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Subject: JOINT NEWS RELEASE: Know Your Flood Risk



South Carolina State Emergency Response Team

South Carolina Emergency Management Division
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JOINT NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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National Preparedness Day: Know Your Flood Risk

Columbia, S.C. (Thursday, April 28) – As part of National Preparedness Day on April 30, the S.C. Emergency Management Division and the S.C. Department of Natural Resources encourage everyone in South Carolina to take steps that reduce the risks of severe flooding.

While many parts of the state are still recovering from the severe flooding of October 2015, spring and summer months typically produce heavy rains and the conditions for severe and flash flooding. Flooding is the most common natural disaster in the United States, according to the National Weather Service.

Half of all flood-related fatalities occur when cars are driven into flood waters. It only takes two feet of flood water to carry away a car. Only six inches of rushing flood water is needed to sweep away a full-grown adult.

The season for hurricanes is upon us. These sprawling storms are notorious for high winds; however, most, if not all, hurricane-related fatalities are due to storm surge and fresh water drowning. Hurricanes create coastal and inland flooding by pushing large quantities of water ashore in the form of storm surge. A wall of water can rapidly overwhelm shoreline structures threatening those who have not evacuated. Evacuation orders save lives. Hurricanes also produce vast swaths of heavy inland rainfall, even if the storms do not make landfall.

The rainfall amounts seen during recent October 2015 floods, although not actually hurricane-related, did represent the rainfall possible from a hurricane moving over South Carolina. On Oct. 3, 11.5 inches of rain fell in Charleston in just 24 hours, both a station record and over three times the amount of rain Charleston normally receives during the entire month of October. Over the course of three days in early October 2015 parts of the Midlands received more than 20 inches, leading to multiple dam failures, overloaded storm drains and the worst flooding many residents have ever experienced.

The floods of October 2015 demonstrated that severe flooding can disrupt electricity and the drinking water supply for many days. Flood waters could also carry hazardous materials that can endanger health, either upon contact with the water itself or with the soggy debris left after the flood waters recede.

Regardless of the source, the season for heavy rain and flooding is before us again. Take precautions to avoid dangerous flood waters whether they be from an offshore hurricane or a severe thunderstorm. Plan ahead. Prepare early. Never underestimate the dangers of flood waters.

SCEMD and SCDNR recommend the following:

- .. Know the flooding risk to your home and your community. Flood damage is not covered by homeowners' policies. Flood insurance is the best way to protect your home, business, and belongings from flood damage.
- .. Even if you live in a low-risk area you can purchase flood insurance so long as your community participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. People outside of the high-risk flood areas file 20-percent of all NFIP claims.
- .. Monitor local media and weather reports via a NOAA weather radio or official social media feed. These sources will alert you to severe weather and the potential for flooding.
- .. When an emergency alert is issued, be prepared to take safety precautions recommended by local public safety officials.
- .. Have supplies on hand that you and your family could use to survive for at least three days (more supplies could be useful).
- .. A primary flood killer is a flooded road. Never attempt to drive through a flooded area. **Turn Around, Don't Drown.**
- .. Do not drive around barricades.
- .. Know where water is likely to collect on the roadways you most travel and the fastest way to get to higher ground.
- .. Use the online information provided by SCEMD and SCDNR to help you prepare for emergencies and reduce your flood risk. Visit scemd.org and dnr.sc.gov for tools and information for your personal emergency planning.

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PLANNING ADVISORY: For more information about severe flooding, contact Dr. Hope Mizzell. Contact Maria Cox for information about the National Flood insurance program. Contact Joe Farmer or Derrec Becker for emergency planning information from SCEMD.

Derrec Becker

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"South Carolina's emergency management program minimizes loss of life and property damage from all-hazard incidents."

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