

MISSISSIPPI EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

NEWS



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: HURRICANE SEASON '99 MARKS 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF CAMILLE

(JACKSON) – This year marks the 30th anniversary of Hurricane Camille, the Category 5 storm that made landfall on the Mississippi Gulf Coast on August 17, 1969 – devastating the Gulf Coast and most of South Mississippi and setting much of this country's hurricane preparedness programs into motion.

Gov. Kirk Fordice has proclaimed May 31 through June 6 as Hurricane Awareness Week in Mississippi as a focal point for Mississippians to prepare for an extremely active hurricane season.

"Hurricane Awareness Week provides an excellent opportunity to prepare for one of the most destructive seasons of the year," Fordice said. "History has demonstrated that a well-informed and well-prepared citizenry suffers less in personal injury and property damage as a result of these massive storms."

The state's primary advocate of hurricane preparedness is Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director Jim Maher, who echoes Gov. Fordice.

"The possibility having another hurricane find its way to Mississippi in the next six months is very real," he said. "With the current prediction set at 14 named storms, nine hurricanes and four of those being Category 3 or better, people in our state are well-advised to prepare now for a storm's landfall in our state."

Those preparations include ensuring you have enough non-perishable food and bottled water to last at least three days in case you become isolated. Emergency supplies should also include a manual can opener, needed medicines, toilet articles, a change of clothes, blankets or sleeping bags, battery operated flashlights and radios and extra batteries. Items for each family should be stored in a water-protected box or container that can be easily carried in case you have to evacuate your home.

Knowing ahead of time where and by what route you will evacuate is also of prime importance.

"In an evacuation, if each person has plan about where to go, what to do and what to take for their individual family then it makes the entire process easier," Maher said, adding that the evacuation of portions of the Gulf Coast last September during Hurricane *Georges* went off without significant problems.

"Even though there were four named storms in the Atlantic Basin at one time last fall, we're very likely to face even more this year," Maher said. "Throughout the entire evacuation and sheltering process during *Georges*, not a single life was lost in Mississippi."

Officially, hurricane season starts on June 1 and continues through November 30. Typically, however, most hurricanes occur in August, September and October. The 1998 hurricane season was one of the most deadly on record – claiming an estimated 11,629 lives. By the time Hurricane *Georges* made landfall in Mississippi, it had claimed more than 500 lives and caused some \$5.1 billion in damages in the Carribean, U.S. mainland, and Cuba. It was a Category 2 storm by the time it reached land in Mississippi.

"While we certainly hope that our state will be spared the effects of a hurricane this year, it is definitely time to prepare now for that eventuality," Maher said.

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Editors/News Directors: Additional information, audio clips and preparedness information is available from MEMA on the Internet at www.memaorg.com on the MEMA News Desk.