

Hi-Riser



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Condo advocacy group releases storm guide

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With hurricane season set to officially begin June 1, the Community Advocacy Network has released its annual "Community Association Hurricane Guide" for residents and city and county officials.

"Our guide is really designed to show how the [condo] board should operate," said Donna Berger, executive director of the Community Advocacy Network, a condo advocacy group for common-interest ownership communities.

"There's a whole different set of concerns for associations before and after

a hurricane."

Hurricane preparation is different for condo associations than for owners of single-family homes because of regulations set forth in state statutes. While the state hasn't tweaked any emergency powers for the current season, Berger said it's important for condo boards to secure the property and community.

"If you start early, you can focus on what you need to do to help keep everyone calm," she said. "The No. 1 mistake is not preparing."

Inside the hurricane guide, residents will find instructions and tips for contracts and preparing the property, communication guidelines, recommendations on emergency powers the board can implement and information on long-term recovery plans.

Berger also said it is important to know which residents need special accommodations, to have a list of documents and photos of the condo, and to have proper in-

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insurance coverage.

Not having an action plan in place following a storm, Berger said, could result in hasty decisions. Condo officials could end up signing contracts without first having an attorney look over the documents, or could pay too much for services.

"The condos that prepare do the best," she said.

Attorney Michael Bender of the Pompano Beach law firm Kaye & Bender, which represents more than 700 condo associations, said videotaping the property before a storm can be an essential step in storm recovery. He also said condo boards and residents need to know all

the evacuation routes and have a chain of command involving the board of directors so everyone knows exactly what to do after a hurricane.

"The importance of preparation cannot be overstated," Bender said.

While the past few hurricane seasons have been quieter in South Florida than the 2005 season,

when a record 15 storms became hurricanes according to the National Climatic Data Center, officials are still warning residents to prepare for the worst.

"People getting a little complacent is always dangerous," Berger said.

Hurricane forecasters at Colorado State University are predicting the 2010

season will produce 15 named storms, eight hurricanes and four major hurricanes. An average season has only 10 named storms, six hurricanes and three major hurricanes.

Along with protecting their homes, Berger said, residents who are prepared also get the satisfaction of knowing they've done everything they can

to ensure the association will recover after a storm.

"In 2005, the [residents] that were prepared recovered more quickly," she said. "And you're calmer when you know you're prepared."

To get a copy of the "2010 Community Association Hurricane Guide," visit www.canfl.com or call 954-315-0372.