



Commonwealth of Virginia
Office of Governor Terry McAuliffe

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Office of the Governor

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**Governor McAuliffe Urges Coastal Virginians to
“Know Your Zone” For Safer Hurricane
Evacuations**

RICHMOND – Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe today announced new, tiered evacuation zones for coastal Virginia designed to enhance current evacuation plans, boost public safety, and improve travel efficiency in the event of hurricanes or other disasters.

“This new evacuation plan represents a significant step toward ensuring the safety of the Commonwealth’s residents and visitors,” **said Governor McAuliffe**. “The new data-driven plan will streamline the evacuation process by providing accurate and useful information to citizens based on their street addresses. And, because it will be vitally important for people to be aware of the new system, we’re launching a public information campaign called *Know Your Zone*.”

Know Your Zone will serve about 1.25 million people who live in coastal Virginia, the region of the state most vulnerable to hurricanes and other storms. Twenty-three localities (listed below) are participating in the program.

Hurricanes cause high winds, tornadoes and landslides, but their deadliest hazard is flooding. Tropical storms and depressions can be just as dangerous. Over the past several decades, hurricanes have repeatedly battered eastern Virginia, killing dozens of people and causing billions of dollars in damage.

Different hurricanes can bring vastly different impacts, depending on tides, storm intensity, path, and other meteorological factors.

The tiered evacuation zones were developed in close cooperation with local emergency managers throughout Hampton Roads, the Northern Neck, the Middle Peninsula, and the Eastern Shore, and are based on the most up-to-date engineering data for the region.

The zones are designated A through D and will provide residents with a better understanding of whether they should evacuate in an emergency or shelter at home, based on their street address and the nature of the emergency event.

Avoiding unnecessary evacuation travel will reduce traffic congestion, promote highway safety, and lessen overcrowding at storm shelters. The new zones enhance the current evacuation plans and routes already designated in coastal Virginia.

When a serious storm is expected to impact Virginia's coastal region, state and local emergency managers will work with local news media outlets that will broadcast and publish evacuation directives to the public.

“Virginians are safer when they are prepared for emergencies,” **said Brian Moran, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security.** “*Know Your Zone* is an important new tool to empower people to make good decisions based on the latest and best scientific and technical information. The Commonwealth is always working to improve emergency response plans, so educational and operational enhancements will continue throughout hurricane season and into future years.”

The new evacuation zones can be viewed at www.KnowYourZoneVA.org.

The *Know Your Zone* website displays a detailed, interactive, color-coded map showing the new evacuation zones. People can use the new map to view a “big picture” of the region or zoom in to their neighborhood. Users can enter their address in a search bar to see their designated evacuation zone.

“It is vitally important that residents of coastal Virginia be aware of the new zones, and – in particular – the zone in which they live,” **said Dr. Jeff Stern, State Coordinator of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.** “Right now, before the storm season gets under way, we’re urging people to *Know Your Zone*. Go online to the interactive web page to learn if you live or work in one of the new evacuation zones, and keep the information handy to use in times of emergency.”

People without Internet access are urged to contact their local emergency managers or call 2-1-1. Local officials and emergency management professionals throughout the region have been actively involved in the new evacuation planning and can assist citizens in identifying their new evacuation zones.

“Even if you don’t live in one of the designated evacuation zones, if there’s a storm or other threat in the region, it’s imperative that you pay attention and respond to instructions given by state and local emergency agencies,” added Stern. “Doing so may save your life or the lives of your loved ones.”

It’s also important to remember that mobile homes are particularly vulnerable to storms with high winds, including hurricanes. Residents of mobile homes in the path of serious storms will be advised to evacuate even if they are not located in one of the new storm evacuation zones.

The new evacuation zones were developed in coordination with local emergency managers by Atkins, a global engineering firm with deep experience designing hurricane evacuation plans for major metropolitan areas. Atkins North America is based in Tallahassee, Florida.

Know Your Zone will serve residents in the following Virginia localities: cities of Chesapeake, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach; counties of Accomack, Essex, Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northampton, Northumberland, Richmond County, Surry, Westmoreland, York, and the town of Chincoteague.

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