



HURRICANE BASICS

From the Kent County Office of Emergency Services

What is a Hurricane?

A hurricane is a type of tropical cyclone, which is a generic term for a low pressure system that generally forms in the tropics. The cyclone is accompanied by thunderstorms and, in the Northern Hemisphere, a counterclockwise circulation of winds near the earth's surface. Tropical cyclones are classified as follows:

Tropical Depression

An organized system of clouds and thunderstorms with a defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds* of 38 mph (33 kt**) or less

* Sustained winds

A 1-minute average wind measured at about 33 ft (10 meters) above the surface.

** 1 knot = 1 nautical mile per hour or 1.15 statute miles per hour. Abbreviated as "kt".

Tropical Storm

An organized system of strong thunderstorms with a defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 39-73 mph (34-63 kt)

Hurricane

An intense tropical weather system of strong thunderstorms with a well-defined surface circulation and maximum sustained winds of 74 mph (64 kt) or higher. Hurricanes are categorized according to the strength of their winds using the [Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale](#). A Category 1 storm has the lowest wind speeds, while a Category 5 hurricane has the strongest. **These are relative terms, because lower category storms can sometimes inflict greater damage than higher category storms, depending on where they strike and the particular hazards they bring.** In fact, tropical storms can also produce significant damage and loss of life, mainly due to flooding.

To learn more on Hurricane Preparedness visit: www.nhc.noaa.gov

Basic Hurricane Safety Actions

- Know if you live in an evacuation area. Know your home's vulnerability to **storm surge, flooding** and **wind**. Have a written plan based on this knowledge.
- At the beginning of hurricane season (June 1st), check your supplies, replace batteries and use food stocks on a rotating basis.
- During hurricane season, monitor the tropics.
- Monitor [NOAA Weather Radio](#).
- If a storm threatens, heed the advice from local authorities. **Evacuate if ordered.**
- Execute your family plan.

WATCH vs. WARNING KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

- A **HURRICANE WATCH** issued for your part of the coast indicates the possibility that you could experience hurricane conditions within 36 hours.
This watch should trigger your family's disaster plan, and protective measures should be initiated, especially those actions that require extra time such as securing a boat, leaving a barrier island, etc.
- A **HURRICANE WARNING** issued for your part of the coast indicates that sustained winds of at least 74 mph are expected within 24 hours or less.
Once this warning has been issued, your family should be in the process of completing protective actions and deciding the safest location to be during the storm.

