



## Charleston County News Release

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# Charleston County Moves to OPCON 4 at 2 p.m. Today to Monitor Tropical Storm Hanna

*Operating Condition 4 means there is a possibility of an emergency or disaster situation.*

Charleston County participated in a conference call today (Monday, Sept. 1) regarding Tropical Storm Hanna. The call was initiated by the South Carolina Emergency Management Division (SCEMD) and included representatives from several counties.

During the conference call, officials learned that there is uncertainty of the track of Tropical Storm Hanna. There is a possibility that South Carolina could see effects later in the week from the storm.

As a result of the information learned during today's conference call, and as a precautionary measure, **Charleston County will move into Operating Condition (OPCON) 4 at 2 p.m. today** and County officials are monitoring Hanna closely.

Phrases like "OPCON 4" are unfamiliar to the public, so the counties' emergency officials want to explain exactly what these mean to citizens.

"The OPCON 4 level means that there is a possibility of an emergency or disaster situation, and it notifies our employees who may be called into our Emergency Operations Center to stay on alert and be ready to act if needed," Haynes said.

At OPCON 4, the Counties' Emergency Operations Centers (EOC) personnel are required to be on alert as officials monitor the storm.

Charleston County's EOC is located in the Lonnie Hamilton, III Public Services Building off Leeds Avenue in North Charleston.

The purpose of the EOC is for county decision-makers to coordinate information and to implement the County's Emergency Operations Plan during any type of disaster. This plan is reviewed and updated every January to ensure proper readiness and response procedures.

Once it is activated, the EOC is directed by the County Administrator and is staffed by personnel from a variety of departments. If a storm increases in severity, other outside agencies will send representatives to the EOC so that information can be coordinated and shared among first responders from a single location. Some of these agencies/representatives are:

- Local law enforcement and fire personnel
- Medical personnel and EMS
- Military personnel
- American Red Cross
- Department of Social Services
- Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)
- Transportation services
- Public works and engineering services

- Hazardous Materials staff
- Telecommunications and power companies
- Coroner
- Damage assessment teams
- Special medical needs services

The public is encouraged to monitor their local news media and to be prepared in case Tropical Storm Hanna moves toward the state's coastline.

Officials from Charleston County will stay in close communication with state agencies and other counties and organizations.

The Operating Condition (OPCON) levels of readiness run from five to one in level of severity, with one being the most severe. This is opposite of how hurricane severity levels run, from one to five, with five being the most severe.

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**The following is an explanation of each OPCON level, and Charleston County is at OPCON 4 as of 2 p.m. today:**

5: Day-to-day operations to include normal training and exercises.

**4: Possibility of an emergency or disaster situation that may require a limited or full activation of the County's Emergency Operations Center.**

3: Disaster or emergency situation likely or imminent. Full or partial activation of the County's Emergency Operations Center; activate County Emergency Operations Plan.

2: Disaster or emergency situation in effect; maximum preparedness level; full activation of the County's Emergency Operations Center.

1: Disaster or emergency situation in effect; full-fledged emergency response operations on-going; highest state of emergency operations.

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 "We are now at the height of hurricane season, and for those who have not done so already, it is time to gather supplies and review family emergency plans in order to be prepared," Haynes said.

To download the 2008 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide, and to keep up to date with County news releases concerning Tropical Storm Hanna, visit [www.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.charlestoncounty.org). Click on the "Are You Ready?" banner on the front page of the Web site to download, print and share:

- The 2008 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide
- The 2008 Disabilities Emergency Guide

Information in the 2008 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide includes:

- Definitions and what you need to do during hurricane watches, warnings and tropical storms
- Preparations for your home and your family before the storm
- What you need to have in your emergency supplies kit
- Evacuation information and routes out of Charleston County
- Shelters in Charleston County
- What to do if you don't have transportation – **NEW!** *Four more pick-up point signs have been posted around the county. Learn now where you need to go!*
- Rules to know and items to bring if you have to bring your pet to the pet shelter
- What to do after a storm, including safety measures and handling debris
- A family communications plan form to fill out
- Important phone numbers

Information on family emergency planning is available on the S.C. Emergency Management Division Web site at [www.scemd.org](http://www.scemd.org).