SEVERE WEATHER

There are multiple types of severe weather that can impact Prince George's County on a seasonal basis.

The County is most susceptible to winter storms and strong to severe rain and thunderstorms. Winter storms can include severe cold temperatures, sleet, freezing rain, and snowfall amounts that make travel difficult and hazardous. Severe thunderstorms can include damaging hail, high winds that cause tree damage and power outages, and heavy rain that could cause flash or localized flooding.

Severe weather alerts are issued using three categories:

> Weather **ADVISORY** is a special weather alert to the public that conditions are possible for a storm to develop in the area.
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> Severe weather **WATCH** means the conditions are favorable for the development of severe storms in and close to the watch area.
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> Severe weather **WARNING** means a severe storm is confirmed to be producing damage and is moving into and through the warned area.

The best response to severe weather in most cases is to shelter-in-place. Therefore, it is critically important to have an emergency kit at home that meets you and your family's needs, an emergency kit at work in case you have to stay until after the storm has passed and in your car in case you are stranded on the road during an unexpected storm.

Additionally, staying informed by receiving emergency weather alerts is very important as the information in the alerts will provide you with guidance as to how severe the storm is and how you can best respond to the event. Sign up for Alert Prince George's at http://alert.mypgc.us to receive up-to date emergency alert information.

Lastly, having a written emergency plan will provide you and your family with the communication tools to stay in-touch during severe weather events. Go to www.ready.gov/make-a-plan for tips and templates that will help you create a written emergency plan.

HURRICANES

A hurricane is a type of tropical cyclone that forms in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and in the eastern Pacific Ocean, with a maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or more. The Atlantic Hurricane Season runs from June 1st- November 30th each year with peak season from mid-August to late October.

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Hurricanes are measured on the Saffir-Simpson Wind Scale, with a Category 1 being the weakest and a Category 5 being the strongest.

Hurricanes can cause catastrophic damage to coastlines and several hundred miles inland. They can produce winds exceeding 155 mph as well as tornadoes, microbursts, and rip currents. In addition, hurricanes can create storm surges along the coast and cause extensive damage from heavy rainfall.

Before a Hurricane:

- Learn the elevation level of your property and whether the land is flood-prone. This will help you know how your property will be affected when storm surge or tidal flooding are forecasted.
- Identify levees and dams in your area and determine whether they pose a hazard to you.
- Learn community hurricane evacuation routes and how to find higher ground. Determine where you would go and how you would get there if you needed to evacuate.
- Make plans to secure your property and cover all of your home's windows.
- Be sure trees and shrubs around your home are well trimmed so they are more wind resistant.
- Clear loose and clogged rain gutters and downspouts.
- Reinforce your garage doors; if wind enters a garage it can cause dangerous and expensive structural damage.
- Plan to bring in all outdoor furniture, decorations, garbage cans and anything else that is not tied down.
- Make a record of your personal property (pictures and videos) and store these documents in a safe place.

During a Hurricane:

- Turn off utilities if instructed to do so. Otherwise, turn the refrigerator thermostat to its coldest setting and keep its doors closed.
- Avoid using the phone, except for serious emergencies.
- Ensure a supply of water for sanitary purpose such as cleaning and flushing toilets. Fill the bathtub and other larger containers with water.
- Stay inside, away from windows, skylights, and glass doors.

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You should evacuate under the following conditions:

- If you are directed by local authorities to do so. Be sure to follow their instructions.
- If you live in a mobile home or temporary structure–such shelter are particularly hazardous during hurricane no matter how well fastened to the ground.
- If you live in a high-rise building–hurricane winds are stronger at higher elevations.

After a Hurricane:

- Stay alert for extended rainfall and subsequent flooding even after the hurricane or tropical storm has ended.
- If you evacuated, return home only when officials say it is safe.
- Drive only if necessary and avoid flooded roads and washed out bridges. Stay off the streets. If you must go out watch for fallen objects; downed electrical wires; and weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks.
- Keep away from loose or dangling power lines and report them immediately to the power company.
- Walk carefully around the outside your home and check for loose power lines, gas leaks, and structural damage before entering.
- Inspect your home for damage. Take pictures of damage, both of the building and its contents, for insurance purposes. If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before entering.
- Avoid drinking or preparing food with tap water until you are sure it's not contaminated.
- Check refrigerated food for spoilage. If in doubt, throw it out.
- Wear protective clothing and be cautious when cleaning up to avoid injury.
- Never use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.

TORNADOES

A tornado is a violent windstorm characterized by a twisting, funnel-shaped cloud. It is spawned by a thunderstorm (or sometimes as a result of a hurricane) and produced when cool air overrides a layer of warm air, forcing the warm air to rise rapidly. Tornadoes may strike quickly, with little to no warning.

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