



## Key Findings: 2009 National Mason-Dixon Hurricane Poll

### Most do not feel vulnerable.

- 62% don't feel vulnerable to a hurricane or related tornado or flooding, yet 72% believe the 2009 hurricane season will be about the same or more active as the 2008 season, which resulted in a total of 8 hurricanes, 8 tropical storms and 1 tropical depression.<sup>1</sup>
- 13% said they would not evacuate even if ordered to do so by emergency officials. The main reasons why?
  - 48% said they prefer to weather the storm at home.
  - 34% said they want to protect their property.

### Hurricane-vulnerable residents still have significant gaps in hurricane knowledge.

- 70% didn't know that storm surge represents the greatest potential for a large loss of life from a hurricane, yet storm surge can account for deaths as far inland as 20 miles.
- 97% didn't know that garage doors are the structural component most likely to fail during a hurricane. Property owners can easily strengthen garage doors at low cost with a reinforcement kit.
- 56% didn't know that the most interior room of the house is the safest place to ride out a hurricane. Half of the respondents believe the basement is the safest place to ride out a hurricane. In fact, the basement poses a serious risk of drowning in the event of storm surge or flooding.
- 51% still believe masking tape would keep windows from shattering. In reality, masking tape provides no protective value at all.
- 56% of residents believe candles or kerosene lamps are suggested items for their survival kits. Emergency experts actually warn that these items can pose a serious fire hazard.

### More than half still do not have plans or survival kits.

- 55% do not have a family disaster plan, yet 38% have suffered or known someone who has suffered a significant property loss from a hurricane or related storm.
- 66% have no hurricane survival kit.
- Of the one in three respondents who do have survival kits, nearly half don't have an axe in their kit -- an item emergency officials recommend in the wake of Katrina, when many residents were trapped in their attics by rising water.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.noaaneews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20081126\\_hurricanesseason.html](http://www.noaaneews.noaa.gov/stories2008/20081126_hurricanesseason.html)

- 11% say they are responsible for an elderly or disabled relative who lives in a hurricane-vulnerable area, yet more than one-third of them say they have no plan for that person in the event of a hurricane.

**More than three out of four have not taken any steps to prepare their homes.**

- 83% said they have not taken any steps in the past year to make their homes stronger, even after last year's active season.
- 31% said they would not make any special preparations to their home.
- 24% said they would not begin to prepare their home until a hurricane warning was issued, which means a hurricane is expected to hit within 24 hours. When a warning is issued, residents should already be boarding their windows, reinforcing garage doors and making sure their yard is clear.

**For the few that would evacuate, many would go too far and return too soon.**

- One in four would evacuate as far as possible, trying to outrun the path of the storm. Instead, emergency officials say residents should only go as far as necessary to get to a secure structure outside the evacuation zone.
- 54% would not leave if a major storm approached their area or they would wait for local officials to order then to evacuate.
- 17% would leave only 12-24 hours before the landfall of a major storm, increasing the chances of evacuation gridlock and the likelihood of evacuees riding out a storm in one of the most vulnerable locations -- on the road.
- 86% percent of pet owners said they would take their pets with them and look for a place that will accept them. Few shelters and lodging establishments accept pets. That is why it is vital evacuees have a sound plan before they leave.
- 30% said they would return as soon as the storm passed. However, more deaths typically occur after a hurricane due to downed power lines, unstable trees and flooding.

**Some do not feel personally responsible for their safety after a storm.**

- 16% believe it's the government's responsibility to provide food, water, medicine and shelter in the first few days after a hurricane, and another 6% are not sure whose responsibility it is. That expectation can seriously impede the ability of residents to adequately prepare for a storm. It can also pose a problem in the wake of even a lesser storm that knocks out power for a period of time. Officials say all residents should be prepared to have at least a three-day supply of water, food and medicines.

**Many lacked knowledge about their insurance plans.**

- 22% said they were not sure or not at all confident that they had the right type and amount of insurance coverage to rebuild their home as it currently stands. Experts say these findings mean there is a significant risk that many residents would not have sufficient coverage to rebuild if they suffered a catastrophic loss.
- 48% do not have a homeowner's insurance policy that covers damage caused by a flood and another 15% were not sure if their policy covered flood damage. In fact, flood damage is excluded from all homeowner's policies.

Damage from flooding is only covered if homeowners purchase federal flood insurance from the government.

- 49% are not sure if their homeowner's insurance requires repairs to be made to prevent further damage before they are compensated for their losses.
- 21% did not know their policy number or how to reach their agent or carrier.