

## **Hurricane Sandy Impacts Families in the Pacific Northwest**

### **Local News**

Posted by: David Haviland

Posted on : November 1, 2012 at 5:50 am

*Written by Chuck Wallace, Deputy Director of the Grays Harbor County Emergency Management Agency* MONTESANO, Wash. - Hurricane Sandy has had a profound impact upon many families in the Pacific Northwest who have relatives living along the East Coast. Personally I have not heard from my parents, who live right on the boardwalk in Atlantic City, NJ, nor my brother, his two sons and their families who live just outside Ocean City, NJ, since the day before the hurricane ravaged the area. There is no power and the roads in and out of the areas are still unusable due to the destruction by Hurricane Sandy. You may ask, "Hey, you are an emergency manager, you should know better," but we are human also and don't necessarily prepare to the full extent we should for the worst case scenario. I talked to my parents about preparedness but they managed to deal with Hurricane Irene last year, numerous tropical storms and countless Nor'easters over the years. "Our building has a generator, we'll be alright" is the habitual message I receive when I talk to them. The problem is, the generator is on the 1st floor and Atlantic City was flooded under a 5-8 foot storm surge, the highest in recent memory - Why didn't we prepare better?

Part of our communication problem is that my parents refuse to use computers and even though they have a cell phone, they have trouble answering it or retrieving messages. My brother and his sons have cell phones and are savvy to computer technology however, without power; there is not much they can do. You'd think one of them would go to a shelter and try to contact someone. Do they understand we wonder and worry about their well being? Are they ok? I told my mother to make sure she had cold food to eat in the event they lost power, but she kept bringing up the generator saying it has always worked in the past. Are they hungry? Do they have usable water or has the Atlantic City water supply been contaminated and they had to resort to drinking bottled water? Of course they would never purchase bottled water because it's too heavy to carry to their 4th floor apartment; so what are they drinking? Are my brother and his son's homes affected by the storm? Are they flooded? Are the windows still intact? The whole event is harrowing for my family and many other families in the Pacific Northwest to say the least. Each day images of destruction from Sandy turn up on television and on my computer screen. Each hour that goes by without communication, my mind produces traumatic images which further distress me. Why didn't we prepare better? The Pacific Northwest is entering our fall and winter seasons - the ones we usually label as harsh and brutal to our communities with severe storms and the ever present possibility of flooding, earthquake and tsunami. Preparation and communication plans are the only way to avoid issues such as what I'm dealing with personally. We must work harder to prepare for anything. My family didn't prepare sufficiently and we are all suffering the consequences. Lessons learned are often too late. Let my lesson be your wake up call. Prepare your family, your pets and your business for every event possible. Don't allow old practices to dictate the need to be better prepared. Your family will appreciate it more than you know.