

North Carolina farmers are dealing with so much right now – high fuel costs, fertilizer costs through the roof, dry conditions, supply chain issues just to name a few.

There's so much going on that hurricanes and tropical storms quite frankly may not be on their radar.

But that doesn't mean they shouldn't be. We have officially entered hurricane season in North Carolina, and our state has had more than its fair share of them. In the last six to eight years we have been hit with more storms than in the previous six to eight years.

This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is predicting an above average season, but I hope they are wrong.

Predictions of a busy season is one of the reasons why I encourage farmers every year to review their emergency plans with workers and anyone involved in their farming operation.

Be sure everyone involved in your operation knows where to meet and make sure that preparation and recovery duties are prioritized and assigned. This allows your team to quickly get to work before and after a storm.

Our Emergency Programs division recently rolled out a newly designed website, meant to collect information and resources for disaster response in one place for easy access in times of crisis.

The new layout is designed around the three core parts of disaster management, **Prepare, Respond and Recover**. Under each category, you'll see links to resources and organizations who can help with each step of that process.

Preparation is perhaps the most important thing that the average person can do heading into storm season. The new site includes resources that can help anyone get ready for an emergency, while also offering some specific tools for farmers and other people in agriculture.

For farmers, pay particular attention to the new site's "Farm and Emergency Planning & Preparedness" section. Here you'll find links to preparedness information from NCDA&CS, N.C. State Extension and the Extension Disaster Education Network, as well as a template for your own disaster plan that you can fill out and have on hand in time of emergency.

You can visit the new Emergency Programs website at <https://www.ncagr.gov/oep/>

Flooding after storms has been especially problematic in the past. Areas that have not been known to flood, have flooded, so having a good flood plan in place is necessary.

Work is underway throughout North Carolina to remove debris along waterways and streams through the Streamflow Rehabilitation Assistance Program. This is in an effort to help remove obstacles from waterways that slow down the flow of water following storms.

We have a lot of work to do in this area as a state, but this program is a proactive measure, with a total of \$38 million in funding earmarked from the N.C. General Assembly. The program

is overseen by the state's Soil and Water Conservation Commission, working closely with the Division of Soil and Water Conservation within the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Being prepared on the farm is also a proactive measure. Some steps you can take on the farm include clearing debris from drainage ditches so water can flow freely.

Identify high ground on your farm to move livestock and equipment to.

Move livestock off the farm prior to a storm if options are available for that.

Have photos of valuables items stored off site. Store all business records above flood level.

It's always a good idea to have important phone numbers handy following a storm. Cell phones help make that easier, but be sure you have the contact number for county extension agents, insurance agents, the county Farm Service Agency and your private veterinarian.

It is my hope that the preparation and the review of your farm's emergency plan is just a good reminder and is not needed this year.