Duke Energy official offers tips for weather-related emergency

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
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SENECA — Although hurricane season began in June, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said the "season within the season" — a roughly eight-week period that is often the most active and dangerous time for tropical cyclone activity — is starting.

According to NOAA, the activity spikes that occur from mid-August through mid-October account for 78 percent of the tropical storm days, 87 percent of the category 1 and 2 hurricane days and a whopping 96 percent of the major category 3, 4 and 5 hurricane days.

As South Carolina enters the peak of hurricane season, Duke Energy recommends having a plan ready to activate in the event of an emergency.

Duke Energy representative Ryan Mosier suggests keeping these items handy: flashlights with extra batteries, portable radio with fresh batteries, first-aid kit, canned or packaged food that can be prepared without cooking or refrigeration, several days' supply of drinking water, portable (and fully charged) cellphone charger and prescription medication.

"If someone in your home has special needs or relies on electric-powered medical equipment, determine now the actions you'd take in the event of an extended power outage, for example, relocate your family member or have a backup generator available," he said. "Make sure your mobile phone is fully charged and phone numbers handy in case you need to check on family or friends in other locations or call emergency response agencies."

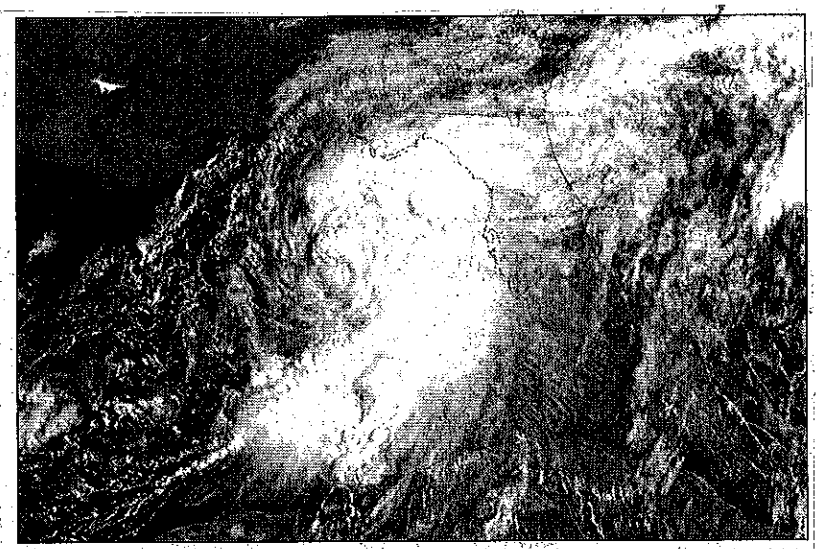
If severe weather moves through the area, Mosier encourages residents to be watchful for downed or sagging power lines. He said to consider all lines energized as well as trees, limbs or anything in contact with lines and report downed power lines to Duke Energy.

"If a power line falls across a car that you're in, stay in the car," Mosier said. "If you must get out of the car due to a fire or other immediate life-threatening situation, do your best to jump clear of the car and land on both feet. Be sure that no part of your body is touching the car when your feet touch the ground."

There are three ways for customers to report outages and get the most up-to-date restoration information. Customers can report an outage online at duke-energy.com/outages, they can text OUT to 57801 on a mobile phone associated with their account or they can call 800-769-3766.

"If you experience a power outage after severe weather, it's likely many other customers are out, too" Mosier said. "When there are widespread power outages, Duke Energy follows a restoration process that focuses on repairs that will return power to the greatest number of customers as safely, quickly and efficiently as possible. Emphasis is placed on vital public health and safety facilities such as hospitals, law enforcement, fire departments and water treatment facilities."

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SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

This GOES East satellite image, taken at 9:15 a.m. EDT on Thursday and released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, shows Tropical Storm Hermine gathering strength in the Gulf of Mexico. The storm was later upgraded to a hurricane.