Hurricane season is here: Take charge, be prepared

June 1 – Nov. 30

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NAS Patuxent River Public Affairs

While nothing could’ve prepared us as individuals to deal with the COVID-19 situation, there are steps you can take to help keep yourself and your family safe by preparing in advance for what’s up next: the Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June 1 through Nov. 30.

An above-normal 2020 Atlantic hurricane season is expected, according to forecasters with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service. The outlook predicts a 60% chance of an above-normal season, a 30% chance of a near-normal season and only a 10% chance of a below-normal season.

“As Americans focus their attention on a safe and healthy reopening of our country, it remains critically important that we also remember to make the necessary preparations for the upcoming hurricane season,” said Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, in a NOAA-released news article. “[Engaging] in preparedness activities is good for your family, community and country.”

An above-normal season could mean more life-threatening storms, longerlasting storms and more rainfall in the coming months. In those cases, it may be the only factor standing between you and a season that could devastate your homes and alter your lives. It’s important to be prepared.

Preparedness is the key to a safer hurricane season. An annual emergency plan is a must. Even if nothing happens, you and your family will have a plan for when a disaster strikes.

Whatever is predicted, it is prudent for every individual and family to have a preparedness plan, complete with a list of contacts during an emergency situation. It is also important to be familiar with the types of hazards that could occur within your community, such as power outages, flooding, or severe weather; and it is vital to understand how you will receive notifications, warnings and other important information should something happen.

Plan ahead, build a kit

When disaster strikes, your family may not all be together in one place. You must pick places to meet, have contact information for everyone, and discuss in advance what to do during various types of emergencies. If everyone in your family knows what your family’s plan is and participates in developing it, nobody is left wondering what to do when a situation occurs. And don’t worry about scaring your children when children are included in the planning process and know how to respond, experts say, it actually helps them stay calmer in the event of an actual emergency.

A prepared family is an informed family — and an informed family is a safer family.

Source: National Hurricane Center (www.nhc.noaa.gov)