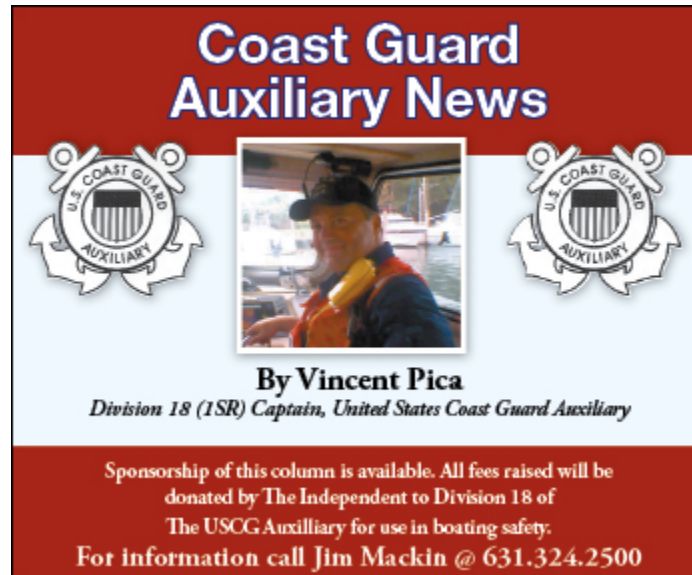


THE *East Hampton • Southampton • Riverhead • Southold • Shelter Island*  
**INDEPENDENT**

Coast Guard Aux NEWS ▶

August 26, 2009



The graphic features a red header with the text "Coast Guard Auxiliary News" in white. Below the header is a white section containing two circular emblems of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary on either side of a central photograph of a man in a blue uniform and cap. Below the photo, the text reads "By Vincent Pica" and "Division 18 (ISR) Captain, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary". A red footer contains the text: "Sponsorship of this column is available. All fees raised will be donated by The Independent to Division 18 of The USCG Auxiliary for use in boating safety. For information call Jim Mackin @ 631.324.2500".

### **Hunkering Down: Hurricanes on Long Island**

Almost without exception, we get the tail, shoulder or rump of one or two of the dozen or so hurricanes that form up in the Atlantic Ocean between the Caribbean and Africa and bring so much destruction and misery with them as they thunder west and north. It is hard to walk in 40 knot winds, it is also hard to stay dry when you live along the edge of an island that lies across its path. This column is about that.

#### **What Is It?**

A hurricane is, in the words of scientists, an organized rotating weather system that develops in the tropics. Technically, it is a "tropical cyclone" and it is classified as one of three states, with hurricanes being further classified into levels of destruction.

1. Tropical Depression: sustained winds of 38 mph (33 knots) or less
2. Tropical Storm: sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph (34-63 knots)
3. Hurricane: sustained winds of 74 mph (64 knots) or greater

Hurricanes are called typhoons in the western Pacific and cyclones in the Indian Ocean. Six of one, a half dozen of the other.

### **Categories of Hurricanes**

We've all heard the weather reporter state that "Hurricane 'x' is now a Category 3 hurricane and headed for \_\_\_\_\_." What does that mean?

### **Category / Winds(mph) / Type of Damage Expected / Examples**

1 / 74-95 mph / Anything not tied down is going to be lost. / Irene, 1999

2 / 96-110 mph / Trees will go down. Roofs in trouble / Floyd, 1999

3 / 111-130 mph / Many trees will go down, along with small buildings / Betsy, 1965

4 / 131-155 mph / Complete destruction of many structures / Hugo, 1989

5 / 156+ mph / Catastrophe. Wrath of God. / Katrina, 2005

USCG hurricane aircraft reported Andrew and Katrina had generated winds over 200mph at various times of the storms.

### **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."

### **Are You 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, Noel's who just left town, came in head-on? How can you be ready?

### **Before the Storm Arrives**

1. Have a family action plan - if you're at caught at school or at work, who do you

call?

2. Flash lights working? Canned goods and water supplies? Cash? Portable radio?
3. Where ARE you going to move the boat? Don't even THINK about staying on her.
4. How about your prescription medicines? A first-aid kit is WHERE?

### **During the Storm**

1. 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!"

2. Propane tanks on your property? Shut them off completely.
3. Turn the refrigerator up all the way and don't open the door idly.
4. Fill the bath tub with water. How about the big spaghetti pot? Anything that can hold water

and keep it clean.

5. If ordered to evacuate, do so. Immediately. And tell someone where you are going.
6. When evacuating, don't drive across flowing water. 2' of flowing water can carry your car away.

### **After the Storm**

1. If you've been ordered to evacuate, don't go back until the area is declared safe.
2. If you see someone that needs rescuing, unless the threat of loss of life is imminent, call 911.
3. See standing water? Do you know if any power cables lie in it?
4. Never use candles and other open flames indoors. Keep the flashlight at your side.