



United States Senator  
**Richard Shelby**  
REPORTS TO ALABAMA



## PREPARATION KEY AS HURRICANE SEASON APPROACHES

*By: Senator Richard Shelby (R-AL)*

The approaching 2006 hurricane season reminds us that we must not forget the many lessons learned from last year's devastating hurricane season. June 1st marks the start of the hurricane season and signals the time for each of us to begin important planning for the natural disasters that could occur again this year.

In anticipation of this year's hurricane season, you should develop a plan and prepare yourself and your family before a natural disaster occurs. To that end, I would like to share with you some brief information on the basics of hurricane preparedness. Remember that in the event of a storm, your safety and the safety of your loved ones should always be a top priority.

Preparation is key. A critical component of that preparation is to develop a comprehensive plan. I encourage you to sit down with your families and formulate a comprehensive disaster plan. The plan should include: a ready-to-go emergency kit, a meeting place, a way to get in contact with one another, and a location and route for evacuation.

Your emergency kit should be located in a safe and easily accessible place and should include: a first aid kit, complete with all prescriptions; food and water for up to 72 hours; extra clothing and blankets; and flashlights and extra batteries. Keep in mind that the more water and non-perishable food you have on-hand for each family member, the better off you will be. If you have small children, be sure to include formula, baby food, and a few toys to keep them entertained.

It may also be useful to have on hand a whistle to signal for help, a camp stove, and a foldable ladder. Most importantly, I recommend you have a NOAA weather radio and extra batteries. The weather radio will provide you with the most up-to-date information and allow you to stay informed of changing weather conditions even when the power goes out.

You should have a plan in place for evacuation and consider practicing your emergency evacuation plan with your family. You will also want to be certain that you can contact your family members in the event of an evacuation.

If you must leave your home for an extended period of time due to an evacuation, ensure that you have copies of your identification, insurance policies, financial information, and other important paperwork. Drivers licenses, proof of residence, wills, deeds, tax records, credit card and bank account numbers, birth and marriage certificates, Social Security cards, and insurance policies are all documents you may need if you are away from your home for an extended period of time. You may consider putting copies for each family member in a safety deposit box. Now is the time to make copies of your documents and arrange for a security box, not when the storm is approaching.

Preparing your home for a hurricane should also be a top priority. For those along the coast who are susceptible to high winds, you should consider installing hurricane shutters or purchase pre-cut, outdoor plywood boards for each window of your home. Preparing ahead of time by installing anchors for the plywood and pre-drilling holes in the plywood to secure the boards quickly when a Hurricane Watch is issued by the National Weather Service is essential to securing your home and, if necessary, ensuring a speedy departure. Remember that taping windows is not a necessary precaution

and will not prevent windows from breaking.

Experience has taught us that time is of the essence in the days leading up to the landfall of a storm. Early preparations will significantly reduce the time you must spend securing your property as a storm moves toward the coast and will improve your ability to evacuate or find a safe place to wait out the storm.

Being fully prepared for the start of hurricane season is only the beginning. You should also understand when to take action.

A HURRICANE WATCH is issued when there is a possibility that you could experience hurricane conditions within 36 hours. This watch should trigger your family's disaster plan, and protective measures should be initiated. You should be sure to secure or store any potted plants, lawn furniture, outdoor decorations, garbage cans, and anything else that may blow away. This is the time to cover all windows of your home, check batteries, and make sure your supplies are in order. It is also a good time to fill your car's gas tank, should you need to evacuate.

If a HURRICANE WARNING is issued for your area, it indicates that sustained winds of at least 74 mph are expected within 24 hours or less. Once this warning has been issued, your family should be in the process of completing protective actions and deciding the safest location to be during the storm.

When a HURRICANE WARNING is issued, listen to the advice of local officials and leave if they tell you to do so. If you are not advised to evacuate, you should seek shelter in a safe location. Should you decide to remain in your home, locate in the center of your home, a closet, or bathroom without windows, to situate yourself and your family until the storm has passed. Be aware that the calm within the "eye" is deceptive. The storm is not over and in fact, once the eye passes the winds begin to blow from the opposite direction. Trees, shrubs, buildings, and other objects damaged by the first winds can be broken or destroyed by the second winds. You should also be alert for tornadoes, which can occur during a hurricane and after the eye passes. It is during this time that a weather radio is essential to receive important information regarding the location of the storm and any subsequent severe weather activity that may occur.

Be sure to pay attention to state and local evacuation orders, and be ready to leave without much notice. You may need to take alternative or unfamiliar routes if major roads are closed or clogged, so be sure you have an updated local road map. Flood waters can be dangerous and should be avoided. If you come upon a flooded road, turn around and go another way. If you are caught on a flooded road and waters are rising rapidly around you, get out of the car and climb to higher ground.

While we can't predict where and when a natural disaster will strike, we can prepare for the possibility. In light of last year's events, I encourage all Alabamians to heed the advice of the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure that we are organized and ready for whatever the hurricane season sends our way this year. For more information, please visit [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) or call 800-BE-READY. I hope you have found this information useful as you work to develop your own hurricane plan. We must be fully prepared and ready for the 2006 hurricane season.



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