In Case You Missed It: FEMA Administrator Discusses Hurricane Preparedness During COVID-19 Pandemic

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WASHINGTON – Earlier today, FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor spoke with The Weather Channel's Jim Cantore about the active start to the Atlantic hurricane season, with Tropical Storm Cristobal forming in the Gulf of Mexico. Gaynor discussed the agency's actions in preparing for this hurricane season on top of COVID-19 response actions, and guidance the agency released to local and state emergency managers.

"It's difficult in any hurricane season to do evacuations and sheltering. When you think about COVID and evacuation, sheltering, it's gonna be even more difficult," said Gaynor. "So part of our goal in issuing guidance and recommendations to our state, local, territorial and tribal partners is plan now for all the things you will encounter. I'll just pick sheltering, for example. You will need more space, more time, you will need to screen people. It's going to be more complicated this season."

Gaynor also discussed the fact that emergency managers are having to rethink several plans to include sheltering to ensure additional safety measures are in place for both evacuees and shelter volunteers.

"We are looking for not just the traditional shelters, where maybe you had one shelter that was used for evacuations in your jurisdiction, but maybe you need more shelters because you need more space. Maybe you have to think about hotels [or] dormitories," he said. "Will people evacuate on an order to evacuate, knowing that COVID-19 could be another threat? You have the threat of a surge. We want to take people out of that threat, but you [don't] wanna put them into a different kind of threat in a shelter," he continued. "It takes a lot of planning and thought. We want you to plan and exercise if you are an emergency manager, and

if you are a resident in any of these high-risk areas, especially for evacuation, ask those questions of your local officials and state emergency managers. What are you doing this season differently to make sure we are fully prepared-- from the local level all the way to the federal level."
On Friday FEMA's Acting Associate Administrator for Resilience Carlos Castillo talked to Univision's Primer Impacto Jackie Guerrido about FEMA's readiness and capabilities while responding to COVID-19 and provided tips for hurricane season 2020. Castillo also provided preparedness tips for those in high-risk areas and challenges they might face during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are ready for all kinds of emergencies and disasters. We are in the middle of the response to COVID-19 and we are fully aware that this hurricane season may be more active, however we are ready and prepared," said Castillo (translated). "Those who live in high-risk areas, especially those that have to evacuate, keep in mind that going to a shelter may not be comfortable especially during COVID-19. It may be a better idea to go to a family member's or a friend's house out of the evacuation area."

Click here to watch the story. *(This video is only in Spanish)*

For more information about preparing for hurricane season, visit Ready.gov in Spanish language visit Listo.gov, download the FEMA app in both English and Spanish.

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