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June 22, 2015

Dear SMTC Families:

The 2015 severe weather / hurricane season began on June 1st and extends through November 30th 2015. Special Missions Training Center is preparing to provide “all hands on deck” mission support during this year’s hurricane season. I am asking you to be prepared if a hurricane strikes your area.

NOAA’s Climate Prediction Center says the 2015 Atlantic hurricane season will likely be below-normal, but that’s no reason to believe coastal areas will have it easy. For the hurricane season, NOAA is predicting a 70 percent likelihood of 6 to 11 named storms (winds of 39 mph or higher), of which 3 to 6 could become hurricanes (winds of 74 mph or higher), including zero to 2 major hurricanes (Category 3, 4 or 5; winds of 111 mph or higher). While a below-normal season is likely (70 percent), there is also a 20 percent chance of a near-normal season, and a 10 percent chance of an above-normal season.

“A below-normal season doesn’t mean we’re off the hook. As we’ve seen before, below-normal seasons can still produce catastrophic impacts to communities,” said NOAA Administrator Kathryn Sullivan, Ph.D., referring to the 1992 season in which only seven named storms formed, yet the first was Andrew – a Category 5 Major Hurricane that devastated South Florida.

Having a plan and knowing what you and your family are going to do in the event of a major storm will greatly enhance your safety and security. I urge you to sit down with your family and develop a family action plan detailing the specific steps you will take in the event of severe weather, to include a potential evacuation. While an evacuation may not be necessary this hurricane season, you must be prepared to conduct one. Military members will likely be ordered to report to SMTC to assist during an evacuation. Family members should have an action plan that takes this into account. If a major hurricane threatens, local emergency management officials may order you to leave your home and seek shelter. These evacuations can cause a serious emotional and financial drain to our families. Having a plan for where to go and preparing yourself for what to expect if an evacuation is ordered will relieve a lot of unnecessary anxiety for your entire family. If you desire to voluntarily evacuate, travel will be at your own cost with no travel reimbursement. All military and civilians in receipt of a Government Travel Charge Card (GTCC) have been advised that their GTCC is to only be used by them and for them. At a minimum, you should have a credit card and cash reserve set aside to use in the event of one or more evacuations.

With respect to your relocation expenses in the event of an evacuation, the following applies:

- Reimbursement of expenses is available to active duty military members and civilian employees, and their dependents, only if the evacuation is authorized for your locale by

the Fifth District Commander in Portsmouth, VA. The most significant impact on the District Commander's decision is whether state or local officials have determined that an evacuation is appropriate; however, the Commanding Officer can request an evacuation order from the District based on local experience and as conditions dictate, even if state and/or local officials have not ordered an evacuation.

- If the Fifth District Commander does authorize evacuation for your locale, the following expenses will be covered within certain specific limits: travel to and from the designated safe haven site; lodging while at the safe haven site; meals and incidental expenses while at the safe haven site. The maximum dollar amount for reimbursement of each of the above items will be based the location of the Coast Guard-designated safe haven. Evacuation to locations other than the designated safe havens site may increase your out-of-pocket expenses. Information will be provided to all evacuating members when the evacuation order is issued by the District.
- Please be aware that travel advances may not be immediately available when an evacuation order is given, and Coast Guard members are prohibited from paying for dependent evacuation expenses on their government travel charge cards. Therefore, you should plan on using cash, checks, or personal credit/debt cards to pay for dependent evacuation expenses, subject to reimbursement after travel claims are correctly filed and paid (with receipts submitted). Information will be provided to evacuating members when the evacuation is issued by the Fifth District Commander.

A Hurricane Evacuation Package is provided to help answer any questions you may have regarding entitlements, pre-storm preparations, and useful hurricane planning tips. Please take a few minutes to read through the attached information. I hope you will find this helpful in preparing your family for the possibility of a hurricane evacuation.

All of your family readiness requirements and your action plan should be completed as soon as possible. Any questions, suggestions, and/or concerns should be directed to CWO3 Robert Campbell (910) 787-3187.

Thank you for your shared commitment to hurricane preparedness. Your safety and well being is of utmost importance to me and to the success of the SMTC.

Sincerely,

J. N. RIFFE /s/
Captain, U. S. Coast Guard
Commanding Officer, Special Missions Training Center

Enclosures: (1) Accountability Information and Procedures – CGPAAS
(2) Severe Weather/Hurricane Evacuation Entitlement Guide
(3) SMTC Emergency Evacuation Card and Useful Websites