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## Agency News

# Be prepared: Hurricane season continues through November

The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season began on June 1 and continues through the end of November, and forecasts range from slightly above average to slightly below average storm activity for the year. The effect of El Niño currents on water temperatures in the Atlantic will help determine how active the season will be, but keep in mind that even one storm, depending on its strength and where it makes landfall, can make for a busy season.

An average Atlantic hurricane season produces 12 named storms of which six become hurricanes, including three major hurricanes. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasts average or slightly above-average hurricane season activity, and predicts a 70 percent likelihood of 11 to 17 named Atlantic storms, with winds of 39 mph or more. Five to nine of these could become hurricanes with winds over 74 mph, and two to four of these could be major hurricanes bringing winds of 111 mph or greater. Colorado State University's Tropical Meteorology Project forecasts an average year for activity in the tropical Atlantic, with 13 named storms, six hurricanes and two major hurricanes.



TDCJ employees commonly deal with inclement weather during their normal workday, but when a large-scale weather emergency such as a hurricane threatens to strike Texas, the agency relies on effective response planning and staff training to continue operations with minimal disruption. TDCJ gets ready for every hurricane season by preparing an emergency response plan and training

staff how to respond during weather-related and other types of emergencies. During such emergencies, the Office of Incident Management (OIM), in coordination with agency divisions and departments, oversees the agency's emergency preparedness and response activities.

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OIM oversees development of the agency's emergency response and continuity of operations plans, trains agency staff on specific emergency response roles, and oversees some transport activities for the State Emergency Management Plan, which includes management of a wide assortment of state transportation assets. OIM and other agency representatives coordinate emergency response activities that involve everything from the evacuation of offenders to the delivery of provisions to affected facilities.

When hurricanes threaten, OIM monitors the storm's approach and keeps senior agency staff aware of its strength and where it might make landfall. If TDCJ operations might be affected, central command staff gathers in Huntsville to develop detailed response plans. Throughout the emergency, OIM maintains communications with senior agency managers and other appropriate groups.

While the OIM and Emergency Command Center coordinate the agency's emergency response, it is the front line staff who successfully confront logistical challenges that may range from evacuation of thousands of offenders to delivering emergency provisions, all while maintaining security. Despite the obstacles nature throws their way, TDCJ employees routinely rise to the occasion and ensure the agency's vital public safety mis-

sion is achieved. When the storm has passed, OIM coordinates with the Business and Finance Division to seek reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for storm-related costs incurred by TDCJ, which can run into millions of dollars.

### ***Tropical weather safety and emergency response preparation***

Everyone who lives where tropical storms might strike should know what to do in the event of a hurricane. Emergency response preparations are especially important for some TDCJ staff members who must provide critical services during weather conditions which will force most businesses to close and may require their family to evacuate for an undetermined length of time. In some cases, TDCJ employees from unaffected areas of the state may report to potential impact areas so local staff members have time to evacuate their family and prepare their personal property before the storm hits.

When a tropical storm approaches, the best plan is to evacuate if instructed to by authorities. Before the emergency strikes, find out where your nearest storm shelter is located and have an evacuation plan in place. Also, have an emergency communications plan in place so you can notify family and friends. Ready.gov is a great website for help with preparedness planning.



During a tropical storm, remember that water surge and floods are usually more significant threats than wind, and even a small hurricane can cause a large surge. A good weather-safety rule during tropical storms is to *run from water and hide from wind*.

If you do not evacuate and must stay in place to ride out a hurricane, keep an emergency supply kit on hand. This kit should include enough drinking water and nonperishable foods to last several days, any special foods for infants or the elderly, personal toiletries and medications, blankets and pillows, a first aid kit, flashlight and batteries, fully-charged cell phones and a battery-operated radio or NOAA weather radio.

For more information regarding hurricanes, visit the National Hurricane Center website or contact the Office of Incident Management at 936-437-6038. ●