7 days a week, confidential, multilingual, and TTY compatible.

There are multiple ways to obtain information before, during and after a hurricane. You should consider all the ways you might get information during an incident (radio, TV, social media, Internet, cell phone, landline, etc.) in case one or more of those systems stops working.

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA's staff of professional planners, communications specialists and operations and support personnel is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management. By building and sustaining effective partnerships with federal, state and local government agencies, and with the private sector - individuals, families, non-profits and businesses - MEMA ensures the Commonwealth's ability to rapidly recover from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating threats and hazards, enhancing preparedness, ensuring effective response, and strengthening our capacity to rebuild and recover.

For additional information about MEMA and Emergency Preparedness, go to [www.mass.gov/mema](http://www.mass.gov/mema). Continue to follow MEMA updates on *Twitter* at [www.twitter.com/MassEMA](http://www.twitter.com/MassEMA); *Facebook* at [www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA](http://www.facebook.com/MassachusettsEMA); and *YouTube* at [www.youtube.com/MassachusettsEMA](http://www.youtube.com/MassachusettsEMA).

*Massachusetts Alerts*: to receive emergency information on your smartphone, including severe weather alerts from the National Weather Service and emergency information from MEMA, download the *Massachusetts Alerts* free app. To learn more about *Massachusetts Alerts*, and for information on how to download the free app onto your smartphone, visit: [www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp](http://www.mass.gov/mema/mobileapp).

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