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**THE STATE OF FLORIDA EMERGENCY
RESPONSE TEAM ANNEX FOR TROPICAL
CYCLONE EVENTS**

To The State of Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

TROPICAL CYCLONE EVENTS ANNEX

Introduction

Due to its climate and geography, Florida may be considered the most vulnerable state in the nation to the impacts from hurricanes and tropical storms. Forty percent of all landfalling hurricanes in the United States hit Florida. More than 76% of the state's 18 million persons reside in one of the state's 35 coastal counties. While all areas within the state are vulnerable to the impacts of high winds and inland flooding, coastal counties may experience storm surge as well as inland flooding, posing greater risk to human lives. The official hurricane season lasts from June 1 until November 30.

Description of Hazard

Hurricanes and tropical storms are tropical cyclones which generally form in the tropics and are accompanied by thunderstorms and a counterclockwise circulation of winds. A hurricane has maximum sustained winds of 74 mph or higher while tropical storm winds range from 39 mph to 73 mph. Tropical cyclones can cause tornadoes, storm surge, high velocity winds, and inland flooding. Based upon the storm intensity, the impacts can vary from minor structural damage to catastrophic statewide impacts.

Risk Classification

The intensity of hurricanes is classified using the Saffir-Simpson Scale:

Storm Category	Wind Speed (mph)
Category 1	74-95
Category 2	96-110
Category 3	111-130
Category 4	131-155
Category 5	155 +

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) provides risk classification for specific coastal regions utilizing the following categories:

- Hurricane Watch: Indicates the *possibility* of hurricane conditions within 48 hours.
- Hurricane Warning: Indicates the *likelihood* of hurricane conditions within 36 hours or less.
- Tropical Storm Watch: Indicates the *possibility* of tropical storm conditions within 48 hours.
- Tropical Storm Warning: Indicates the *likelihood* of tropical storm conditions within 36 hours or less.

Similar classifications for inland counties are provided by the local National Weather Service forecast offices.

Notification and Warning

Notification and warning for all hazards is conducted in accordance with the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and applicable operational procedures.

It is the responsibility of the National Hurricane Center to notify the State Watch Office of an impending tropical cyclone risk which has been identified and classified. Hurricane and tropical storm watches and warnings are issued by the National Hurricane Center in close coordination with the State Emergency Operations Center and impacted counties. Similarly, the National Weather Service will issue tropical storm and hurricane wind warnings for inland counties. Both the National Hurricane Center and the National Weather Service distribute the warning data via the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Weather Wire Service, Emergency Satellite Communications (ESATCOM), media, or other mechanisms.

Protective Action Decision Making

Under Florida Statute 252, it is the responsibility of each Board of County Commissioners to declare a local state of emergency for tropical cyclones threatening their jurisdiction and to order necessary protective actions. The Governor of the State of Florida, however, reserves the right to override local decision making when the lives within the State of Florida are threatened. The goal within the state is to relocate all vulnerable populations within the hurricane storm surge areas, areas prone to inland flooding, populations residing in unsafe buildings, and persons with special needs. Local governments offer sheltering options and transportation assistance for evacuating populations and persons with special needs.

Concept of Operations

Response operations will be conducted in accordance with the State of Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan with the following hurricane specific components:

- Lengthy hurricane clearance times and limited evacuation routes in Florida mandate proactive evacuation coordination among local, state, and federal public safety agencies far in advance of storm arrival. The State Emergency Operations Center will activate as soon as the hurricane forecast indicates a potential threat to any portion of the state. All county Emergency Operations Centers will activate in response to an impending hurricane threat on their own jurisdiction or in support of neighboring threatened jurisdictions.

Additional References

The following annexes and plans provide detailed information regarding preparedness, response, and recovery from tropical cyclone incidents within the State of Florida:

- State of Florida Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan
- State of Florida Hazard Mitigation Plan
- The State of Florida Emergency Operations Procedures for the State Watch Office
- Statewide Regional Evacuation Studies
- Regional Evacuation Guidelines (REVAC)