



U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, Division 20

Proudly serving the Mid-Hudson Area with Flotilla 20-2, 20-3, 20-4 and 20-6.

Articles By Vincent Pica

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary



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Rain, Rain, Go Away – Little Johnny Wants to Play

If 11” 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. 2’ of flowing water can carry your car away. Yes. Only 2’ of moving water can raise your car off the pavement – and take it to deeper water. Turn around and go another way.

So, what 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...

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 Anything not tied down is going Irene, 1999
to be lost; don't get hit by it.
2 96-110 Trees will go down. Roofs in Floyd, 1999
trouble. Georges, 1998
3 111-130 Many trees will go down, along Betsy, 1965
with small buildings Alicia, 1983
4 131-155 Complete failures of some small Hugo, 1989
buildings. Complete destruction
of many structures
5 156-> Catastrophe. Wrath of God. Andrew, 1992
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, Earl's in 2010, 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? To grandmother's house we go?
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. As above, when evacuating, don't drive across flowing water. 2' of flowing water can carry your car away. Yes. Only 2' of moving water. Turn around and go another way.

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 9-1-1.
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...

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