



**FEMA**

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# Press Release

## **FEMA URGES LOUISIANA RESIDENTS TO PREPARE FOR 2008 HURRICANE SEASON: *JUNE 1 MARKS THE START OF HURRICANE SEASON AND HEIGHTENED RISKS FOR FLOODING***

Washington, D.C. – It only takes *one* storm to cause serious flood damage. While the 2006 and 2007 hurricane seasons were relatively quiet, natural disasters are unpredictable and preparedness is critical for all Louisiana residents as another storm season begins. Hurricane season brings a heightened risk of flooding to Louisiana and residents need to have an evacuation plan, a family emergency plan and a disaster supply kit, along with flood insurance to ensure they are properly prepared for potential flooding in the coming months.

Past hurricane seasons have illustrated that the consequences of seasonal flooding in Louisiana can be devastating. Hurricane Rita made landfall in Louisiana as a Category 3 hurricane late in the 2005 hurricane season. It swept through inland Louisiana and reached the coast, causing \$11.3 billion in damages in the Gulf Coast, and almost \$408 million in Louisiana alone. Despite heightened risks, only 30 percent of Louisiana residents are protected with flood insurance. This leaves a majority of residents vulnerable in the face of hurricane season and means that they may have to absorb financial losses on their own or seek limited funding from other sources to rebuild or repair in the wake of a storm.

“Louisiana residents who aren’t insured against flooding should not wait until the first storm of the season to obtain a policy. There is typically a 30 day wait before a flood insurance policy takes effect, and by then it could be too late,” said David Maurstad, Assistant Administrator of Mitigation and Federal Insurance Administrator for FEMA. “Now is the time to talk to your insurance agent about your individual risk and flood insurance options.”

New preliminary flood maps have been released for Cameron, Iberia, Livingston, St. Mary, Tangipahoa and Vermilion parishes and many residents may find that their flood risk levels have changed. “It is important to be aware of these map changes, as they affect residents’ flood insurance needs and requirements,” said Maurstad. “When the new maps are officially adopted, individuals in high-risk areas will be required to carry flood insurance if they have a loan from a federally regulated or insured lender. However, nearly a quarter of all flood claims come from low- to moderate-risk areas. Everyone should understand that flooding can impact them and consider the financial protection that flood insurance provides.”

Residents should know that most homeowners insurance policies don’t cover flood damage. Typically, only a separate flood insurance policy provides this coverage, and flood insurance is more affordable than some might think. The average cost of a flood policy is \$500, and could save thousands of dollars in damages. Most properties in Louisiana’s low- to moderate-risk areas are eligible for Preferred Risk Policies (PRPs) that start at less than \$120 a year.

FEMA also offers the following tips to prepare for flooding:

### **Before a Flood**

- Have a safety kit with drinking water, a first-aid kit, canned food, a radio, flashlight and blankets.
- Know safe routes from home, work and school that are on higher ground.
- Protect your property. Most homeowners insurance does not cover flooding. Make sure that your flood insurance policy is up to date.

### **During a Flood**

- If flooding occurs, go to higher ground. Get out of areas subject to flooding. This includes dips, low spots, canyons, washes, etc.
- Avoid areas already flooded, especially if the water is flowing fast. Do not attempt to cross flowing streams.
- Roadbeds may be washed out under flood waters. NEVER drive through flooded roadways. If your vehicle is suddenly caught in rising water, leave it immediately and seek higher ground.

### **After a Flood**

- Do not turn electricity back on in your home if you detect gas or if the electrical system has been flooded.
- Clean and disinfect everything that was touched by floodwaters or mudflows and throw out any such foodstuffs.
- Follow directions from local officials regarding the safety of drinking water.

Flood insurance is available through approximately 90 insurance companies in more than 20,400 participating communities nationwide. Everyone can purchase flood insurance – renters, business owners and homeowners – and last year 20 to 25 percent of all claims paid by the National Flood Insurance Program were for policies in low- to moderate-risk areas. In low- to moderate-risk areas, lower-cost Preferred Risk Policies (PRPs) start at less than \$120 a year. Individuals can learn more about their flood risk and how to protect their property by visiting [FloodSmart.gov](http://FloodSmart.gov) or by calling 1-800-427-2419.

*FEMA coordinates the Federal Government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or manmade, including acts of terrorism.*

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