

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
DIVISION OF MARINE FISHERIES

Reviewed June 2025

HURRICANE RESPONSE PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Hurricanes are the largest, most destructive storms affecting coastal areas, but are also easily monitored, and relatively predictable. There is more time available for property protection and evacuation before a hurricane than for almost all other natural disasters. By taking advantage of the available time through the implementation of this plan, the Division of Marine Fisheries can minimize loss and suffering caused by a hurricane.

Hurricanes can inflict massive damage to low-lying coastal areas and to persons who live and work in the areas susceptible to hurricane damage. Preparation is an important factor. This plan emphasizes preparedness, evacuation and recovery operations that will enable this division to protect lives and property.

II. PURPOSE

To provide protection for Division of Marine Fisheries' personnel and equipment in the event of the threat of a hurricane, or actual storm landfall, and to provide appropriate assistance to other state agencies and local governments when requested. Division of Marine Fisheries staff housed in the Wilmington and Washington regional offices will also take guidance from regional office managers.

III. SITUATION AND ASSUMPTIONS

A. Situations

1. The areas of operation of the Division of Marine Fisheries are all of North Carolina's coastal counties. All coastal areas are vulnerable to the effects of hurricanes and severe coastal storms.
2. The Division of Marine Fisheries has capabilities, if effectively used in the event of an impending hurricane, that can maximize protection of division personnel and equipment.

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3. The division also has resources that can be effectively employed in coastal areas to assist local governments and other state agencies in the performance of their responsibilities to protect people and property in coastal areas.

B. Assumptions

1. There will be sufficient warning time for the Division of Marine Fisheries to take the actions outlined in this plan.
2. Communications systems will be available to provide timely emergency weather information to all division staff. In the event of communications breakdown, individual sections and programs have the capability to act independent of the division.

IV. DEFINITION OF TERMS

A. Tropical cyclone - by international agreement is the general term for all cyclone circulations originating over tropical waters classified by form and intensity as follows:

1. Tropical disturbance - A moving area of thunderstorms in the tropics that maintains its identity for 24 hours or more.
2. Tropical depression - Rotary storm circulation at surface, with highest constant wind speed of 38 miles per hour.
3. Tropical storm - Distinct rotary circulation, constant wind speed range of 39-73 miles per hour. This is the stage that the National Weather Service (NWS) assigns the storm a name.
4. Hurricane - Pronounced rotary circulation with constant wind speed of 74 miles per hour or more.

B. Emergency weather advisories and warning categories used by the National Weather Service are:

1. Small craft advisory - When a tropical cyclone threatens a coastal area the National Weather Service will advise small craft operators to remain in port or not venture into the open sea.

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2. Gale warnings - May be issued where winds of 39-54 miles per hour are expected.
3. Storm warnings - May be issued when winds of 55-73 miles per hour are expected.
4. Hurricane watch – Is issued when there is a threat of hurricane conditions within 24-36 hours. The National Weather Service may provide a percentage of probability of specific location of landfall in connection with this condition. Notification to all section chiefs and employees will be made by DMF management.
5. Hurricane warning - Is issued when hurricane conditions are expected to strike in a specified coastal area in 24 hours or less. The National Weather Service may provide a percentage of probability of specific location of landfall in connection with this condition. Notification to all section chiefs and employees will be made by DMF management.

V. ORGANIZATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Organization – DMF management will reference the division’s notification list (call tree) and Continuity of Business Operations Plan (COOP) for communication, order of succession, essential functions DMF teams (sections), alternate locations and other essential business operations, equipment, and records. This plan is to be reviewed annually.
- B. Responsibilities
 1. All division employees will coordinate emergency actions with their supervisors under the direction of the Marine Fisheries Director and Deputy Director. These actions will be communicated to section chiefs and through email to all staff.
 2. Section Chiefs are responsible to ensure call trees are updated and to provide direction to section staff to secure operations, equipment, etc. for the section’s operations.
 3. Marine Patrol will advise about changes in conditions, assist in the internal division coordination, coordinate with county, state, and federal agencies and stay informed about evacuation routes, shelters, and re-entry.

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4. Captains of larger division vessels and aircraft pilots are responsible for evacuation and safeguarding their vessels, planes, and crew.
5. Facility maintenance staff will secure facilities.
6. All section chiefs will be notified of change in storm condition. They will keep their personnel advised. However, personal evacuation of families is the responsibility of each family and is not addressed in this plan.

VI. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

- A. The actions taken in implementing this plan will be in time phases that are related to specific storm conditions (established by the N.C. State Hurricane Plan). They are:

Condition 5 - Beginning of hurricane season (June 1)

Condition 4 - First hurricane advisory from the National Weather Service

Condition 3 - Hurricane watch (36-48 hours)

Condition 2 - Hurricane warning (18-24 hours)

Condition 1 - Evacuation (less than 18 hours)

Condition 0 - Landfall

Re-entry

- B. The Deputy Director will notify the Section Chiefs to officially notify them to begin the actions for each condition phase. The Section chiefs will notify the Deputy Director when the actions for each phase are completed.

The staff and all responsible individuals should be familiar with the Emergency Management Plans for the counties in their area and with the (State Hurricane Evacuation) Plan for the North Carolina coastal areas.

C. Actions

1. Condition 5 - This is considered a normal readiness period.
 - a. Review and update all hurricane plans and operating procedures annually, notification lists (call trees), and the COOP at the beginning of each hurricane season (June 1).

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- b. Check, test, and maintain communications, warning systems, and backup generators.
 - c. Maintain liaison with local governments.
 - d. Participate in local hurricane exercises and National Weather Service/State sponsored North Carolina Hurricane Awareness Week programs.
- 2. Condition 4 - This is the beginning of the increased readiness period.
 - a. Review current availability of equipment and personnel.
 - b. Each person responsible for equipment reviews the exact site to which the equipment is to be evacuated and stored. Priority will be given to boat storage, moorings, and airplanes.
 - c. Notify officers assigned to assist in re-entry and supply names to the Communications Center.
- 3. Condition 3
 - a. Notify all employees through Section Chiefs, chain-of-command, and email.
 - b. Be prepared to assist in the dissemination of critical weather information to mariners in the area and Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality precautionary shellfish closure or precautionary beach advisory.
 - c. Check and fuel all equipment.
- 4. Condition 2
 - a. Keep section chiefs informed of critical weather information. Notification to all employees will be made by their immediate supervisors.
 - b. Responsible individuals will determine non-essential personnel and activities and inform those persons to prepare to close down their activity.

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5. Condition 1

- a. Notification will be made to section chiefs, through their chain-of-command, to keep all personnel informed of storm conditions.
- b. Mobilize personnel and prepare to assist in the warning evacuation of the public upon request from local and state government agencies.

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- c. Finalize plan of evacuation for execution, if necessary.
- d. Captains of all vessels and pilots of planes must recheck tie downs and moorings to ensure all precautionary measures have been completed.
- e. All buildings used by Marine Fisheries will be secured. Staff in regional offices will take guidance from the regional office managers. All files, equipment, etc., should be located at the highest possible level. Power, gas, and water should be turned off at their source.
- f. Communications systems will be reserved for emergency use only. Prepare to assist other agencies in the dissemination of emergency information if needed.
- g. Release all non-essential (non-mandatory and non-emergency) personnel, when approved by the department's/state's facility closure process.
- h. Determine status (close or keep open) DMF Communications Center.

6. Condition 0

- a. The Telecommunicator on duty in Condition 0, may be required to remain on duty until the next scheduled shift after re-entry, unless provided additional instruction from Marine Patrol Colonel/Major, division deputy director or division director.
- b. Stay inside and observe all prudent precautions for personal protection.

7. Re-Entry

- a. Survey personnel and equipment and provide storm damage assessment for all division resources.
- b. Prepare to provide personnel and equipment to assist in search and rescue operations as directed.

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- c. Prepare to assist in law enforcement operations in coordination with the State Highway Patrol and local law enforcement officials.

VII. DIRECTION AND CONTROL

- A. The Fisheries Director reports to the Department Secretary for hurricane preparation and response actions. His/her emergency operations staff will be located at the Division Headquarters, 3441 Arendell Street, Morehead City or, depending on severity of event and status of facilities, through alternate location/communications as defined in the COOP.
- B. The Deputy Director or designee, reports to the director for the coordination of the actions in this plan in all coastal areas.
- C. The Section Chiefs and section managers are responsible for all preparations and actions within their district and location and will report the status of preparedness to the Deputy Director.
- D. In the event the Deputy Director is not available to perform his/her responsibilities, he/she will designate the individual next in the chain-of-command to assume their responsibilities based on the order of succession identified in the COOP.
- E. In the event the director determines that evacuation of Headquarters is necessary, alternate location and communications will be established as defined in the COOP.

VIII. ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS

- A. Reports
 - 1. Section Chiefs will report completion of action for each phase to the Deputy Director.
 - 2. After a hurricane has passed, each employee will contact their supervisor as soon as possible concerning reports of damage and clean-up responsibilities. Section Chiefs will forward reports to Headquarters/Deputy Director as soon as possible.

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B. Communications

1. A notification list (call tree) will be maintained by the division (first notification) and each section will use this as the primary means of communication. Each section is to maintain a call tree for all section managers, supervisors, and employees so that all employees will be notified through the call tree. The call list will include work and personal telephone contact numbers.
2. Email, when operable, will also be used for communication. During the event (Condition 0) and after, email may not be available.
3. Marine Patrol radios (VIPER) will also be used for emergency instructions and reports. During Condition 1 and 0, VIPER handsets may be distributed to the Director, Deputy Director, DEQ Communications staff, and others, if available or necessary.
4. When in Conditions 1, 0, or re-entry, communications will be strictly reserved for emergency traffic.

C. Personnel and Logistics

1. DMF management reference the (COOP).
2. Each Section Chief will maintain a hard copy of the COOP.
3. Each employee is able to review a summary of the COOP via a presentation located on the division's intranet site under Disaster Procedures.

IX. REFERENCES

- A. DMF COOP
- B. Hurricane Response Check List – Attachment 1
- C. Computer Preparedness Guidelines – Attachment 2

HURRICANE RESPONSE CHECK LIST

CONDITION 5: Beginning of Hurricane Season (June 1)

Review and update Notification Lists (call trees) and DMF Hurricane Plan, Section Hurricane Preparedness plans and operating procedures, annually.

CONDITION 4: 72 Hour Alert

1. Review Hurricane Plan.
2. Contact and alert all personnel in your area.

CONDITION 3: 48 Hour Hurricane Watch

1. Notify personnel that hurricane watch has been issued.
2. Check mobile equipment.
3. Check communication equipment.

CONDITION 2: 24 Hour Watch

1. Coordinate with County and State Emergency Planning.
2. Move watercraft to safe harbor.
3. Fly out or secure aircraft.
4. Fuel and check all equipment.
5. Notify personnel that a hurricane warning is in effect.
6. Standby to mobilize personnel.
7. Finalize plans to evacuate if ordered.
8. Assist those evacuating voluntarily.

CONDITION 1

1. Call back all essential (mandatory and/or emergency), off-duty personnel.
2. Conduct search and rescue mission as conditions permit.
3. Secure all boats and aircraft.
4. Batten down all buildings.
5. Release all non-essential personnel.

CONDITION 0

1. Seek cover and remain inside for duration.

RE-ENTRY

1. Conduct search and rescue operations.
2. Initiate damage assessment operations.
3. Provide equipment and manpower as requested to assist in areas heavily damaged.

Computer Preparedness Guidelines

In the event of an emergency – follow these general procedures for securing your computer equipment.

The employee is responsible for the safeguarding of all NCDEQ-issued equipment assigned to them, including any loss, damage, or wear of equipment.

Remote Access – Should any NCDEQ-issued equipment be damaged as a result of negligence or deliberate action by the employee or any private persons at a remote work location, the employee is responsible for full reimbursement for the damage or replacement costs to NCDEQ.

Reminder: only NCDEQ employees may use NCDEQ - issued equipment. Unauthorized individuals, including family members or friends, may not use NCDEQ-issued equipment or connect to NCDEQ's network via any means.

Before the Storm

Ensure You Have a Backup of your local files (these are files not stored on the network drives)

Users should utilize OneDrive, SharePoint or a network drive, not local data. If you do have local data, it's the user's responsibility to back it up.

- Do not wait until the day before a hurricane to back up your files! Backup all your data files on regular bases depending on your needs.
- If you need assistance - all help desk requests or issues must be reported via a DOTS Ticket by user or co-worker, or call Solution Center 919-707-8900.
- Store your backups in the safest place possible. Put backup media (Flash drives, external hard drives, etc.) in waterproof bags/containers and store in a safe location on or off site.

Secure Your Equipment – Onsite or Remote Work

- Turn off all power to all equipment. It is critical to unplug all devices that carry electricity.
- Turn off battery backup units and disconnect power cords to the wall. Unplug all power cords from the wall and battery backup to all devices (CPUs, monitors, scanners, label

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printers, terminals, modems, fax/modems, etc.). Leave the other end of all the cords connected to the PC.

- Unplug the power cords from the wall for any printers.
- Disconnect all phone lines from the device (modems, fax/modems, etc.). Unplug the network cable from the back of the PC and printer, and leave the other end connected to the network jack on the wall.
- Use plastic bags and tape, which can be used to cover PC's and peripherals such as printers, scanners, battery backups and speakers. Move the computer and peripherals away from windows and doors towards the center of the room. The equipment should be securely supported at least two feet from the floor and covered with plastic sheeting. Remember, the purpose of this is to keep the computer equipment watertight.
- If you need assistance - all help desk requests or issues must be reported via a DOTS Ticket by user or co-worker, or call Solution Center 919-707-8900.

Network Services

DEQ IT will notify DMF staff when systems will be shut down and steps will be followed as identified in the DMF COOP Plan. All computer components on the Network at the HQ & CDO buildings will need to be brought off-line and/or shutdown before the storm hits. This is necessary to ensure that equipment and components are safe from the effects of the storm. Access via VPN should not be affected.

After the Storm

- Return computer and peripherals back to their original locations.
- Remove the plastic bags & tape. Fold and store the plastic for future use (make sure it is dry).
- Plug in your battery backup unit(s).
- Plug in all the power cords from all the devices (CPUs, monitors, terminals, modems, fax/modems, etc.).
- Plug in your network cables to your computer and printer.
- Plug in all phone lines.
- Turn on your battery backup units.
- Turn on all power to all equipment.
- If you need assistance - all help desk requests or issues must be reported via a DOTS Ticket by user or co-worker, or call Solution Center 919-707-8900.

IT will work as quickly as the circumstances permit to restore network connectivity to the HQ & CDO buildings and services throughout DMF.

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