



2022 Hurricane message
By Hon. G. Wayne Panton, JP, MP

Good day,

In two years' time we will mark the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Ivan and recall the struggles we went through as a people and a country during and in the wake of that storm's devastation.

Ivan lay bare Grand Cayman and just four years later, Hurricane Paloma destroyed Cayman Brac.

We have had skirmishes with storms since Ivan and Paloma with our last brush being with Tropical Storm Grace last year. While Grace was categorized as a tropical storm when it reached our shores, I am sure that many of us including our farmers would agree that it had the force of a small hurricane with lots of tornadoes.

We know what storms can do and none of us wants to experience another Hurricane Ivan or Paloma or a strong Tropical Storm such as Grace.

Unfortunately, the possibility is very real.

The official start of Hurricane Season is 1 June and looking at long-term and seasonal charts, it appears we will face another busy weather year. Predictions are that this will be the seventh straight year for having busier-than-normal tropical cyclone activity for the Caribbean region and the Atlantic Basin.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA, is predicting above-average hurricane activity this year. NOAA is forecasting a likely range of 14 to 21 named storms, including three to six major hurricanes in categories 3, 4, or 5. That means that this season will be similar to that of 2021 when there were 21 storms, seven hurricanes and four major hurricanes – Grace, Ida, Larry and Sam.

More frequent and intense storms are one result of increased global temperatures that is particularly relevant to our country. Being prepared is one of the most important things we can do as individuals, as families, businesses and communities to minimise the impacts of severe weather events.

If you haven't already done so, stock up on your hurricane supplies and make sure you have hurricane plans for your homes, businesses and your families.

Yes, the predictions are dire, but I have every confidence in the measures that my Government, Hazard Management, the National Weather Service and others have taken to ensure that we can bravely face any storms that may come our way.

Earlier this year in March, Government launched the National Emergency Notification System mobile application that allows direct communication with all subscribed users in the Cayman Islands in the event of a national emergency or a disaster.

The free app delivers emergency alerts directly to subscribers by email or SMS text.

Residents and visitors can download the app on their phones by going to nens.gov.ky.

Building a national culture of disaster preparedness and resiliency is a collective responsibility and I encourage all Cayman Islands residents to subscribe to the mobile alert app.

In a national emergency or disaster, safeguarding human life is of paramount importance. We all have a role to play in following the official guidance from Hazard Management to prepare for emergencies, but we can't always predict when a disaster or emergency will happen. That's why it is important to download the mobile app so you can stay informed and know what action to take to keep yourself and your loved ones safe in the event of a national incident.

Even if you don't have the app, Hazard Management has many ways by which to communicate with the public in emergencies including local media, posting to the HMCI website, social media sites and the radio alert system established in collaboration with the Department of Public Safety.

I understand the novelty of watching weather systems form and reading forecasts on social media, but I urge you to monitor official sources on local radio or television for news about any disasters that may befall us.

Shelter training has been taking place and I thank the volunteers who will manage the various shelters throughout all three Cayman Islands. They will be doing so while we are still in the throes of COVID. I urge those who attend the shelters to follow COVID protocols and shelter rules. Take your masks, sanitizers and a stock of food with you, please.

Your hurricane plans should include knowing where the nearest shelter to your home is located. If you don't already have a hurricane plan, please make one. You can find great advice at caymanprepared.gov.ky.

I repeat, we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and have seen our infection numbers spike again. If you have not been vaccinated against the virus, I strongly urge you to do so. If it is time to get your booster, please do so before bad weather hits us. Children aged 5 and older are also eligible for the vaccine, so please ensure that they too are protected.

If we do find ourselves facing another storm this year, I ask you to please pay attention to Government announcements and bulletins. All of our media outlets – Radio Cayman FM 89.9 on Grand Cayman, the Breeze FM105.3 on Grand Cayman and FM 91.9 on Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands Government TV, Cayman Islands Government Information Services and the Cayman Prepared website will carry information to tell you what to expect and what to do.

Hazard Management Cayman Islands also works with private media houses that have been diligent each time we have faced a storm to get out the important and necessary information.

While my Government will do all it can to help us get through any storm or disaster, each of us must ensure that we have a plan and are prepared to face this year's Hurricane Season.

I pray to God that He will once again spare us and keep our precious Islands and their occupants safe from this Hurricane Season.

Thank you.

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