



## Charleston County News Release

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### **Charleston County Moves to OPCON 4 at 2 p.m. Today to Monitor Hurricane Irene**

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

[Charleston County Government](#) participated in a conference call today (Monday, Aug. 22) regarding Hurricane Irene. The call was initiated by the [S.C. Emergency Management Division \(SCEMD\)](#) and included representatives from several counties.

There is a strong possibility that South Carolina will see effects this week from the storm. As a precautionary measure, **Charleston County moved into Operating Condition (OPCON) 4 at 2 p.m. today**, and County officials are monitoring Emily closely.

The OPCON 4 level means that there is a possibility of an emergency or disaster situation, and it notifies County employees who may be called into the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to stay on alert and be ready to act if needed. Charleston County's EOC is located in the Lonnie Hamilton, III Public Services Building off Leeds Avenue in North Charleston.

The public is encouraged to monitor their local news media and to be prepared in case Hurricane Irene makes landfall on the state's coastline. Officials from Charleston County will stay in close communication with state agencies and other counties and organizations.

"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," said Cathy Haynes, [Charleston County Emergency Management Department's](#) Chief of Operations.

**The public can go to [www.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.charlestoncounty.org) and click on the "Are You Ready?" banner on the front page of the County's Web site to download, print and share:**

- The 2011 Charleston County Hurricane Preparedness Guide (in English and Spanish)
- The 2011 Disabilities and Special Needs Emergency Preparedness Guide
- **NOTE:** The shelter list has changed for the 2011 hurricane season, as the new Stall High School on Ashley Phosphate road has been added to the list. See the complete list of Charleston County shelters at:  
<http://www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/EPD/Shelters.htm>.

"Because of the low-lying areas in our county, we will never have enough safe shelter space for all of the residents who live here," said Jason Patno, Charleston County Emergency Management Director. "Therefore, we encourage everyone who has the means to leave town to do so and to consider shelters only as a last resort when they have nowhere else to go."

Also, those who have the ability to leave should do so as early as possible.

"You don't have to wait until a voluntary or mandatory evacuation order is issued," Patno said. "If you can, leave as early as possible to make your trip easier and to help relieve the traffic congestion on our roads."

Citizens who do not have transportation should learn where their nearest evacuation pick-up point is located. The evacuation pick-up points are noted by blue signs with a hurricane and bus symbol, and are located across the county at many CARTA bus stops and popular areas like schools, churches and shopping centers. In the event of a mandatory evacuation, buses will transport citizens from the 79 pick-up points to the nearest available [Red Cross shelter](#).

"It is vital for residents in our community who don't have transportation to know where their nearest pick-up point is before the next hurricane approaches our coast," Patno said. "It takes all of us working together to make sure our citizens and neighbors are prepared and safe."

**Information on Emergency Preparedness:**

- For Charleston County residents, visit the Charleston County website at [www.charlestoncounty.org](http://www.charlestoncounty.org).
- For family emergency planning, visit the S.C. Emergency Management Division's Web site at [www.scemd.org](http://www.scemd.org).

**About the Charleston County Emergency Operations Center (EOC):**

- At the EOC, County decision-makers coordinate information and implement the County's Emergency Operations Plan during any type of disaster. The 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
    - S.C. Department of Social Services
    - S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)
    - Transportation services
    - Public works and engineering services
    - Telecommunications and power companies
    - Coroner
    - Damage assessment teams
    - Special medical needs services
  - 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. To see an explanation of all OPCON levels, visit: <http://charlestoncounty.org/departments/EPD/opcon.htm>.
- Get emergency information on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/EMDChasCo> -  
- Follow "ChasCountyGov" ([www.twitter.com/ChasCountyGov](http://www.twitter.com/ChasCountyGov)) on Twitter -