



CHART A COURSE FOR SAFETY

6th Issue

Weathering the Storm

June 21, 2010

Severe weather is a fact of life. Living near the ocean also brings into play the threat of tropical weather in the form of tropical storms and hurricanes. The area around Wallops Island is not immune to severe tropical weather. Usually the impact is limited to a strong tropical system that is losing strength as it approaches from the southern latitudes, but there have been occasions in the past when this area has taken a storm system directly. History points to storms in 1821, 1933 and 1936 for land-falling storms and as recently as 2009, when Tropical Storm Fay passed us to the west.

The key to weathering a tropical storm or hurricane (pun intended) is preparedness. The biggest advantage we have concerning these systems is the massive amount of information available, usually several days prior to a system affecting any given area. This information, coupled with a pre-determined plan, will greatly increase your ability to successfully deal with these adverse conditions. At WFF we have many avenues to obtain information regarding severe weather. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) web site is operational at <http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code803/eocmain.html> and contains many links and locations for current information. You will find information regarding WFF and links to other resources such as the State of Virginia EOC and the National Hurricane Center. Several changes are now in effect regarding tropical storm information:

 The new Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale became operational. The scale keep the same wind speed ranges as the original Saffir-Simpson Scale for each of the five hurricane categories, but no longer ties specific storm surge and flooding effects to each category.

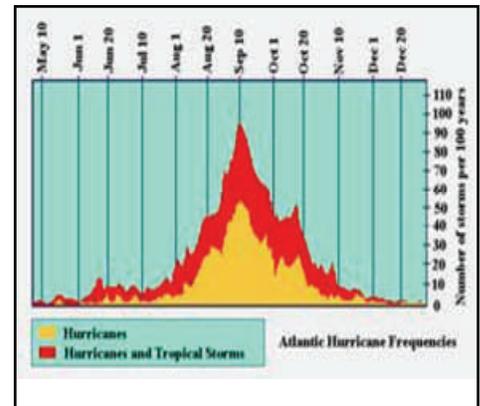
 Watches and warnings for tropical storms and hurricanes along threatened coastal areas will be issued 12 hours earlier than in previous years. Tropical storm watches will be issued when tropical storm conditions are possible along the coast within 48 hours. Tropical storm warnings will be issued when those conditions are expected within 36 hours. Similar increases in lead-time will apply to hurricane watches and warnings.

Hurricane Alert Conditions - Condition V - 120 hours Review of Plans/long lead item
Condition IV - 72 hours Start Preparations
Condition III - 48 hours Active Preparation
Condition II - 24 hours Active Preparation
Condition I - 12 hours Final Actions/Ride out

Several things to think about include evacuation routes and the time it will take to leave the peninsula if ordered, and where you would go. Make these plans in place before you need them. Here are some things you should keep in mind if a serious storm should threaten:

If a Mandatory Evacuation is declared for the peninsula, the state of Virginia will not allow evacuations south into Norfolk. This will require the entire population to evacuate north if such an order is issued.

Pay attention to the local conditions. WFF coordinates all storm related response stages with Accomack County to reduce conflicting information. Be aware of the Hurricane Condition Level. This will be distributed via email, announcements and telephone as needed.



WHAT HAVE YOU DONE FOR SAFETY LATELY??

Highlights from Code 803.2 Safety and Mission Assurance Branch, Glen Liebig, Branch Head

The goal of this branch is to give people the tools to make correct safety decisions. As safety information changes it is important that it is made available. One avenue used to get this done is the publication of the Safety and Environmental Newsletter distributed monthly to civil servants, contractors, NOAA, Navy and Spaceport. In addition, this branch has a goal to educate people about safety; in fact we would love to “go out of business”, but that is only possible if everyone responsibly practices safety on every job, every day.

“Accidents hurt - safety doesn't.”



Get Caught Doing Something Green!

The Environmental Office has a program to recognize those who have helped protect the environment at WFF. Past award recipients have reported spills, designed secondary containments, protected bird nests, changed processes to reduce waste, and compiled exemplary affirmative procurement data. So the next time you put that plastic bottle in the recycling container, pick a piece of trash up off the street, or hang up the phone after calling 911 to report a spill, turn around slowly. Someone from the Environmental Office may be right behind you waiting to say, "You have been caught doing something green!"



The Next Science on the Shore event will be held July 16th at the Wallops Visitor's Center. The Marine Science Consortium will present a teacher/student speaker series on drilling and coastal environments. For more details please visit the Environmental website:

<http://sites.wff.nasa.gov/code250/>

The Importance of Wetlands

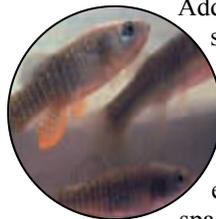
Wallops Flight Facility is composed of approximately 2800 acres of wetlands, located on Wallops Island and Wallops Mainland. The majority of these wetlands are tidal and, next to tropical rainforests, tidal wetlands are the most biologically productive resource in the world! They provide valuable habitat for much of the wildlife that calls the Eastern Shore home (or at least a nice place to visit)!



Tidal wetlands provide habitat, nesting, feeding, and refuge areas for shorebirds; serve as a nursery ground for larval and juvenile organisms as well as estuarine-dependent oceanic species; and provide significant habitat for shellfish. Most of the commercial fisheries stock that we eat actually start their lives in tidal wetlands. These resource areas also improve water quality by trapping sediments, reducing turbidity, restricting the passage of toxins and heavy metals, decreasing biological oxygen demand (BOD), and trapping nutrients. Wetlands also act as an invaluable buffer against storms, such as hurricanes and nor'easters, by collecting and holding flood waters and absorbing wind and tidal forces.



Additionally, tidal wetland vegetation stabilizes shorelines and buffers erosion.



Wetlands provide recreational opportunities for fishing, wildlife observation and hunting; are important to commercial and recreational shell- and finfisheries; and are areas of scientific and educational value. Tidal wetlands are a major source of coastal open space and offer exceptional scenic views.

It has been the policy of the federal government since 1989 that there be "no net-loss" of wetlands. If you have a project that impacts wetlands, compensatory mitigation (restoration, enhancement, preservation or monetary) is required and is based on the type of wetland the project would impact. Please contact Joe Mitchell of the Environmental Office (x1127) for more information.



You can't turn on the television, surf the web, or read the newspaper without hearing about the catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. For more information on how this unprecedented disaster is



affecting wetlands, as well as daily updates, please visit the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) homepage: <http://sws.org/oilspill/>