



HURRICANE HEROES

A first-person account from the director of the Bermuda Weather Service



OFF TO A STORMY START

Wedding planners try not to let hurricanes ruin their client's big day



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hurricane

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Keeping An Eye On The Weather

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES LOOK AT HOW WEATHER IS REPORTED

BY KRystal MCKENZIE

The mission of the Bermuda Airport Authority (BAA), under which the Bermuda Weather Service (BWS) operates, is to ensure the safe delivery of aviation and weather services that produce positive outcomes for Bermuda.

More specifically, the job of the BWS is to provide weather, water and climate data, forecasts, warnings and support services to protect people, property and the national economy.

To these ends, Dr. Mark Guishard, Director of the BWS, is keen to highlight the work of his team, the wider BAA, and those who support them. Here he graciously shares his perspective on hurricane season in his own words...

I'm the Director of the BWS and I have been in this post since spring of 2020. I have previously been in the role when BWS was under another parent organization from 2006 to 2012. Prior to that, I was a forecaster and research meteorologist.

As I was spinning up to come back to the operations, I had to re-certify my competency as an aeronautical meteorological forecaster, which included doing some day and night shifts. Our team does 12-hour shifts and covers monitoring, forecasting and warning the island 24/7. There's a Meteorological Technician and a Meteorological Forecaster on shift at all times, day and night.

What we do supports safe air navigation and aviation services at LF Wade International Airport, as well as providing safety-critical information for Bermuda Maritime Operations Centre (RCC Bermuda

Radio), and the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) in times of hazardous weather.

Of course, it's a much wider effort at the Bermuda Airport Authority—our operation at BWS gets essential support from other sections such as Air Traffic Engineering, Airfield Maintenance Services and Aerodrome Development and Technical Services.

Part of our essential weather support involves two-way communication directly with the Air Traffic Control Services, which is in turn directly in contact with pilots and ground crews. All of that effort, as in any operation, is greatly enabled by the administrative teams who provide financial and logistical support (e.g., HR, accounting, IT), as well as structural governance and strategic direction. All in all, it is a complex set of inter-dependent operations that rely on highly competent specialist teams within the Airport Authority.

So, back to hurricane season preparations. The Airport Authority has a well-practiced hurricane plan that we review and update annually to ensure that support and plans are in place for our staff who need

to be present and working hard, even while much of the rest of the island is hunkering down.

This involves being ready to 'double-up' on the shift when a storm is approaching. Not only do the routine tasks increase in volume, but the number of communications goes up also. Formal communications with those agencies and stakeholders I mentioned above, routine calls with the U.S. National Hurricane Centre, and also ad hoc (sometimes random) calls from anyone and everyone seeking information on the storm and advice on what to do.

It's safe to say that COVID put us through our paces the last couple of years. On September 14, 2020, Hurricane Paulette made history as the 100th hurricane to pass within 100 nautical miles of Bermuda. A direct hit, Paulette was a category one storm that increased in strength to category two before exiting the local area.

Our normal 'doubling up' on the forecasting shift was hindered by our need to maintain our COVID response protocols, such as physical distancing and minimizing the number of people in the workplace. I found myself pulling double duty as a forecaster and managing the communications with the EMO. I was pleased to be working directly (but distantly!) with our newest meteorologist, Troy Anderson, through the onset and passage of storm.

We kept in close contact with the U.S. National Hurricane Center via videoconference. Our diligent

team of meteorological technicians also kept a keen weather watch through Paulette's approach, onset and retreat. They even launched a weather balloon in the eye of Paulette.

Through the whole team's hard work, we were able to keep the data flowing and the island well informed. We then also had the right meteorological measurements and data to do a robust post-mortem examination of Paulette.

Of course, that is an example of when Bermuda had a relative success, with minimal damage and disruption on the island. This may not always be the case. Last year saw the closest approach of a strong category 4 storm to the island since records have begun. Hurricane Sam luckily passed just under 200 miles away to the east, but a slight jog to the left would have seen some unprecedented conditions on the island.

As the upper ocean continues

to warm, hurricanes near Bermuda have been becoming stronger, and the most intense storms more frequent. Accordingly, we work with the EMO and other stakeholders to ensure that residents sit up and take notice at key points through the hurricane season.

Advice that I regularly give includes the following:

It only takes one storm to make it a busy season for us, regardless of how active things are in the wider Atlantic. Bermuda needs to be ready for a major storm every year, regardless of the seasonal predictions.

Every person, family and organization should have a hurricane plan. Each plan will be different, catering to everyone's unique circumstances. It could be as simple as checking shutters, making sure you have some supplies for a power outage and checking in on neighbours and vulnerable people.

Start thinking about the coming season now.



Mark Guishard



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What's On The Forecast

STORM REPORTING IS A BUSY BUT REWARDING DUTY FOR BERMUDA'S METEOROLOGISTS

BY TIM SMITH

Michelle Pitcher had been sitting on the forecasting desk at Bermuda Weather Service (BWS) one weekend in 2014 when a subtropical depression named Fay was forecast to brush within 100 miles of the island.

That system evolved into a tropical storm heading straight for the island throughout the Saturday—and its erratic and destructive nature made it a storm Pitcher will never forget. “I went to bed Saturday night expecting the eye of Fay to pass while I was asleep,” says Pitcher, the deputy director at the BWS. “Getting ready for work the next morning, I thought it was awfully quiet outside as I expected stronger winds to be around as Fay exited our area.”

Like thousands of other people, Pitcher woke to find scenes of utter destruction. “There were branches and other debris in the roads, so it was obvious that we had experienced tropical storm-force winds,” she says. “When I arrived at work, I found out that the eye of Fay was actually over the island, hence the light winds and, once the back edge of the eye came into view on the radar, I saw that we would be in for some severe weather.”

Pitcher relays what happened next. “I alerted key stakeholders that severe weather was imminent and myself and the duty meteorological technician did our best to keep up with the rapidly changing

conditions over the next couple of hours.”

Luckily the worst of it didn't last more than an hour and conditions steadily settled through the rest of that day. Anyone who remembers the infamous double-hurricane hit of 2014 might guess what happened next.

“There was no rest for the weary, as Hurricane Gonzalo was hot on the heels of Fay,” Pitcher recalls. “The rest of my shift run was spent gearing up for the arrival of Gonzalo.”

Fay was later upgraded to a Category 1 hurricane following reanalysis by the National Hurricane Centre (NHC), while Gonzalo was a Category 2, making it one of Bermuda's worst hurricane seasons in living memory.

Pitcher shares her memories of that week as she discusses how the BWS team keeps us up to date with the latest news every time Bermuda comes under threat from a major storm. She works alongside director Mark Guishard, five meteorological technicians and a climate data and systems administrator. During a major storm, those on duty launch weather balloons to collect key data, communicate with colleagues at the

NHC and release regular forecasts and warnings through the BWS website, on Facebook, through media interviews and on the Emergency Broadcast station (100.1FM). They also deal with briefing requests and Emergency Measures Organization meetings during the lead-up to the storm.

It's a heavy workload with no chance to go home and relax. Pitcher explains: “As conditions are usually unsafe during shift-change times, several off-duty staff sleep at BWS to ensure that they are ready to take over when it is time for their shift.”

While hurricanes may be unpredictable, the cycle of the BWS team tends to follow a pattern.

“There are similarities and differences for each cyclone,” Pitcher says. “There are more staff around to start with as the extra workload is too much for one forecaster alone to keep up with. There is excitement in the lead-up to the arrival of the worst conditions as our forecasting skills are put to the test. Remember that we love weather and experiencing such a powerful phenomenon first-hand and to see how our challenging forecasts com-

pare to reality is a privilege.”

Pitcher says the shifts go by quickly, with much discussion on details amongst those at BWS as well as with NHC specialists. “During the height of a hurricane's passage, there is usually a pause in activity just to silently appreciate the power of the cyclone as well as to watch our many instruments' readouts,” she says. “At this point our drop ceiling tiles are usually rattling and there are unusual noises as the winds try to get in under the storm shutters or any small cracks or holes. We don't have time to pause for long as we continue to monitor and issue updates.”

When the eye of a hurricane is expected to pass overhead, the team releases a weather balloon to capture key details. “This valuable data from the eye of a hurricane is essential to tropical cyclone research,” Pitcher explains. “The more that is understood about these cyclones, the better they can be forecast. The BWS has had this unusual privilege of the eye of a cyclone passing over us a few times in recent years.”

The BWS team gathers its weather information via computer models, remote sensing, internet

data and from the NHC specialists, who have access to cyclone data. Pitcher says: “Technology has improved in that much more data is available now than ever before. It's almost too much to analyze in a timely manner now.”

This data has enabled the NHC to improve its intensity and track forecasts and enabled BWS to increase the accuracy of our forecasts. “Tropical cyclones remain one of the most difficult weather features to predict. The increase in available data and remote sensing allows everyone to better understand them, predict their movement and intensity and be able to give an earlier warning if conditions start to change significantly from previous forecasts.”

Forecasting technology will continue to evolve. “Faster supercomputers that can handle more data will allow models to be more precise as resolutions get smaller,” Pitcher says. “Improved technology increases the accuracy and amount of real-time data being gathered.”

This helps researchers and analysts gain a better understanding of how the atmosphere works.

“As forecasting improves, so does our ability to predict and warn people of adverse conditions and allow for preparations to take place in the interest of protecting lives, property and livelihoods,” she says.



Michelle Pitcher

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Post Hurricane To-Dos

BY NADIA LAWS

Before a hurricane, there's often a mad dash at local stores as residents stock up on tools, batteries, flashlights, canned goods and water.

But what about after a hurricane? *The Royal Gazette* got the low-down on what to do and not to do post-hurricane to make sure your home and family are fully protected.

DO

Check to see if power is restored. If you don't have electricity after a hurricane it changes everything, says Sasha Bearden, CEO and co-owner of Baptiste Limited. If power hasn't yet reached your home or neighbourhood, you'll have to leave your fridge closed as much as possible to ensure you can keep cold foods fresh for as long as possible.

DON'T

Run the water or flush the toilet without electricity. Most longtime Bermuda residents know the importance of storing water pre-hurricane in the bathtub, as well as in large containers and buckets. This water can be used for brushing teeth, flushing the toilet and even drinking throughout the duration of the storm. But Bearden reminds people to avoid running the water in sinks or showers or flushing the toilet while the electricity is out so that you don't cause damage to the pressure tank and pump. "If water in the pressure tank goes below a certain level, the pump won't kick in," she explains. "The system will have to be drained—that's when people end up burning out their pump." To prevent this, Bearden suggests going a step further by turning off water from the valve next to the pump. That way you can rest assured there's always enough water remaining in the pressure system.

DON'T

Forget to survey your property. When the winds have subsided and it's safe to go outside, Mark Stearns, President of Masters Home Center, suggests taking a quick walk around your property to assess if there is any damage to your home. You can also make a list of anything that needs to be repaired or any supplies that need to be purchased to restore your home to its former glory.

DO

Clear the roads. Ensuring you have a chainsaw or handsaw on your property before a hurricane is a smart move, says Stearns. These tools will make clearing any large debris (like fallen branches or broken trees) that are blocking the roads a breeze. Not only will you personally be able to drive on the roads much more easily, but it's also extremely helpful for emergency vehicles that need to transport people to the hospital.

DO

Rinse off windows and walls. There's obviously a lot of salt spray on homes after a hurricane, particularly those houses located close to the water. By rinsing down your windows and walls with a hose, cleanup becomes a lot easier, says Bearden. She suggests Windex, which makes a product that attaches directly to the end of your hose and has a powerful window cleaner in it. "This makes washing leaves off so much easier, before they become dry and stuck on."

DO

Clean your gutters. As part of your pre-hurricane prep you should have blocked up the gutters with something simple like a tennis ball or a rag. This stops bugs and debris from getting into your tank during the storm. But after the hurricane, it's just as important to unblock your gutters and drains after you give the roof a quick clean. This will ensure leaves and debris don't go into your water tank and impact your home's fresh water source.

DO

Be mindful of extra pests. One of the pesky things that happens after a storm is an increase in bugs. Bearden says she hears from customers who see "flies like no one's business" after a hurricane. This is actually due to the moist and wet conditions, which make for ideal breeding conditions for flies. To stay ahead of this, make sure you have apple cider vinegar with water to spray all around the house.



DON'T

Be afraid of getting your hands dirty. After a hurricane is a perfect time to get out those landscaping tools like rakes and gloves to help with the cleanup. Stearns also encourages people to open up the house to air it out after the long period of intense humidity.

DO

Protect your furniture. In the unfortunate event you discover a hole in your roof caused by the hurricane, you'll want to find some spare tarpaulin and rope. While there's not much you can do while the winds are still blowing strong, Stearns advice is to stay put, get your family to a safe part of the house and when safe to do so, use the tarps to protect furniture from the outdoor elements.

DON'T

Keep to yourself. One of the most important things to do after a hurricane is to check on extended family, friends and neighbours to make sure everyone is safe and everything is secure. Today, this is made easier than ever thanks to technology. Stearns recommends creating a group on WhatsApp so you can stay updated on what friends and family are experiencing. "Having that easy line of communication is always a source of comfort for people," he says. "Even with the wider community, it's great seeing how a crisis tends to bring people in Bermuda together."

Food Safety After The Storm

WHAT TO DO WITH SPOILED FOOD AFTER A POWER OUTAGE

BY ERIN SILVER

When I lived in Australia, I committed a cardinal sin: after enjoying prawns at Christmas, I threw out all the shells in the garbage and left them there in the summer heat until garbage day. After a few days, my neighbours came knocking. I had no idea that in hot climates, rotting food could attract maggots.

Similarly, after a hurricane in Bermuda, when the power could be out for hours, if not days, and garbage collection might be delayed, it's important to know what to do with food that's spoiled—and how to tell if it's gone bad.

First, make sure as much food as possible stays safe. Don't open the fridge or freezer to lock in the cold. Perishable foods, like dairy and meat, should not be allowed to go above 40°F for more than two hours. If a power outage is two hours or less—or if you have a generator to keep it going—your food should still be safe to eat. If the power is out for longer, pack it into a cooler with ice. This should help maintain your food quality. Non-perishable shelf-stable foods, like canned tuna or meat, condiments and pasta will remain safe to eat.

Be sure to use your senses, and common sense, to decide whether or not fresh foods like meat, cheese, milk and vegetables have gone bad. Is there mould? Does it smell? Has it gone green? These are all signs to look for. When in doubt, throw it out.

If food has gone off, you will need to throw it out and clean your fridge and freezer. Be sure to have latex gloves handy so you don't get sick from bacteria or contaminate other surfaces. It's hard to clean without water. Instead, if you find yourself without running water, use disposable antibacterial wipes or cleaning detergents. Make sure the entire area is sanitized. Surfaces should be left for about 10 minutes for the cleaning agents to work. To get rid of any lingering smells, place a bowl of coffee grounds, baking soda, vinegar or lemon slices in the freezer or fridge for a while to absorb bad odours. When the power goes back on, you can re-stock your fridge and freezer.

Spoiled food should be double bagged and only placed in your bin and put to the curb on garbage day. That's the law. If garbage day isn't for several days, you'll want to avoid attracting rats by leaving it to rot in the summer heat. Residents can bring their spoiled food to the Tynes Bay Public Drop Off once it's safe to leave your house and use the roads again. The public will be alerted to this by Bermuda's Emergency Measures Organization. (As an aside, any foliage, branches and trees you collect can be dropped off at the Marsh Folly Dump.)

If you can't take the waste to the dump yourself, listen for government advisories about residential waste collection. The current Waste and Recycling calendar is available at www.gov.bm or you can call 295-5151.



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GETTING OFF TO A STORMY START

WEDDING PLANNERS TRY NOT TO LET
HURRICANES RUIN THE BIG DAY

BY TIM SMITH

Even the best-laid plans can go awry when your wedding gets crashed by a major storm.

But for Francine Trott and her niece Cyniqua Anderson at Just Dreams Events, coping with the unpredictability of hurricane season is all part of the job when they're handling a couple's special day.

With quick thinking, flexibility and a "third eye" for spotting things that might go wrong, the wedding planners have ensured numerous brides and grooms tied the knot happily in spite of everything the elements threw at them.

When a storm hits, Just Dreams Events tries to avoid simply cancelling the wedding—and instead makes the best of a difficult situation. "We try to emphasize postponing events and not cancelling them," says Anderson, founder and owner of the business. "There's always a solution for everything. I have been through so many situations now, everything is figure-out-able. There's always someone I can call."

Anderson has learned many of her skills from her aunt, who has planned more than 100 weddings over the past four decades. "She has a million tricks up her sleeve," Anderson says.

"I have learned from her not to panic. If I panic, the bride panics, the groom panics, the rest of the

wedding party panics, and once they all panic, it's over! If I keep calm, the guests keep calm, the clients keep calm, and that helps everything go as smoothly as possible."

The first task is to figure out whether the storm will make the wedding impossible for its planned location and time. Trott explains: "The first thing you check is the weather. How fast is this storm coming? Can I still have a wedding with wind and in between rain? Can we bring it under cover? If the winds are blowing very hard, then of course we have got to postpone it, because it's a matter of safety now."

Then the planners spring into action. "We sit down with the bride and groom and discuss what we need to do," says Trott. "We talk about everyone who has been invited and how we can let them all know. Are they still able to come if the date is changed?"

Notifying guests can be difficult. "Is it tearful? Yes! We try to assure them that nothing happens by chance," Trott continues. "The day that you are getting married is the day you were supposed to get married. It's going to be even better because it's happening as it's sup-

posed to. It changes nothing. The important thing is you are getting married."

If the wedding must be postponed, efforts are made to claw back costs. Anderson explains: "You pay for a lot of things well beforehand, like flowers, linen, wedding favours and bride and groom glasses. As planners, we receive deposits prior to the wedding day and put that towards our own costs, such as the vendors and florists. If a hurricane is coming, you have to consider which of these things are reusable. If you've already created menu cards for the table, you can just put them aside and save them for when the wedding goes ahead. You can't do that with flowers or food though, so sometimes you can't get your money back," says Anderson. "We do try our best to alleviate the amount of money that gets lost."

On one occasion two years ago, Anderson was able to offer a full refund. "They were coming to Bermuda from the East Coast of the United States to get married on Marley Beach," she recalls.

"Everything was perfect a week before the wedding. It would have been beautiful. Then we saw we had a Category 5 coming our way."

So what happened? "We finally made a decision: it's not going to work. They had already paid a deposit to me. It was not a whole big group—bride and groom and a few witnesses—and because it was going to be on the beach there hadn't been a whole lot of preparation."

The only serious expenditure was on flowers, but that was minimized because a local florist was able to sell them anyway. "I gave them a full refund because it wasn't a whole bunch of costs on my end," Anderson says. Sometimes, the

weather will not be bad enough to cancel or postpone the wedding, but will force a change of plan. Anderson recalls the time there was a sudden burst of torrential rain shortly before an outdoor wedding. "You think you have everything sorted, and then something like that happens, so it's stressful," she says. "We did the entire ceremony in the reception location. We moved the tables to create an aisle. We took all the cutlery off the head table and turned it into a makeshift altar."

In the end, it worked out. "We got a lot of good feedback," says Anderson. "They all knew they weren't supposed to get married like that, but with the curveball we got thrown they understood we had to make those decisions. We had to do a lot of quick work to make sure it didn't look like they were just getting married in front of a table."

Trott says the planners try to bear the brunt of the stress. "The bride will be waiting for me to say it's all done—she might have to feel the anxiety of 'will this happen?' But we are the ones that are really freaking out, trying to get this to work! Sometimes we get to do makeshift things, like change the venue. We have to find a truck to cart everything from this location to that location at the last minute. We might not have as many chairs as we need, or even enough space at the other venue," she says. "I have been truly blessed with a third eye to see things other people can't see. We have got to do it in a way that looks cohesive. How's this going to work? That third eye has got to see how we can make it one whole thing."

While some people find it very stressful, "the end result is what keeps me going for more and more," says Trott. "There's nothing like seeing that joy on people's faces!"



Cyniqua Anderson & Francine Trott

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STUDENTS SHARE THEIR STORM STORIES BY TIM SMITH

WHAT WE LIKE ABOUT HURRICANES

Nala Outerbridge: "It helps me sleep better. I don't like to go to sleep without any sounds. My dog Astro gets scared in a storm and he wants to sit on my lap. But he's a big dog—he's 65 pounds!"

Jahmari Kellyman: "I like it when people come to our house to help clean up. My brother even came back from Canada to help."

Ms. Stowe: "I'm not quite sure I like the hurricane but, when we have one, I like the camaraderie of people working together to help each other out afterwards." What would you tell someone who is about to experience a hurricane for the first time?

Rowan Smith: "Prepare for the unpredictable: its strength, how fast its winds are, how long it's going to be, what damage it's going to do. When you get word that there's going to be a hurricane, get ready and get all your valuables, all the things that you love, in a safe place."

Nai-Indae Simmons: "Buy rope, duct tape, anything that can keep everything safe. Buy board games so you have something to do because you might be stuck in your house for a long time."

Shawn Fox-Bean: "Before the hurricane happens, while you still have internet, download as many things as you can so that you can play them and watch them after you lose the internet."

Osheah Douglas: "Have the number of a friend to call in an emergency. If something happens to your house, you want to have someone to call to ensure you are safe."

Nala Outerbridge: "Be prepared. If you have pets, bring them all inside."

Taj Signor: "Never go outside and do silly stuff when the eye of the storm is here. Always keep your phone charged because, even without the internet, you can still dial 911 in an emergency."

Ms. Stowe: "Don't wait until the last minute! We tend to wait until we get news that a storm is approaching us before we start preparing. My advice is that we don't have to wait."

There's no better way of helping children understand a subject than by encouraging them to share their experiences about it with each other.

P6 pupils at East End Primary School put this idea into practice by holding a class discussion on hurricanes, recalling the times they've spent hunkering down with their families during major storms in years gone by.

From the frightening episodes to the joyful moments, they've learned a lot of lessons along the way, making them storm veterans at the tender ages of 9 and 10. Hurricanes are part of the science curricula at primary and middle school during June, according to the Ministry of Education, and are integrated into subjects such as Bermuda's topography and climate change.

Makeba Stowe, the P6 teacher at East End, says: "Based on Bermuda's geographical location, hurricanes are a real-life experience that our children are exposed to on an annual basis. Whether a hurricane affects Bermuda directly or indirectly, it is important for students to be aware and knowledgeable about these massive storms and the possible ramifications of these unpredictable weather conditions."

Stowe continues: "The most important message is hurricane preparedness and that they should never take anything for granted. I find the best way to

get this across is through the use of books, photographs, video footage and good old-fashioned storytelling about real life experiences, which is my favourite platform!"

Here is what some students in East End P6 had to say about their scariest hurricane memories:

Jahmari Kellyman: "One time my mom had to put the washing machine next to the door because the wind was blowing against it so hard. But then it blew through anyway, so we had to get in the car and drive to my friend's house where we could be safe. We stayed there for the rest of the storm. After the storm finished, we went back to our house and had to clean everything up."

Osheah Douglas: "One year we had a hurricane and our roof came off, so we had to move to another house where everything was okay. When I heard it, I was scared because I did not want that to happen. We had moved all our valuables to a place where we knew they would be safe. A couple of minutes later, we heard a loud bang because

an electricity pole had fallen on our neighbour's house. We had to go through the back door and help them. The electricity pole was huge."

Nala Outerbridge: "One year, I was outside on my porch and I came back inside the house. I turned around to look outside, and just saw the ceiling part of the porch collapse all the way to the floor. I was very thankful that I wasn't there. I had just gone back inside because it was very windy. It taught me that you should be grateful when you are not hurt in a storm."

Taj Signor: "The house behind ours was abandoned but it still had electrical wires going through it. When the storm came, the whole sky went blue and then there was this loud bang. There were a few more bangs and some sparks, and

then everything just went dark because the electricity went out. I was kind of surprised because usually wires are covered in rubber so they don't do that."

Da-Xia Gibbons: "During Hurricane Humberto, the floors were coming up in our house. It was very scary. Our railing also got blown down. After the hurricane finished, we went downstairs and we found the railing all covered in leaves."

Ms. Stowe: "The entire experience of Hurricane Emily in 1987 was extremely unnerving! If my memory serves me correctly, no one was prepared for the brutal winds and tornadoes that were entangled in the hurricane. I recall the aftermath being somewhat surreal because everything happened so quickly. The hurricane literally came, damaged and left!"



Students of P6 Stowe at East End Primary School

Travelling During Hurricane Season

THE ROYAL GAZETTE SPOKE TO A TRAVEL EXPERT FOR ADVICE

BY ERIN SILVER

Siairah Milano is a Travel & Event Consultant and Certified Tourism Ambassador with Thinking of Bermuda, a destination management company dedicated only to traveling to Bermuda. In other words, she is something of an expert in the field. She knows a lot about booking trips year round, including during hurricane season. The Royal Gazette asked her some questions about whether Bermudians should consider travelling overseas during this time.

Royal Gazette: Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30 in Bermuda. Is it a good time for Bermudians to travel?

Siairah Milano: That is a long time frame, so I would say yes... just be mindful of where you're traveling to. For example, Florida is known for its hurricanes, whereas traveling up north wouldn't be as risky. In general, summers in Bermuda are our peak season for travel in and out of Bermuda, mainly because of weather and our beaches. It's also a big travel time for locals as we have most vacation time and, again, good weather.

RG: What should people consider when making plans to leave or return to the island?

SM: The usual visas, budget, COVID regulations, itinerary, hotel research etc. Regarding hurricane season, possible delays or travel changes could be an issue. If they have to stay a few more days, what does their budget cover? What about extra days off work, childcare and so on?

RG: Should people buy travel insurance or know about any other policies that might affect changes in travel plans in the event of a hurricane?

SM: Typically, they can purchase travel insurance through their current insurance policy. Airlines and travel agencies don't usually offer travel insurance. Airlines are pretty good with flight changes and offering different options that could work best with the customer needing a flight change. Even gift certificates and/or vouchers can sometimes be offered. Customers are usually alerted regarding changes to their flights, but it is always best to reach out directly to confirm or even check in for an update. Using the airline's app is also helpful, if they have one. For example, the American Airlines app will alert travellers immediately and allow you to make changes. When flying, however, I would always recommend checking with the airline or your travel agency regarding the airline's travel policies before booking.

RG: If people are going to travel, are there certain destinations that are better than others?

SM: Not too much. As mentioned before, Florida would be a bit risky, but then again it just depends. You would need to monitor the weather predictions closer to your travel date. The technology that we have now is so efficient with predicting a hurricane's expected pathway. However, as mentioned before, traveling up north, like to Canada, Washington State etc. or to colder places where they can have snow, obviously there's little to no hurricane risk.

RG: Is there any other advice you want to add when it comes to travelling during hurricane season?

SM: Overall, just monitor the weather predictions. And keep in mind that Bermuda usually gets hit with a hurricane at the end of hurricane season, closer to the end of August/September and sometimes even later than that.

IT'S HURRICANE SEASON
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THIS COULD BE US AGAIN!

NOW IS THE TIME TO PREPARE!

- Have or make a family plan
- Prepare your emergency supplies
- Check your insurance policies
- Always keep COVID Guidelines in mind
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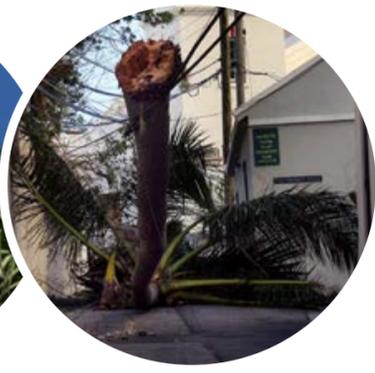
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Tackling The Damage

EXPERTS SHARE TIPS ON CARING FOR YOUR PROPERTY AFTER A STORM

BY TIM SMITH



The howling winds have finally subsided and at last it's safe to step outside, breathe in some fresh air and assess the damage.

For many people, those few hours after a storm are a trip out of their comfort zone—inspecting their roof and walls like a builder, examining their trees and gardens like a horticulturalist and having to make quick decisions to tackle the vast range of unpredictable things that might have happened.

Experts agree that your first priority is to stay safe. Debris could have blown into your yard and become a hazard, and there may be live wires on the ground. They also offer the following advice on caring for your property after a storm:

ROOFS

Richard Moulder, the general manager at Bermuda Paint, says: "You should be looking for new cracks. If the storm came through and your roof lifted and dropped back down, you are going to have replace that portion of the roof. Look on your ceilings on the inside for wet areas. Then you should go outside and look at your roof where those cracks were. Sometimes those cracks are so faint they are difficult to see."

Moulder says Bermuda Paint offers advice and provides the relevant products to fix roof problems.

WALLS

Salt water will make the outside of your home sticky, and debris such as leaves will attach to the walls. Moulder says: "If you are able to, you should as soon as possible wash all your exterior walls off. If you don't do that, the leaves will stick to the wall, then they will dry. Eventually, you start getting brown stains and you can't get them off. If you don't deal with it, in the end you have to buy paint for a couple of hundred dollars and pay someone to paint your house."

INSURANCE

Carry out a proper assessment of your property to receive funds from your insurance company to make repairs. Callan Bassett, the business development manager at Age Concern, provides the following advice, which is applicable for all residents:

- 1. Take photos**
"After the hurricane has passed and it's safe to venture outside, grab your camera or smartphone and start taking pictures and capturing video. Remember: be safe. Downed power lines and high water can

be deadly, and it's not worth risking your life for photos that can be taken at a later, safer time."

- 2. Save receipts, stay organized**
"Paperwork is crucial in the world of homeowners insurance. Securing your paperwork prior to a hurricane can alleviate headaches and problems after it's gone. Make sure to save receipts, as many are likely to be reimbursable."
- 3. Call your insurance company soon and often**
"Once the hurricane has passed, it is imperative to get in touch with your insurance agent or insurer as soon as possible. Provide them with all the pictures and videos you've collected, as well as any paperwork you have saved, and make sure to get everything you can in writing."

DEALING WITH THE UNPREDICTABLE

Usually, you will make repairs in conjunction with your insurance company. The Department of Parks offers an example of one occasion in which it helped out. According to a spokesperson, "The only time the Ministry has assisted residents is when there are those associated with the vulnerable populations

and where the families may not have the financial resources. An example is Parks several years ago responded to a senior's residence where a large casuarina tree was unstable and would have collapsed onto the roof when the wind speed became sustained at gale-force to storm-force. It was declared an urgent matter and our Tree Unit removed the tree from the property without charging the seniors."

VEGETATION

Jeff Sousa, the president of Sousa's Landscape Management, has worked in horticulture for more than 40 years and seen the damage from many major storms, such as Hurricane Emily in 1987 and Hurricane Fabian in 2003. "We have a very vegetative island. Things do grow fast here. A lot of damage can take place in a storm," Sousa says.

You can limit damage to your plants by washing away the salt spray after the storm. "We have two types of hurricanes—wet hurricanes and dry hurricanes," he says. "A wet hurricane is better, because the rainfall that comes with the hurricane washes off the salt spray. If it's a dry hurricane, the next day it's very important to go out there and water all your plants to remove the salt spray."

Sometimes there's nothing you can do to fight storm damage to your garden. "When you know a storm's coming, people will put up sticks for their tomatoes, but

there's not a lot you can do," Sousa explains. "If you are going to have high winds, you have to forget those tomatoes. It usually means you will just have to replant them—that's just the price you have to pay. You can't fight Mother Nature, but at least you can plan ahead."

This means making sure trees are properly trimmed and hedges are pruned in an A shape, rather than a V shape, so that they are less susceptible to falling over with high winds.

You may find branches on your property after a storm. You can take these to the government waste facility at Marsh Folly, or use your own compost bin.

Heavy rainfall could also lead to water collecting in containers or items such as plastic bags. Remove these before they become a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

STAY SAFE

Sousa says: "More people are hurt in the clean-up afterwards than the hurricane itself. They get out there and they are panicking a little bit so they grab a chainsaw and do what they can. That's the most dangerous thing you can do. You should also wear safety goggles whenever you're using any of that kind of equipment."

Call Belco on 955 to report downed power lines or a pole fire on your property.



What happens after a storm

Once the height of the storm passes and weather reports indicate it is safe, BELCO immediately enters the restoration phase of our emergency operations. Our process is designed to assess and repair our facilities, and restore power across the island as quickly and safely as possible.

The order of restoration is as follows: main circuits, branch lines and individual customers. BELCO restores main line circuits first, focusing initially on those that supply the Island's essential services and critical infrastructure. Repairs must be completed in the order above because main lines feed all other lines. An individual customer in the middle or at the end of a branch line cannot receive electricity until all of the repairs between them and the main power supply have been made.

We encourage you to remember:

- DO NOT call to report power outages in the immediate aftermath of a major storm so that telephone lines can be available for emergency calls. Customers who have had advanced meters installed no longer need to report power outages as a signal will be received by BELCO automatically when any abnormality, such as a power outage, occurs.
- Stay clear of piles of debris or downed foliage that may conceal live power lines.
- Energised lines can be deceiving by appearing lifeless and harmless. DO NOT touch these lines! Stay a safe distance away—at least 30 feet or more!
- DO NOT run from a fallen line. Running from a fallen line may cause your legs to bridge current from higher to lower voltage and you may receive a shock. Instead, keep your legs together and shuffle away with both feet on the ground. Shuffle a safe distance (10 feet or more) away from other utility poles.
- If you see someone injured after touching a downed power line, call 911 for help.

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 JUNE 1-NOV 30

Are you ready?

During hurricane season, your emergency plan should include a list of items that you can keep stocked in your home. This hurricane preparedness grocery list should include a first aid kit, water, non-perishable foods and other supplies you may need if you evacuate or stay home during a storm. Check out this emergency supply list to prepare yourself and your family.

HURRICANE SEASON PREP

FOOD

Plan on stocking at least a five-day supply of non-perishable food that requires no refrigeration and little preparation. This includes:

- Dry cereal
- Canned goods: fruit, vegetables, juice, soups, meats, pasta, beans
- Nuts, dried fruits
- Peanut butter
- Bread
- Crackers, potato chips
- Granola and energy bars
- Un-refrigerated fruit: bananas, apples, oranges
- Pet food
- Baby food and bottles
- Rice and pasta
- Pasta sauce
- Seasoning
- Granulated sugar, honey
- Oats
- Tea bags, coffee
- Pancake mix

KEY SUPPLIES

Water – 1 gallon per 1 person per day. For a family of 4 for 5 days, you need 20 gallons. Save water in a bathtub for basic sanitation and dishwashing, but do not drink this water.

First Aid Kit – Band-Aids, bandages, antibiotic ointment, bleach and a medicine dropper so you can create water disinfectant (6 drops of bleach for every 1 gallon of water), hand sanitizer, any necessary medications, hygiene products, and baby products.

Flashlight – 1 flashlight per family member and the correct size of extra batteries.

Tool Kit – A basic set of tools: hammer, nails, screws, screwdriver, pliers, and knife.

Sanitation Products – Toilet paper, moist towelettes, and plastic garbage bags in different sizes.

OTHER SUPPLIES

Paper towels • Garbage bags • Aluminum foil • Mosquito repellent • Charcoal Lighter • Lighter fluid • Manual can opener • Large sealable bags to store important documents • Strike anywhere matches • Resealable sandwich bags Hand sanitizer • Dish soap • Paper plates and cups • Plastic utensils • Baby diapers, wipes and rash ointment • Insulated coolers • Ice Packs • Bags of ice.

Rain gear • Plastic sheeting • Rope • Duct Tape • Grill • Cash • At least ONE fully-charged cellular phone • Pet leash, collar, food bowls and carrier.

Food Safety

Never taste food to determine its safety!

IF YOU LOSE POWER, FOLLOW THIS THREE-STEP PROCEDURE

- 1** Eat perishable items in your pantry, refrigerator, etc. as soon as possible, and as long as fridge temperature is below 40°F.
- 2** Eat perishable items in your freezer. As long as food contains ice crystals in the center, that means it's still safe to eat.
- 3** Eat your stock of non-perishable items.

WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

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