

# Hancock, New Hampshire - Hurricane Irene Information

**From the Director of Public Works**

*Posted on August 26, 2011 - 11:05 a.m.*

By now I would hope that you have all heard of Irene coming up the coast this weekend. This far out there is a lot of speculation and what if's. I am not ready to say this is the worst storm in 50 years, but it does bear watching over the next 36 hours. I get weather updates about every 4 hours, and they are still changing the track a little east and a little west. The east side of the eye gets the worst wind and the west side gets the most rain, straight on gets both.

We started making our preparations the day before yesterday, in conjunction with all the other departments. Our fuel tanks are full, all generators are being tested, all our chainsaws have been readied with spare parts for all. I have spoken with several logging companies so that we have log trucks available if we have wide spread trees down. Today we will be checking all our catch basins and culverts to make sure they will be able to handle the rainfall that is coming. When we head home today we will be as ready as we can be for whatever is coming.

My best guess right now, we will begin to see rain on Saturday afternoon, it will turn eavy overnight Saturday/early Sunday morning. I am expecting Sunday to be a washout, with increasing wind and rain as the day goes on. The actual track of the storm will dictate how much wind and how much rain and actual timing of all these events. Sunday will be a great day to stay home, watch a movie, play a game, or read a good book. As the day progress's the potential for roads closed due to trees down or washouts will increase.

I am anticipating my crew will be out sometime on Saturday evening and will remain out during the storm. If the wind gets too severe we will be coordinating our response with the Fire Department to handle all emergency calls that come in. If this were to happen all our coordinating efforts will be happening at the Fire Station Command Center, which is the town's Emergency Operations Center.

**A few things to keep in mind if this storm does bring widespread havoc to us.**

- Treat all downed power lines as if they are live lines. We do not have the ability to tell if a wire is live or not and they carry anywhere from 4000 volts to 20,000 volts. An improperly installed generator can back feed a power line and kill you..... even when you know the power is off in your home.
- We will not be removing trees on lines until the power company has informed us that we can do so safely. This can delay our response to clearing the roads. Don't try to be a neighborhood hero, wait for the professionals to make sure the line is dead.
- Be prepared to encounter flooded roads or washed out culverts. Never drive through a flooded road. There is no telling how much damage the water has done to the road, or how deep the water really is. Our Fire Department does not need to be performing rescue operations in swift water because someone thought they could pass through the flooded road. This places our emergency personnel in too much danger, nothing is that important that you must get to the other side, if it was it should have been done before the storm hit.
- Our hills are going to be very vulnerable to washouts if we get tropical rains of 4-8 inches. Washouts are not just for the low lying areas.
- IF we get widespread trees down our cleanup efforts will be from the Fire Station out. We will be working our way around by main roads, then side streets. Known medical needs of residents as well as emergency calls will be prioritized.
- Everyone should be prepared to handle 2 to 3 days on their own, It may take that long to open all roads. We strive for 1 lane passable on all major road within 24 hours, all roads 1 lane passable within 48 hours. Much of this depends on the response from the electric utility. Outlying areas are the hardest to reach as many of them have only 1 way in and 1 way out. We have 50 miles of road, it will take time to open them all up, it will take even longer to clean them all up.
- Please check on your neighbors, especially the elderly or ones with medical needs.

Don't forget to learn something from your elderly neighbors, they have been through this many times and have picked up a lot of tricks over the years.

- Fill your bath tub before the wind really gets going. That water can be used for many chores around the house. Pick up all objects outside that cannot sustain a 70-100 mph wind. Patio furniture can do a lot of damage in a short amount of time. Fill your gas grill tank, make sure all your cars have full tanks of fuel. Don't stock up on ice cream, it will melt if the power goes out and that would be a shame.
- I will send out an update sometime mid-morning on Saturday. I will continue to update throughout the storm, as long as I am able to have internet or cell service. Being prepared now is the best defense we can all have if this does in fact become a widespread weather event. There is a lot that can change in the next 24 to 48 hours, stay tuned to your local weather station to monitor the changes.

Have a great weekend,

Kurtis J Grasset, Director of Public Works

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