

Ready PA *monthly*

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A Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) digital newsletter

Ready PA Monthly - May 2025

Riding Out the Storm: What to Know

The Atlantic Hurricane Season runs from June 1 through November 30, and this year, forecasters expect it to be an active one. While we may not live near the ocean here in Pennsylvania, hurricanes—and what’s left of them—can still pack a punch when they reach us.

Before we dive into the hazards, let’s give a quick shoutout to the real MVPs of forecasting: hurricane hunters. ✈️ These brave crews fly specially equipped planes right into tropical storms and hurricanes (yes, on purpose!) to collect data about wind speed, air pressure, temperature, and more.

This info helps meteorologists figure out where a storm is headed and how strong it could become. Pretty amazing, right?

So, what does all this mean for Pennsylvania?

Even though we’re not a coastal state, we still get hit with the aftermath—especially heavy rain, strong winds, and even tornadoes. In some southeastern counties, coastal surge can also be a concern. Here’s a quick look at what a typical hurricane season brings:

- 14 named storms
- 7 hurricanes
- 3 major hurricanes



The Top 4 Hurricane Hazards

1. Heavy Rain & Flooding

Flooding is our most common threat in PA. Long-lasting, heavy rain from tropical systems can cause flash flooding and river flooding.

⊘ Never drive through floodwater—most flood-related deaths happen in cars, especially at night when it's hard to see.

💡 You don't need to live in a flood zone to be at risk. In fact, 1 in 5 flood claims come from outside high-risk areas.

2. Wind

Tropical systems can bring strong, damaging winds that knock down trees and power lines.

💡 Tip: Make sure you have what you need to get by without power for a few days.

3. Tornadoes

Yes, hurricanes can spin up tornadoes! PA saw this during Isaias in 2020 and Ida in 2021, with serious damage and even loss of life.

4. Waves & Surge

If you live in southeastern PA, coastal surge and large waves from nearby systems can cause localized flooding, especially along rivers that connect to tidal areas.

What You Can Do

- Know your flood risk and check your insurance coverage.
- Have an emergency kit ready—with flashlights, meds, water, and backup power.
 - Sign up for local alerts and monitor forecasts when storms are brewing.
 - Make a plan for how your family will stay safe and communicate if the power goes out.

Hurricane season may not hit Pennsylvania directly, but its impacts are real. By staying aware and prepared, you can ride out the storm safely—whatever it brings.

For more on tropical storm prep, visit [here](#).

Staying Safe Around Dams

Every year on May 31, we recognize Dam Safety Awareness Day, remembering the 2,220 lives lost in the tragic 1889 South Fork Dam failure near Johnstown, Pennsylvania. While that disaster happened more than 130 years ago, it still reminds us how important dam safety is today.

Dams play a huge role in our daily lives by providing water, electricity, and flood protection. But they can also be dangerous if we don't know how to stay safe around them. This Dam Safety Awareness Day, take a few minutes to learn simple steps that can help keep you and your family safe.



Why It's Important to Stay Safe Around Dams

Dams hold back large amounts of water. If something goes wrong, that water can flood nearby areas very quickly. Knowing what to do—and what to avoid—can save lives.

Top Tips for Staying Safe Near Dams

1. Obey Warning Signs

Always respect warning signs and barriers around dams. They're there to protect you from dangerous areas where water flows can change quickly.

2. Don't Swim or Play Near Dams

Even when the water looks calm, strong currents near dams can be unpredictable and dangerous. It's safest to stay out of the water near any dam.

3. Stay Away from Spillways

Spillways help control overflow water from dams. Water can be released without warning, creating strong currents that can sweep you away.

4. Know Escape Routes

If you're spending time near a dam, always know the quickest route to higher ground. Being ready to move quickly can make all the difference in an emergency.

5. Be Prepared for Emergencies

Have a plan in case of a dam emergency. Know who to contact and where to go if an alert is issued. Preparation saves lives.

Dam Safety Awareness Day is a reminder that safety starts with awareness. Whether you're out for a walk near a dam or live downstream from one, taking simple precautions can save lives. Let's all do our part to stay safe, stay alert, and spread the word about dam safety.





Low Head Dams: A Hidden Danger in Our Waterways

Low head dams, often called "[drowning machines](#)"—may look small, but they pose a serious risk. These dams, found on rivers and streams across Pennsylvania, create powerful, recirculating currents (called backrollers or boils) just below the drop.




These strong currents can trap people and boats, making escape nearly impossible—even for experienced swimmers.

How to Stay Safe:

-  Stay away from the front and back of any low-head dam.
-  Get out and go around - never paddle over a low-head dam.
-  Check for dams before your trip - many low head dams are unmarked.
-  Don't take chances for a photo. Currents are stronger than they look.

By staying alert and keeping your distance, you can enjoy Pennsylvania's waterways safely.

 Learn more: [Avoid the Drowning Machine – Low Head Dam Safety.](#)

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