

Watchwords by Officer Tom Hanshaw November 9, 2012

Although we're just over a week into November and still in the middle of fall, we've already had our first nor'easter of the 2012-13 "winter" season. Sandy visited the east coast and our community last week, leaving a lot of damage and a lasting impact. Unlike the "Halloween" storm of 2011, we did not receive any snow but the rain and wind certainly wreaked havoc. As an amateur weather buff, it was quite an interesting storm to track and watch. It was also a great topic to write about as we quickly approach winter.

We often poke fun at the weather forecasters, especially when they get a prediction wrong, but they were right on target with this one. More than a week before Sandy arrived; all meteorologists were warning this was a storm to monitor. Despite being thousands of miles away and battering the island of Cuba, computer modules were showing a potential track towards the east coast. A variety of ingredients were coming together to produce a recipe of trouble. Their advice, which is also the theme of this week's "Watchwords" was to "be prepared."

Public safety employees, government officials and those in the weather field share the feeling that it's better to be prepared and not need it than to be caught unprepared. For several days leading up to the storm, newscasters stressed the importance of filling your car with gas, stocking up on food, buying extra batteries and even having cash on hand. This was the first time I noticed a mention of cash but it truly made sense, as credit cards could not be swiped if there was no electricity. As we approach the winter storm season, be sure to add medication, warmer clothing and blankets to the list. We were fortunate with Sandy, in a way, because there was no snow to remove and the temperature stayed relatively mild, unlike the typical storms of December and January.

Some may argue the weather forecasters and public safety officials are just trying to hype the situation but that's not the case by any means. We are out there and see what happens when people are not prepared. Too often the result can be a serious injury and even a death plus you place emergency responders at risk when you don't evacuate or venture outside during a serious storm or emergency. In fact, we can usually predict the type of calls generated during a particular situation. There's no need to run out and buy six gallons of milk, ten loaves of bread and countless canned goods every time a storm is forecast but some preparation is a necessity. You should also expect some things are inevitable; like the loss of power. We rely on a power grid that in itself is quite amazing but "mother nature" knows how to pull the plug too. Unfortunately we take the simple flip of a switch for granted; wonder how they survived all those years ago?

Be prepared, be patient and be ready for the winter of 2012-13, it's just around the corner and Sandy may have been a sneak peak. In comparison to several other states, we actually fared quite well but the serious damage was not far away. It was actually a bit concerning how many people were not aware a hurricane was approaching prior to Sandy's arrival. In this era of technology and instant communication, the information is at your fingertips. Too often an emergency comes quickly with little warning, so take advantage when you've got time to be prepared.

The annual "Fill A Crusier with Food Drive" is on for Saturday November 17th, from 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Super Stop & Shop Plaza on Macy Street. We also have a collection box at the Police Station for donations of food, money or gift cards. Items collected will be donated to the Food Pantry at Our Neighbor's Table. I'm also pleased to mention that WNBP will be helping out again this year, with a visit to the Food Drive from 10:00 AM to Noon. Stop by to say hello to the crew, which is now playing the "tunes we grew up with" on FM at 106.1. This year's "Most Wanted" items include cereal, soup, stews, peanut butter, canned vegetables and pasta.