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Gerry McGonagle - Atlantic hurricane season has begun and property owners/managers should have disaster plans ready

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The Atlantic Basin hurricane season began June 1st and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has issued its annual predictions for the storm season that lasts through November. The Climate Prediction Center, a division of the National Weather Service, forecasts an above-normal hurricane season and it is likely to result in increased property damage, not only along the coastline but over inland areas as well with flooding and potential tornadoes.

The official prediction indicates that activity will exceed the seasonal average of 11 named storms, six hurricanes and two major hurricanes, forecasts with a 70% likelihood:

- * 12 to 18 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which:
- * 6 to 10 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including:
- * 3 to 6 major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5; winds of 111 mph or higher)

What are the factors contributing to this prediction? According to Gerry Bell, Ph.D., lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at the Climate Prediction Center, ocean and climate conditions including

- * Warm Atlantic Ocean water;
- * La Niña (cooler water temperature) conditions in the Pacific dissipating; and
- * Ocean and atmospheric conditions which lead to hurricane development in sync, with sea surface temperatures where storms often develop and move across the Atlantic up to two degrees (fahrenheit) warmer than average.

During the 2010 hurricane season, the United States Atlantic coast was fortunate to have no direct hurricane hits as the result of favorable winds pushing storms out to sea. However, we cannot rely on good luck during the 2011 season, especially with predictions of greater activity. According to ready.gov "At least one in four businesses never reopens after a disaster." If you own or manage commercial property or a business operation, you understand the importance of disaster planning and recovery. FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate said, "Now is the time, if you haven't already, to get your plan together for what you and your family would do if disaster strikes. Visit ready.gov to learn more. And if you're a small business owner, visit <http://www.ready.gov/business> to ensure that your business is prepared for a storm disaster."

Plan ahead with a qualified service partner. Property damage recovery specialists are typically capable of responding to a wide range of damage incidents including water, fire, mold, storm and other weather-related events. When selecting your service partners, consider not only their expertise, range of services and capacity to respond, but also levels and type of insurance coverage, scheduled rates and billing terms. Many emergencies can result in an insurance claim, requiring greater documentation, reporting and time to settle payments.

NOAA has unveiled a new set of video and audio public service announcements featuring NOAA hurricane experts and the FEMA administrator that are available in both English and Spanish.

Have a safe summer 2011!

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