

HURRICANE SEASON 2024 IS HERE

You may not receive a more important message from the Town of River Bend this year. Please take the time to read the whole message and most importantly, heed it.

The Atlantic Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30 each year. Historically, Fall is the most active part of hurricane season for our region. August and September are usually the busiest months for hurricanes along North Carolina's coast. However, a hurricane could develop outside of the official hurricane season. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is [predicting](#) an above-normal Atlantic hurricane season for 2024. In fact, this year's forecast, with 25 named storms, is the most ever in a NOAA preseason forecast. NOAA director Rick Spinrad said the Atlantic Hurricane season is shaping up to be extraordinary. Our proximity to the Atlantic coast, combined with the low elevation above sea level for large parts of our town, makes River Bend vulnerable to impacts from hurricanes. A tropical system does not need to develop into a hurricane to cause damage in River Bend, particularly in the flood zone. Click [here](#) to view our flood zone maps, which were developed by FEMA. Enter your address (street, city, state, zip) then click on GO for the map. For this site, enter New Bern as your city.

Based on our history and geography, if you live in River Bend, you may want to consider purchasing flood insurance. You can obtain a policy from a local agent, through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The Town of River Bend is a participant in the Community Rating System (CRS) of the NFIP. In short, that means that the town maintains records and files on flood zone properties, has and enforces a local flood damage prevention ordinance and meets other annual minimum requirements to be a CRS participant. Our CRS status means that River Bend residents who live in a special flood hazard area (SFHA) are eligible for a 10% discount on annual flood insurance policy premiums. Those living in other areas could be eligible for a 5% discount. Typically, regular homeowner's insurance policies do not cover damages from rising waters (flooding). If you are uncertain about your insurance coverage, you should contact your agent now. Do not wait until after the storm to learn that you are not covered. Most insurance companies require flood insurance to be purchased at least 30 days prior to a named storm that impacts a customer. That means that you cannot buy coverage at the last minute when a storm is already headed in our direction.

Although it has been almost 6 years ago, Hurricane Florence is still in the memory of many River Bend residents. Our records show that 503 homes in River Bend were flooded by Hurricane Florence. According to data from the NFIP, just before Hurricane Florence made landfall on September 14, 2018, there were 443 flood insurance policies in effect in River Bend. That means there were at least 60 flooded homes that did not have flood insurance. As of this week, there are 415 flood insurance policies in effect in River Bend. At this time last year, there were 554 in effect.

Now, and throughout the summer, is a good time for you to assess your property and see if you are ready for a hurricane or even a smaller magnitude tropical storm. There are many things that you can do now so that you will be better prepared if a storm does impact us. A few suggestions are:

1. Check your trees and other vegetation. Remove any dead, damaged or leaning limbs that may fall on your home or other buildings. Don't forget to look above where you park your car, too. A tree or limb can ruin a vehicle. You may need that vehicle to leave the area. You do not want to be pruning or trying

to hire a tree trimmer shortly before the storm. They will likely be in high demand then. Also, trimming shortly before a storm creates debris that could also cause trouble during the storm.

2. Check your gutters, roof and siding (and flood vents if your home is equipped with them). Be sure they are in proper working condition and/or are properly secured. Do you have a tarp and enough rope to secure it if your roof is compromised during a storm? Tarps are hard to find near a storm's arrival. Also check your windows and doors to make sure they are prepared to keep out the elements.

3. Check the drainage features on your property. Be sure they are clear and working properly.

4. If you own a generator (or chainsaw), give it a tune up now. Exercise your generator. A generator has two main components. They are the motor and the generator. Cranking the motor and letting it run will only exercise the motor part. Be sure to plug something into it and make sure the generator part is also working. It is called "testing under load." Simply plugging up a couple of lamps or fans will do the trick. It would be unfortunate to own a perfectly running generator engine that does not produce electricity. Often, following hurricanes or other natural disasters, more people die from improper use of generators than die due to the actual storm event. If you own a generator, make sure that you and your family know how, when, and where to operate it. Make sure that you have adequate and proper fuel storage containers. When a storm is approaching, they are difficult to find in stores. A milk jug is not a proper/safe fuel storage container. Batteries and flashlights may be hard to find, too. Test your supply and stock up now. Consider buying a spare chain for your chainsaw, just in case yours breaks.

5. Outdoor items such as swings, lawn furniture, trash cans and anything else that is in your yard can become wind-driven projectiles during a storm. Imagine a trash can lid striking the window of your home or vehicle at 75 mph. Also, loose items like basketballs or flowerpots can float away and completely block storm drains, which can contribute to flooding. Now is the time to formulate a plan for how you will address these issues when a storm is approaching. I recommend having a place to store the items inside or being able to tie them down during a storm. You may need to buy a supply of rope now. Speaking of being tied down, all portable storage buildings should be properly anchored.

6. Subscribe to the town's e-news and Blackboard Connect service. They are two separate services. Being a subscriber to one does not automatically enroll you in the other. Today, we have 344 Blackboard subscribers. That number should be much higher. For comparison, we currently have 1,039 e-news subscribers. Subscribing to either can be done by clicking on the "[Register for Alerts](#)" button near the top of our home page. Immediately before and after a storm event, we will be using these services, along with our web page, as our primary means to share official updates and guidance. We cannot subscribe for you. If you do not subscribe, you simply will not get the information. Please do not rely on information that you may find on social media as your source for information. It may be inaccurate.

7. Familiarize yourself with your electrical supplier. Duke Energy is the electrical supplier in River Bend. They have lots of useful information on their Storm Center [website](#) about what to do before, during and after a storm, including many FAQ's. The Town of River Bend does not direct the operations of Duke's restoration crews following a storm. There is no need to call Town Hall to report a power outage. You should know how to communicate directly with Duke Energy prior to an emergency event.

8. Familiarize yourself with your natural gas supplier. Piedmont Natural Gas is the natural gas supplier in River Bend. They have lots of useful public awareness and safety information on their [website](#). You should call 911 in the event of a gas leak. What would you do if a tree fell on your gas HVAC unit and ruptured your gas line? You should know how to communicate directly with Piedmont Natural Gas prior to an emergency event.

9. If an evacuation is ordered, heed it. Evacuation orders are serious and should be followed. Rescue crews do not provide service when the weather conditions are too dangerous for them to operate. Do not expect them to risk their life to save yours when you should have been gone from the area.

10. Know where your water shut-off valve is located and how to operate it. The town's water meter is not meant to be used as a water cut-off device for leaks on the customers side of the meter. If you do not have a water shut-off valve, as is required by the state building code, you should have one installed now. A water leak inside your home can happen anytime, without warning, not just during hurricane season.

11. Following large-scale events the Town of River Bend hires a contractor to provide debris removal. Often this activity is in collaboration with and subject to strict FEMA guidelines. Do not place debris by the roadside for collection until **AFTER** the town has published debris collection guidelines for that event. You can find those guidelines on our web page as the storm approaches. If your debris is not properly placed, it cannot be collected. In that case, you will be solely responsible for its disposal. Repeat, improperly placed debris will **NOT** be collected by the town. Please, just wait for instructions and when they are posted, follow them exactly. The best way to avoid issues is to simply follow the rules. Failure to do, will create problems for you.

Obviously, we hope that you will never find yourself in a hurricane in River Bend. However, hurricanes and other tropical storm events are natural, fairly common events in eastern North Carolina. If you live here, the best thing to do is to prepare for them as best you can, long before they arrive. Just like every other town in the state, the Town of River Bend can offer no guarantees of total protection from a hurricane, or any storm event. You play a major role in protecting your own life and property and reducing your exposure to damage.

By: Delane Jackson (posted 5-29-2024)