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Sarasota County urges residents to 'Know Your Zone' and prepare for active hurricane season

With predictions of increased hurricane activity this year, residents are urged to know the evacuation zone they live in and prepare to protect their safety as the storm season begins this month.

"The first thing everyone should do is answer the question, 'Should I stay, or should I go?'" said Ed McCrane, emergency management chief for Sarasota County.

Families should only consider staying at home if their houses or apartments can withstand the anticipated winds, are shuttered and are located away from the coastline and not in a flood-prone area, McCrane said.

Residents who plan to stay
If residents plan to stay, they should take a number of steps:

- Assemble disaster supply kits and first aid kits.
- Make sure that pets have adequate supplies.
- Stock food and water.
- Fill cars with gas and secure your home.
- Check on neighbors, especially those who are elderly or have disabilities, or invite them into your home during the storm.
- Use a battery-powered radio and monitor the weather for weather changes or instructions.

Determine evacuation zones
Residents also should determine their evacuation zone now to save valuable time if they are asked to evacuate. Residents living in unincorporated areas of Sarasota County in Zones A and B now have reflective yellow bands with a black "A" or "B" on stop sign poles at key intersections. These signs were installed and will be maintained by Sarasota County Traffic Operations and Maintenance.

Residents who plan to evacuate
Residents who decide to evacuate during a storm should:

- Plan to have a place to go that is a storm hardened building out of the potential storm surge area.
- Notify family and friends about plans.

- Secure your home and assemble a shelter disaster supply kit and a first aid kit.
- Make a plan for pets and their needs.
- Map out a route and an alternate route to arrive safely at your desired destination.

For additional information, contact the Sarasota County Call Center at 941-861-5000 or visit the Sarasota County All Hazards web site at www.scgov.net. Determine what evacuation zone you live in and get directions to all of the shelters in Sarasota County.