

Pandemic could complicate hurricane season

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(HealthDay)—As Hurricane Isaias moved toward the east coast of Florida on Friday, one expert warns that the coronavirus pandemic could make preparing for an active hurricane season even more challenging.

The average hurricane [season](#) has about 12 named storms, but up to 20 storms are being predicted this season, according to Marshall Shepherd, director of the Atmospheric Sciences Program at the University of Georgia.

"There's a [double whammy](#) here in terms of the most vulnerable regions to both COVID and hurricanes," Shepherd said in a university news release. "I think it's probably more important than ever that people are thinking about the duality of the threat here."

He said that "the most useful aspect of these seasonal predictions is to really start to get people to think about what they would actually have to do if they needed to evacuate and perhaps go to a shelter and have to deal with COVID. I think that there is an extra layer of concern and an extra layer of forethought needed in how people prepare."

For one, it's a good idea to add masks, hand sanitizer and disinfectant products to your emergency supply kit. Those items will be important if you have to evacuate to a shelter.

Find out if your usual evacuation area is in a COVID-19 hotspot and, if it is, check for alternative locations, he suggested.

"Certainly, all counties are dealing with this, but if you look at various states, some counties are hotter than others in terms of hotspots, so maybe that's not a place that you would evacuate to, even though in the past it might've been a place you would go," Shepherd said.

He noted that many relief agencies have already switched to largely online disaster training and are trying to find alternative lodging like hotels for evacuees where possible.

"One thing to keep in mind is that [hurricane](#) season does really start

peaking and ramping up in August, September and October. The second week of September is the peak of the season. I'm an optimist by nature, so my hope is that we will start to see somewhat of a less-risky coronavirus environment as the [hurricane season](#) starts to ramp up," Shepherd said. "But that's certainly no guarantee."

More information: The American Red Cross has more on [hurricane preparedness](#).

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