

Opinion: Don't wait – prepare for storms

By Tracy Franklin

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is forecasting a major atmospheric river to hit the region this weekend starting on Jan. 8 and continuing through Jan. 9 with widespread flooding expected.

NOAA is also forecasting another atmospheric river arriving in the region on Jan. 10-11. NOAA is stating that this event could be similar or greater than the floods of 1997 and 2005 which greatly impacted South Lake Tahoe.

An atmospheric river is a conveyor belt of vapor that extends thousands of miles from out at sea, carrying as much water as 15 Mississippi Rivers. Each storm can dump inches of rain or feet of snow. NOAA is predicting 6-8 inches of rain falling in the Tahoe basin between Sunday and Monday; if these predictions hold, residents and visitors of South Lake Tahoe need to be prepared.

City public works and public safety crews are working around the clock between Friday and Monday to prepare for the storm. Friday and Saturday crews will be out clearing snow and storm drains. Residents need to prepare for the storm.

Today we encourage residents to get prepared by doing the following:

- Stay home. If you really don't have to go out, don't. Even if you can drive well in the snow, not everyone else can. Don't tempt fate: If you don't have somewhere you have to be,

#StayHomeStaySafe.

- Get sand bags. Sand bags are available at the city yard at 1160 Rufus Allen Blvd. and also at fire station No. 3 at 2101 Lake Tahoe Blvd.
- Clear storm drains. There are 1,874 storm drains in the city. City crews will be out clearing to clear high priority drains in expected flood areas. Residents can also help by clearing any storm drains in front of their home. Use a shovel or pick to break ice and snow away from storm drains so that water can enter the drains.
- Prepare for utility outage. Gather flashlights and replace batteries. During the storm, Liberty Utility crews will work 24/7 to restore power where needed. To report a power outage, call 844.245.6868.
- Keep roofs cleared. Snow with high water content is heavy. When it's followed up by torrential rain, existing snow on your roof will become heavier. Spend Friday and Saturday clearing as much snow off your residential structures before the next storm arrives.
- Expect berms. Heavy snow is more difficult to plow and often results in berms in driveways and at street intersections.
- Stock up on supplies. People using oxygen tanks need to have battery back-up power on hand. Residents should store up on food, water, batteries, pet food. #StayHomeStaySafe
- Don't drive through water that is too deep. If flooding occurs, don't drive through it.
- Stay informed.
- Get the word out. Advise neighbors, friends and family of expected flooding and to plan and prepare.
- Emergency operations. In anticipation of flooding and severe weather, the city has already contacted American Red Cross and prepared its emergency operations teams to be on call and ready to open evacuation centers as needed. Stay up to date with

emergency and weather information with the city's social media accounts, Twitter feed, Facebook, and **NewsFlash reports**.

During the 1997 and 2005 floods the following neighborhoods experienced flooding and we anticipate flooding to occur again during these storms:

- Lower Tahoe Keys
- State streets
- Mobile home parks at Third Street and Jean Avenue and Woodbine
- Winnemucca and Highway 50
- Pioneer Trail and Blackbart at the meadow

Recreation center staff are currently working with the Red Cross to have emergency shelter established for residents displaced during the storm. The recreation swim complex is located at 1180 Rufus Allen Blvd.

Tracy Franklin is the public information officer for South Lake Tahoe.