Residents advised to prepare for flooding due to Hurricane Joaquin

GEORGETOWN COUNTY (10:55 a.m.) — While South Carolina is well outside the current cone of error for Hurricane Joaquin, the Georgetown County Emergency Management Division is asking local residents to be prepared for flooding as the storm passes our coast.

The National Weather Service predicts the storm could bring tropical storm force conditions for northeast South Carolina, including gusty winds in our coastal regions over the weekend. However, the biggest concern for Georgetown County at the moment is flooding. Regardless of Joaquin’s eventual track, very heavy rainfall is expected beginning this afternoon and through the weekend, with additional heavy rainfall possible early next week.

As the ground is already saturated, flooding could develop quickly with any heavy rainfall, said Sam Hodge, emergency manager for Georgetown County. Georgetown County could see as much as 10-15 inches of rain in the coming days, according to forecasts.

The combination of flooding and strong winds has the potential to cause downed trees and power outages. More erosion and rip currents on county beaches are also expected with increasing wave action and water runup.

Hodge also warns that flooding due to the storm won’t be limited to coastal areas. Western parts of the county are also in danger of flooding. If flooding occurs, residents should not attempt to cross flowing water on roadways. As little as six inches of water may cause drivers to lose control of their vehicle. Two feet of water will carry most cars away.

In the event of flooding:
- Be aware of potential flash flooding. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move to higher ground. Do not wait to be told to move.
- If time allows, prepare your home for a flood by moving essential items to an upper floor, bring in outdoor furniture, disconnect electrical appliances and be prepared to turn off the gas, electricity and water.
- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.
- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle could be quickly swept away.
After a flood:
- Listen for news reports to learn whether the community’s water supply is safe to drink.
- Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage. Water may also be electrically charged from underground or downed power lines.
- Be aware of areas where floodwaters have receded. Even if the roadway of a bridge or elevated highway looks normal, the support structures below may be damaged.
- Stay clear of downed power lines and report them to your power company.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly to foundations. Stay out of any building that is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Clean and disinfect everything that got wet. Mud left from floodwater can contain sewage and other harmful chemicals.

Rip Currents:
Residents are also advised to check surf conditions before going into the ocean and be on the lookout for signs that rip currents may be present. Be aware that public beaches in Georgetown County do not have lifeguards. Even in shallow water, wave action can cause loss of footing. Beachgoers should obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards or firefighters and law enforcement officers assigned to beach patrols. These professionals are trained to identify hazards.

For updates and future warnings, visit www.gtcounty.org or follow Georgetown County government’s Facebook and Twitter accounts. The county’s automated information hotline is also active. The hotline, at (843) 545-3900, is available 24 hours a day.

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