# Overview of New Castle County Hazards and Disasters

New Castle County is vulnerable to a wide range of natural hazards, including flooding, tornadoes, tropical storms, hurricanes, winter storms, and earthquakes. Their occurrence is natural and inevitable, and there is little we can do to control their force and intensity. NCC is also vulnerable to a variety of human-caused hazards, including chemical releases, spills or explosions associated with the fixed storage or mobile transport of hazardous materials. In today's world, we must also consider human-caused hazards, such as technological accidents or deliberate acts of terrorism, as legitimate and significant threats to life, safety, and property. These hazards threaten the safety of county residents, and have the potential to damage or destroy both public and private property and disrupt the local economy and overall quality of life.

# Watches and Warnings: Know the Difference

While the specific actions required for each type of hazard may differ, the basics of watches and warnings are the same.

WATCH: Conditions are favorable for a hazard to occur or develop within the next 36 hours. At this point, you should make sure that you have your 72-hour emergency supply kit ready. Also, be prepared to put your family evacuation plan into action. You should also make sure your house and property are ready for the upcoming disaster.

WARNING: Conditions are favorable for a hazard to occur or develop within the next 12 to 24 hours. At this point, you should be listening to your local radio and TV stations for information. You should be deciding whether you are going to shelter-inplace or evacuate. If you decide or are requested to evacuate, make sure someone knows where you are going and to take your 72-hour emergency supply kit with you.

\*\*Why is it a 72-hour supply kit? 72 hours is the historical disaster recovery timeframe for essential infrastructure services to resume.

#### Floods

#### Know what to expect:

- Research the flood hazards in your area.
   (www.fema.gov or www.nccde.org
   "Hurricane and Flood Safe", link to
   NFIP site)
- If it has been raining hard for several hours, or steadily for several days, be alert to the possibility of a flood. (in locations such as small streams, creeks and roadways)
- Listen to local radio and TV stations for flood information.

When a flood watch is issued: (if you live in a flood prone or coastal area)

- Move your furniture and valuables to higher floors of your home, if possible.
- Make sure you have a full tank of gas in your vehicle.
- · Be prepared to turn off household utilities.

When a flood warning is issued:

Listen to local radio and TV stations for information and advice. If told to evacuate, do so as soon as possible.

#### When a flash flood watch is issued:

- Be alert to signs of flash flooding in your area and prepare your home.
- Be aware of alternate routes in case of road closures.

When a flash flood warning is issued:

- Or if you think flash flooding has already started, evacuate immediately. Act quickly!
- Move to higher ground away from rivers, streams, creeks, and storm drains.
- Do not drive around barricades...they are there for your safety. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground.

#### Winter Storms

#### **Family Preparations**

- Have heavy blankets on hand.
- Ensure that each family member has a warm coat, gloves or mittens, and insulated water resistant boots.
- · Check on any elderly neighbors or family.
- Consult a doctor regarding flu shots for family members.
- Prepare a family emergency supply kit.

#### **Home Preparations**

- Insulate the attic or crawl space.
- Re-caulk around the outside of windows and door frames.
- Install storm windows and doors.
- Hang heavy window drapes which close completely.
- Have the heating system serviced by a professional.
- \*\*\*If the heating system depends on a fuel delivery supplier, maintain at least a 3 day supply of fuel.

#### **Vehicle Preparations**

- Replace worn tires, aging batteries, and windshield wiper blades.
- Maintain engine coolant at manufacturer's specifications to prevent freezing and/or overheating.
- Keep a full reservoir of windshield washer fluid.
- Maintain a winter storm kit in the vehicle: blankets, ice scraper, shovel, sand, jumper cables, flashlight, signal flares and first aid kit.

## **Homeland Security**

Recommended Actions by Threat Level

#### **GREEN=LOW**

- Take steps to protect your identity.
- Report suspicious activity to the local police.
   (NCC Police: (302) 573-2800) or
   1-800-FORCE-12 Terrorism Tip Line
- Take first aid and CPR classes.
- Prepare a 72-hour family emergency supply kit and plan.

#### **BLUE=GUARDED**

- Complete green recommended actions.
- Identify suspicious packages. (Look for out-ofplace containers, excessive postage, strange odors, protruding wires, and oily stains.)

#### YELLOW=ELEVATED

- Complete blue recommended actions.
- Take alternative routes to/from home, school, and work.
- Take precautions when traveling across US borders and overseas.
- Practice your family emergency plan.

#### ORANGE=HIGH

- Complete yellow recommended actions.
- Exercise caution when traveling and attending special events.

#### RED=SEVERE

- Complete orange recommended actions.
- Shelter-in-place or evacuate if instructed by government officials. Refer to www.Ready.gov or www.state.de.us/dema for these procedures.

### **Emergency Supplies Kit**

Be sure to keep all items in a waterproof container, and have on hand enough supplies in this kit to last you and your family for 72 hours:

- Blankets, pillows, or sleeping bags
- Extra clothing (also rain gear and sturdy shoes)
- Canned and other non perishable food items (such as self heating meals)
- Manual can opener
- 3 gallons of water per person in your household
- Medications (prescriptions, eye glasses, hearing aids, dentures, etc.)
- First aid kit
- Toiletries and feminine items
- Diapers, food, and other essential items for children
- Plastic zip top bags and trash bags
- Plates, cups, utensils, or mess kits
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Battery operated radio (NOAA weather service capable) with extra batteries
- Paper towels, napkins, and moist wipes
- Tools (make sure there's a wrench to turn off the water)
- Important Documents: Deeds, insurance policies, medical records, bank account numbers, social security card, identification, proof of residency (such as utility bill), inventory of all valuables, and have an extra set of keys and cash
- Pet care items (tags, immunization records, ample supply of food and water, medications, carrier/cage, muzzle/leash, current picture of you with the pet)
- · Games and toys for children

### Thunderstorms and Lightning

#### Protective Actions When Home:

- Stay inside and away from windows.
- Unplug electrical appliances, and entertainment devices.
- DO NOT USE faucets, bathtub, shower, hot tub, or other items connected to your water
- DO NOT USE telephones, except for emergency calls. (Cell or cordless phones are a safer choice than a corded phone, but distance yourself from its power base.)
- PRACTICE THE 30 MINUTE RULE! Wait at least 30 minutes after last seeing lightning or hearing thunder before going outside or resuming normal activities.

#### Protective Actions When Outside:

- Seek substantial, enclosed building or metal-topped vehicle with windows up, engine off, and radio off.
- If shelter is not available, find a low spot in an area away from natural lightning rods and metal objects; such as tall trees, fences. poles, water, hill tops, motorcycles, golf carts, golf clubs, bicycles, and guard rails.
- Position yourself to be the smallest and lowest object in the area by squatting low to the ground on the balls of your feet and getting into the duck and cover position.

#### **Enhanced Fujita Scale of Tornado Intensity**

EF Scale #	3 Second Gust	Intensity
EFO	65-85 mph	Gale
EF1	86-110 mph	Moderate
EF2	<b>111-135</b> mph	Significant
EF3	136-165 mph	Severe
EF4	166-200 mph	Devastating
EF5	Over 200 mph	Incredible

#### **Hurricanes and Tornadoes**

Category	Sustained Winds	Damage
1	74-95 mph	Minimal
2	96-110 mph	Moderate
3	111-130 mph	Extensive
4	131-155 mph	Extreme
5	>155 mph	Catastrophic

Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale

#### **Hurricanes:**

What to do when a hurricane watch is issued:

- Make sure that your 72 hour family emergency supply kit is ready.
- Prepare your home and family to shelter in place or evacuate.

What to do when a hurricane warning is issued:

 Complete preparations and listen to local radio stations for emergency information.

#### Tornadoes:

What to do when a tornado watch is issued:

- Secure all outside items. (furniture, grill, etc.)
- Listen to local radio and TV stations for further updates.
- Be alert to changing weather conditions; such as blowing debris, hail, or the sound of an approaching tornado. Many people say tornadoes sound like a freight train or a jet.

What to do when a tornado warning is issued:

- If you are inside, go to your designated safe room. A good place is an interior room on the lowest floor of your home (under heavy, sturdy furniture that will protect you from debris).
- If you are outside, in a car, or in a mobile home to a nearby sturdy building or lie flat in a ditch or low lying area. Do not go under a bridge or overpass, as these will act as a wind tunnel. Do not try to outrun the tornado in your car.



**New Castle County** 

Department of Public Safety Office of Emergency Management

87 Read's Way

New Castle, DE 19720 (302) 395-2700 www.nccde.org

# Office of **Emergency Management**



# Planning for Emergencies and Disasters

Your Guide To:

Gaining Knowledge of Frequent Hazards

Developing Action Items for your Family Emergency Plan

Gathering Items for a 72-hour Emergency Supply Kit