

June 2022

THE SAFETY NET

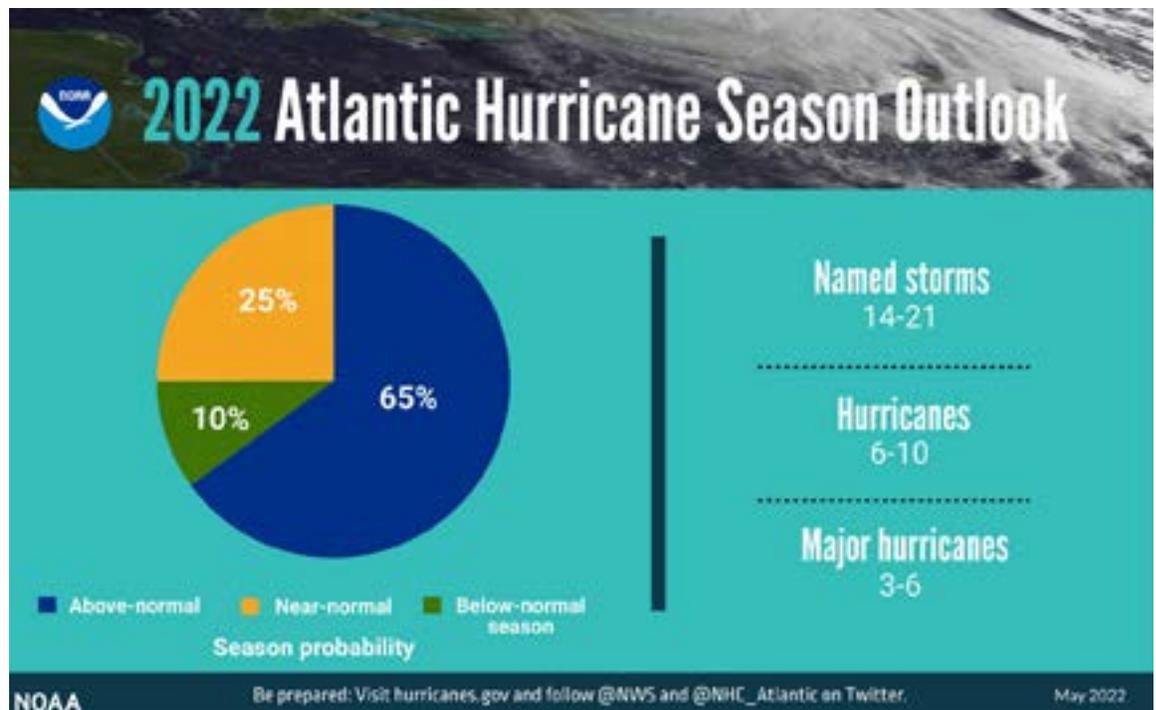
HURRICANE EDITION

Eastern Virginia Medical School's *Environmental Health & Safety* Newsletter

Hurricane Season is Here!

As part of the Atlantic Coast community, you must understand what an approaching hurricane, or even a tropical storm, could mean for you. It's never too early to start planning for emergencies; preparedness is the key!

The 2022 prediction for the Atlantic Basin is 14-21 named storms, 6-10 of which will become hurricanes, with 3-6 becoming a major hurricane¹. Plan before the storm!



EVMS communicates with students, faculty and staff during severe weather events through the methods described in the EVMS Inclement Weather Policy. When weather conditions cause EVMS to close, the information will be on the [EVMS homepage](#), on the main EVMS phone number (757-446-5600), and the [Rave Alert](#) system. You may also find closing information on local TV and radio. To help you be better prepared this hurricane season, EH&S has included information in this newsletter on a variety of topics:

Virginia Sales Tax Holidays

Save money on emergency preparedness supplies during Virginia's Sales Tax Holiday. This year's Virginia Sales Tax holiday will be August 5-7, 2022. Shop for products such as batteries, food storage containers, generators, first aid kits, bottled water, and radios to save on the sales tax.

- Hurricane hazards
- Prepare your work area for hurricanes
- Priming your household for the hurricane season
- Links to important websites

¹NOAA predicts above-normal 2022 Atlantic Hurricane Season. U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), 24 May 2022. <https://www.noaa.gov/news-release/noaa-predicts-above-normal-2022-atlantic-hurricane-season>

Emergency Planning for Your Work

Before a storm or emergency is even on the horizon, there are steps to ensure you have a complete plan for your workspace.

In the Laboratory

Develop a plan for safely shutting down your research. It should include securing chemical, biological, and radioactive material; ensure that all personnel clearly understand the plan! Ensure research data is backed up. Plug essential equipment into emergency electrical outlets (the “red” outlets). Identify equipment that requires special restart procedures after a power outage, and ensure all staff are aware of it. Identify sources of dry ice and have systems in place for obtaining it in quantities needed during an emergency. You can purchase dry ice from grocery stores or distributors such as [Atlantic Dominion](#) and [Airgas](#)®.

Solar Chargers

Consumer solar chargers use solar energy to supply electricity to devices or batteries. Portable models are used to charge cell phones, iPods, and other small electronic devices. With the range of models and price points, a solar charger makes a great item for an emergency supply kit!

For more information and products:

- **Outdoor GearLap** - goo.gl/5XuuMs
- **Backpacker** - goo.gl/uyKncV
- **REI** - goo.gl/YQW3Yq
- **The Wirecutter** - goo.gl/XCQgVD
- **Amazon** - goo.gl/IYHt0z

In the Office

Develop and review your lab’s Emergency Response Plan. It should include lab shut-down procedures and emergency contact phone numbers. Include a list and diagram of the location of safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers, pull stations, emergency exits, safety and shower/eyewash, etc. Prepare a detailed work/task plan and assign various tasks to different members of your staff. Ensure that each lab member has a copy of everyone’s contact information. Develop a plan for contacting your team during an emergency or planned closure.

Storm’s Coming; Manage Your Workspace!

Once a storm has been identified as being a threat, there are a series of steps to take to ensure you and your lab are ready.

- **Back up electronic records and protect the backup copy.**
- **Elevate boxes and equipment by placing them on a tabletop.**
- **Switch off and unplug all non-critical electrical equipment. Move all equipment and furniture away from the windows.**
- **Cover all equipment, computer terminals, file cabinets, etc., and draw blinds or drapes to help hold back flying debris.**
- **Remove all hazardous materials (i.e., chemicals, biological specimens, radiological materials) from bench tops and away from windows and doors.**
- **Ensure compressed gas cylinders are secured, remove the regulator and install the safety cap.**
- **Ensure that dry ice or compressed gas has been ordered and received to cover any potential days the insulation is closed (72 hours or more).**
- **Close the sash on your chemical fume hood.**
- **Listen for local instructions:**
 - **If ordered to evacuate, take your emergency supply kit and follow your evacuation plan *immediately*.**
 - **If instructed to “shelter in place,” you must remain in your home or office and protect yourself there.**

The Quarter-Cup Trick!

If you come back from an evacuation, you want to know if your food in the fridge/freezer is still good, right?! Try the quarter-cup trick!

1. Before evacuating, put a cup of water in the freezer until it’s frozen solid.
2. Place a quarter on top of the frozen water; store in the freezer.
3. When you return, look at where the quarter is:
 - a. If the quarter is at the bottom of the cup, the power went out for too long. Throw the stored food away.
 - b. If the quarter is on top of the ice, the power did not go out and the food is safe to eat.
 - c. If the quarter is in the middle, food it’s likely ok, but use discretion.

During a Storm

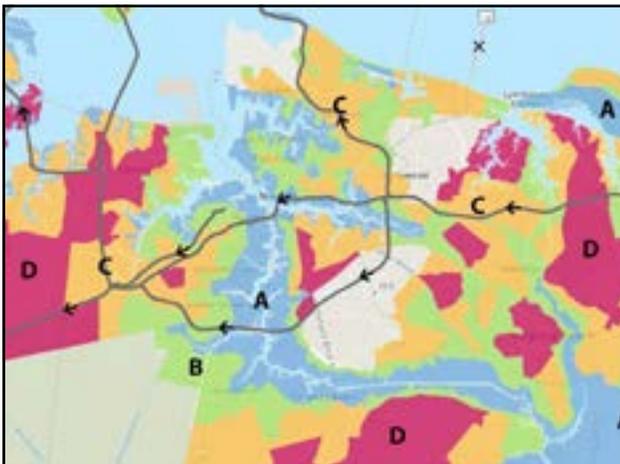
- Go to an interior room without windows and is above ground level.
- Close all interior doors. Closed doors will help prevent damaging hurricane winds from entering rooms.
- Listen to your battery-operated radio or NOAA Weather Radio for updates and instructions.
- Have a flashlight and extra batteries within reach. Flashlights provide the safest emergency lighting source.
- Do not go outside. If the eye of the storm passes over your area, there will be a short period of calm. On the other side of the eye, the wind speed rapidly increases to hurricane force and will come from the opposite direction.
- Do not go outside to see “what the wind feels like.” Flying debris is dangerous.
- Beware of lightning. Stay away from electrical equipment. Don't use the phone or take a bath/shower during the storm.



Hurricane Isabel flooding, Norfolk, Virginia, 2003

When the Storm is Over

- Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless in immediate danger of death or further injury.
- Try to make contact with all your family and your coworkers.
- Stay mindful of potential flooding. **Stay away from flood water and do not drive through flooded roads.**



Southside Flood Zone Map



VA DOT Hurricane Evacuation Routes

Before returning home or work, wait for the official “safe to return” announcement. When the OK has been given to return:

- **Travel during daylight.**
- **If you discover conditions that pose a threat (such as a fire or spill), close the door, notify occupants in the area, activate the fire alarm, exit the building, and call EVMS Police at 757-446-5199.**
- **Do not use lab equipment such as chemical fume hoods or biosafety cabinets that are alarming or not working correctly.**
- **Check all equipment that may have been affected by power disruptions. Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed until temperature levels return to normal.**

Links

For more information:

- **Virginia Department of Emergency Management:** <https://www.vaemergency.gov/>
- **VA Hurricane Evacuation Guide:** <https://www.vaemergency.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Publication-Hurricane-Evacuation-1.pdf>
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA):** <https://www.noaa.gov/>
- **FEMA's Ready Campaign:** <https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>
- **Volunteer organizations:** [American Red Cross](#), [Salvation Army](#)