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Coast Guard Aux NEWS ►

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Coast Guard Auxiliary News



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Rain, Rain, Go Away

If 11 inches of rain falls on Long Island in 24 hours and no one calls it a hurry-cane, what was it? The downpour amounted to what the National Weather Service said was double the average amount of rainfall for the entire month of August. This column is about that.

What Was It?

It was unprecedented, that's what it was. I can't find anybody who saw so much water fall from the sky and fall, and fall, and fall. Oddly, for most of the time, the flags hung limply from their yard-arms, just getting wetter and wetter and wetter. It was just a "good soaking," as the old salts would call it.

But one of the dangers that spurred me to refresh this column has nothing to do with seamanship. When highways started closing all along Long Island and motor traffic backed up to "Portugal," the specter of people driving through running water raised its head. When evacuating, don't drive across flowing water. Two feet of flowing water can carry your car away. Yes. Only two feet of moving water can raise your car off the pavement – and take it to deeper water. Turn around and

go another way.

So, with that said, here is another refresher on a combination of a "good soaking" and high winds – which are coming again, as sure as Fall follows Summer.

Hurricanes

We don't get many. We get the "tail" of hurricanes as they peter out to sea after running up the eastern seaboard. A hurricane is, in the words of scientists, an organized rotating weather system that develops in the tropics. Hurricanes are called typhoons in the western Pacific and cyclones in the Indian Ocean. Six of one, a half dozen of the other.

Tidal Surges

For Islanders, as bad as the winds will be, it is the tides and tidal surges that will do most of the damage, which is why even these tails that go by every year leave so much trouble behind. The storm tide is added to the astronomical tides. And when those waves hit something solid, they generate force dozens of times more powerful than wind of the same speed. Andrew generated a storm tide of 17 feet. Camille in 1969? 24 feet.

Add to that the population growth in our area and the increase in the value of homes and it can spell either "an absolute disaster" or "they were prepared."

Ready For the Glancing Blow?

Look, if a Category-4 or -5 gets up here like in 1938, there are no levels of preparedness except evacuation. A storm surge like Camille's basically means that everything "south of the highway," as real estate agents like to classify the choicest properties on Long Island, is gone for all intents and purposes. But what if the glancing blow like Ivan's in 2004 or Earl's in 2010, came in head-on? How can you be ready?

Before the Storm Arrives

Have a family action plan – if you're caught at school or at work, who do you call? To grandmother's house we go?

Flash lights working? Canned goods and water supplies? Cash? Portable radio?

Where ARE you going to move the boat? Don't even THINK about staying on her . . .

How about your prescription medicines? A first-aid kit is WHERE?

During the Storm

Have the radio or TV on. If power goes out and you don't have a portable radio, I'd get the kids in the car and "to grandmother's house we go!"

Propane tanks on your property? Shut them off completely.

Turn the refrigerator up all the way and don't open the door idly.

Fill the bath tub with water. How about the big spaghetti pot? Anything that can hold water and keep it clean.

If ordered to evacuate, do so. Immediately. And tell someone where you are going.

As above, when evacuating, don't drive across flowing water.

After the Storm

If you've been ordered to evacuate, don't go back until the area is declared safe.

If you see someone that needs rescuing, unless the threat of loss of life is imminent, call 9-1-1.

See standing water? Do you know if any power cables lie in it? Never use candles and other open flames indoors. Keep the flashlight at your side.

This is by no means an exhaustive list. But that no-name-good-soaking just sent us a reminder.

BTW, if you are interested in being part of USCG Forces, email me at JoinUSCGAux@aol.com or go direct to the D1SR Human Resources department, who are in charge of new members matters, at [DSO-HR](#) and we will help you "get in this thing..."