



NJ Office of Emergency Management

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NJOEM's Winter Weather Awareness Week: Nor'easters: Powerful Winds and Coastal Flooding

(TRENTON, NJ) – Colonel Rick Fuentes, Superintendent of New Jersey State Police and Director of the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management, is celebrating Winter Weather Awareness Week beginning today and ending Friday.

Each day will bring a new message on family preparedness during the winter months.

Today's message: **Nor'easters: Powerful Winds and Coastal Flooding.**

What is a Nor'easter?

Nor'easters have the potential to cause as much damage as hurricanes in New Jersey's latitudes, with powerful winds, rain or snow and large waves.

They can pound and erode beaches with heavy surf, affect inland areas with flooding, or coat the land with thick layers of ice and snow.

Nor'easters result from the counterclockwise rotation of a low-pressure system and the clockwise rotation of a high-pressure system, combining to send wind and moisture to New Jersey from the Northeast. The nor'easter's ferocity will depend on the strength of the two systems.

One reason nor'easters are so dangerous is that they tend to move much more slowly than hurricanes at our latitudes. That slow movement allows the storm's effects to accumulate in a given area. The worst disasters in New Jersey history, in terms of cost and widespread damage, have been from nor'easters that moved slowly and remained for several days.

A nor'easter's wind circulation can cause tidal waters in back bays to be held in place, and not allow the water to drain through inlets and into the ocean. The accumulation of more and more water in tidal areas can cause widespread flooding.

Nor'easters can occur all year long, but in New Jersey they are primarily a risk between September and April.

It is important to remember that nor'easters are not the only winter hazards that can cause widespread coastal flooding and beach erosion.

Flooding can result from the sudden thaw of a heavy pack of snow, or from an "ice jam." After long cold spells, which can cause rivers and lakes to freeze, a rise in the water level or a sudden thaw can break the ice into large chunks, which can become jammed at manmade and natural obstructions. These ice jams can act as a dam, resulting in severe flooding.

Family Preparedness

For New Jersey residents, the basics of preparedness for nor'easters and winter flooding are virtually the same as preparedness for all hazards, natural or manmade:

- **FIRST:** Arm yourself and your family members with an **Emergency Supply Kit** and an **Emergency Action Plan**.
 - Your **Emergency Supply Kit** should include a blanket, a battery-powered radio, a first aid kit, one week's prescription medications, personal toiletries, infant care items, three days' worth of non-perishable food and water (one gallon of water per person per day), a can opener, and cash or travelers checks. For more, visit the American Red Cross website: www.redcross.org/disaster/safety/fds-all.pdf.
 - Your **Emergency Action Plan** should include an out-of-town contact your family members will call or email to check on each other, a predetermined meeting place away from your home, and specific plans for individuals with special needs or disabilities. For more, visit the American Red Cross website: www.redcross.org/static/file_cont36_lang0_23.pdf.

- **NEXT:** Pay attention to **weather media and your local radio or television stations** for **weather updates** and for **official instructions** from **Public Safety Officials**.

- **If you live in an area prone to flooding: Know your evacuation route.** You can find maps of New Jersey's coastal evacuation routes at the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management's website, www.nj.gov/njoem. In all areas, call local Emergency Management officials or Police Department for details on your evacuation plan.

Further information on all-hazards preparedness for families can be found at the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management's website, www.state.nj.us/njoem.

Similar information can be found in "Plain Talk on Terrorism Preparedness," available from the New Jersey Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force at www.njhomelandsecurity.com/Plain-Talk-12.08.04.pdf; and in "Ready Together New Jersey," from the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services, at <http://www.njhomelandsecurity.com/ready-together-brochure.html>.

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