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Sussex County activates EOC, pre-positions paramedics ahead of blizzard

Forecasts now call for 18 to 30 inches of snow, gusty winds and tidal flooding this weekend

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

**1700 Hours, Friday
Feb. 5, 2010**

Sussex County will activate its Emergency Operations Center and pre-position paramedics at local fire stations this evening in preparation for a major winter storm still expected to bring well over two feet of snow to parts of the region.

The National Weather Service's blizzard warning remains in effect for all of Sussex County, from now until 7 p.m. Saturday. Forecasters are predicting a range of 18 to 30 inches of snow to fall across the area overnight and well into Saturday.

The snow, possibly mixed with sleet and rain, could fall at the rate of 2 inches an hour, with 30 mph winds and visibilities under one-quarter mile, resulting in whiteout, blizzard conditions. Tidal flooding also is possible with this potentially dangerous coastal storm.

"The time for preparation and dress-rehearsal is over," Sussex County EOC Director Joseph L. Thomas said. "Now is the time for all of us, emergency planners and the public alike, to implement our plans, to pool our resources and to hunker down for what looks to be a rough 18 to 24 hours."

Non-essential travel during that time is strongly discouraged as heavy snowfall totals and wind-whipped drifts will keep roads impassable and treacherous.

In anticipation of the storm, the County EOC will be staffed with additional 911 dispatchers, storm hotline call takers and representatives from various government agencies beginning at 6 p.m. Friday. Those additional staff members and agency

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Continued from previous page

representatives will be on hand around the clock for the duration of the event, responding to public requests and coordinating emergency response.

Meantime, Sussex County Emergency Medical Services will position additional paramedics at fire and ambulance stations throughout the county to ensure EMS coverage remains constant during the storm, EMS Acting Director Robert Stuart said.

“It is critical that the public heed the warnings and stay off the roads tonight and Saturday. Stay inside your homes where you are safe from the elements,” Sussex County Administrator David B. Baker said. “That will enable state Department of Transportation crews to clear roads and allow our public safety providers to handle any emergencies during and after the storm.”

The public should be prepared for limited travel, widespread power outages, downed trees, as well as tidal flooding. Residents should be stocked with basic household supplies, including extra food and water, first-aid supplies, flashlights and batteries, a battery-powered weather radio, extra prescription medicines, baby items, an emergency heat source and sufficient heating fuel.

No evacuations have been ordered, but Mr. Thomas said emergency planners can activate sheltering if conditions warrant. The Sussex County EOC will continue to monitor forecasts for the storm and issue public updates should they become necessary.

For a list of road closures, visit the Delaware Department of Transportation Web site at www.deldot.gov. To view a map of power outages in Sussex County, visit Delmarva Power’s Web site at www.delmarva.com and the Delaware Electric Cooperative’s Web site at www.delaware.coop. For updates, stay tuned to local television and radio stations, as well as to the Sussex County EOC Web site, at www.sussexcountyde.gov/services/storm.

Members of the public who have storm-related questions or non-emergency concerns can contact the Sussex County EOC’s storm information line, beginning at 6 p.m. Friday, at (302) 856-7366.

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Media calls should be directed to EOC spokeswoman Debra Jones at (302) 855-7801 or Sussex County Chief of Public Information Chip Guy at pio@sussexcountyde.gov.