Keeping Our Eyes On The Storm - The Season Is Here

BY Richard Smith Posted May 31, 2022

The 2022 Atlantic Hurricane season has begun and it's time to ask – What have hurricanes like Elsa, Dorian, Maria, and other notable hurricanes across the Caribbean region in the last 10 years have taught us? If we're honest with ourselves, they showed us some vulnerabilities in our preparedness, as well as reinforced the importance of having our homes adequately insured. They have also highlighted the need to adopt a community-wide approach to hurricane preparedness.

So, with the official start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season on June 1st, we need to keep our eyes on upcoming storms. What measures are we adopting, or what mitigation plans are we putting in place to reduce our vulnerabilities? What questions can we ask ourselves? Could water possibly enter our homes under that windward facing door? Could the coconut tree's branches blow further than we thought in high winds? Are our homes as structurally sound as we once thought?

The time is now for us to do a survey of our homes if we haven't already, with the memories of hurricanes like Elsa still relatively fresh in our minds. We need to take stock of areas in and around our homes which let us down in previous years, with a view and intent on making our homes safer during the passage of a tropical weather system. This should be done systematically.

Start with:

• Windows and doors
• Roofs and foundations
• Take stock of your immediate environs (e.g., the trees around us – do they shed leaves that can block drains and cause flooding? Are these trees flexible? Are their branches brittle?)

If building or rebuilding, pay careful attention to:

• The points where your homes meet the foundation or where the roof meets the house
• Location of home – Is your home located close to a water course that if swollen, could cause flooding?
• How to supply your home with potable water. Do you have containers that you can store some water inside the house?
• Creating a safe zone. Include a bathroom and a place to lie down like the living room or a bedroom and add security to the area, where you can shutter the windows.

What to Consider For Home Evacuation:

• Where is the nearest shelter? Do you have a neighbour, friend or family member that would accommodate you and your family, given current Covid protocols?
• In the event of wind gusts and maybe even flooded streets, how would you get to the shelter?
• What arrangements can you put in place for your pets?
• Keep an eye out for vulnerable members in your community (age, infirmity, physical or mental disability.)

Let’s aim to be more prepared this year, to be more resilient and secure. Let’s set ourselves some goals, work towards achieving them for our good and the good of the community. We got this!

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