



The Avalon Home and Land Owners Association

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PREPARATION FOR EMERGENCIES

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Harry deButts outlined what to expect from a major event hitting Avalon. These events could include:

- North East Storms (e.g., 1962)
- Hurricanes (Gloria, 1985)
- Tsunamis
- Tidal surges
- Terrorist activities.

Some of the things done to meet storm hazards include:

- Beach renourishment
- Rebuilt seawall
- Back bay pump stations (which will not operate if the bulkheads are overflowed)
- Dune construction and maintenance. A Category 3 hurricane lasting 45 minutes will create a tidal surge of 20 feet (which the dunes have been constructed to withstand). There will be back bay flooding.
- Borough facilities have been rebuilt to meet codes for flood and wind damage.
- Rigorous code enforcement
- Complete training of emergency responders
- Formation of a Community Emergency Response Team. The Avalon Lions were instrumental in this program getting off the ground. These people are not first responders, but are able to come in to help out in case of need. New recruits are welcome should anyone wish to volunteer.
- Tactical Response Team (police).

The reason to call for an evacuation is to ensure the safety of the life and health of the residents. Evacuations of Avalon were called for in 1962 and in 1985. Photographs of both events were shown, notably flooding to the west of the Parkway overpass on Avalon Boulevard after the latter storm.

A mandatory evacuation may be called. The public will be notified by the public address sirens (examples of the messages that can be heard in some parts of town will be shown on the Borough web site), the Emergency Radio Station (1630 AM) and by the electronic signboard.

Based on traffic studies in the early 1990's it would take 36 hours to evacuate Cape May County in mid-summer without a reverse lane strategy. Since then traffic volume has increased dramatically. An example of the length of lead-time that could be given was the example of hurricane Floyd that was off New Jersey 8 to 10 hours after it passed the Outer banks of North Carolina - fortunately it occurred in mid-September and had lost most of its intensity.

Every family should have a disaster plan that everyone in the family understands and can follow. A suggested Survival Check List was given:



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1. Being prepared. Take as many photos of the property as possible before the event. Have a record of all the improvements that have gone into the property.
2. Getting ready;
3. Heading out - where to? The Borough has arrangements with Dennis Township for Borough employees and families with Millville as a secondary venue.
4. Have your property tax file
5. Flood insurance file
6. Health and dental records
7. Savings and checking accounts. If damage in Cape May County is extensive where will you bank?
8. Last will and testament
9. Homeowner's insurance / home inventory
10. Automotive insurance
11. Income tax returns for the last three years
12. What will you come back to? When will you be able to return? Where will your mail go? How will you contact family members? What will you do with pets?

There are essentially two evacuation routes from Avalon:

- To the Parkway to Route 50;
- To Route 9 - to Route 83 - to Route 47 (where reverse lane operation will start) to Route 55. Bear in mind that the low point on Route 47 is near the Wawa on Route 47.

Frank McCall, Director of Emergency Management for Cape May County, said that prior to 9/11 the only preparation was for weather related events. Since then anything non-weather events could be a potential crime scene. The Emergency Management group meets every three weeks to discuss public safety. A full exercise will be held at Wildwood Convention Center on September 28.

In 1992 the hurricane evacuation study identified 455 evacuation centers in Cape May County. The most recent document (July 2005) indicated there are no centers in the county. The map associated with the study identifies all areas east of the Parkway and south of Dennis Township would be flooded after a Category 3 storm. Woodbine and Belleplain are significantly above water. One must ensure one has the opportunity to get somewhere.

A reverse lane strategy will be implemented on Route 47 between Routes 83 and 55. The program is tested semi annually. With NJ DOT, the State Police and others working it takes 4 hours to get the strategy in place. There is an agreement that there will be no tolls on the Parkway. More recently it has been announced that tolls will be lifted from the Atlantic City Expressway and the bridges into Pennsylvania. Since evacuation by elevation is not an option in Atlantic City, that community will have to be completely evacuated, so there is a plan for a reverse lane strategy on the Atlantic City Expressway.



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The government cannot to be relied on to provide shelter. Cape May County will probably be on its own for 72 to 108 hours. Elected and appointed officials have cooperated in developing emergency plans. Despite each community wanting its own fiefdom they are all working together.

In answer to a question it was stated that communications is a major problem. Avalon, Wildwood and Ocean City have AM stations that people can tie into. There is a portable AM station with a 10-mile range that can be located on Route 47. The big disappointment is that Comcast, which used to enable community alerts to be issued, no longer allows that to happen. Mr. McCall suggested that the case be made known to Comcast to get emergency notification back.

There is a digital public address system on the three fire sirens in Avalon. There will be a set of tones with a voice over to alert people. Sample statements will be on the Borough website. The best advice is to turn to the AM station when one hears a siren with voice over.