

Senior citizens prepare for hurricanes

BY ALEXANDRIA BURRIS • ABURRIS@DAILYWORLD.COM • AUGUST 14, 2008

LEONVILLE - As one tropical wave hangs in the Atlantic, senior citizens with the St. Landry Parish Council on Aging gathered Wednesday at the Leonville Municipal Building for a course on hurricane preparedness.

Jimmy Darbonne, a spokesman for the St. Landry Parish Sheriff's Office, said the meeting was intended to help elderly residents prepare for emergencies ahead of time.

"We need to know what to do if a hurricane comes and not at the last minute," he said.

Lisa Vidrine, St. Landry Parish Emergency Preparedness director, walked the group through a list of what they can do in the event of a hurricane or other emergency evacuation.

Vidrine said despite never having a mandatory evacuation, St. Landry Parish residents need to be prepared.

"We do have something that is out there that could potentially become something next week in the Gulf of Mexico," Vidrine said.

Alice Lewis, the Council on Aging's activity coordinator, said she asked that the meeting be held because she was concerned for the safety of the parish's oldest residents.

A part of St. Landry Parish, from Lafayette Parish to Washington, is part of the state's contraflow plan, where traffic flows in the opposite direction, she said. Evacuating citizens of coastal parishes are encouraged to drive to shelters north of the parish.

"We're a last resort shelter and parish," Vidrine said. "We can only open so many shelters with the manpower that we have."

Families should plan where they will go if they need to evacuate, how they will get there and what they need to take with them, she said.

She recommended storing important documents such as marriage license, insurance policies, death and birth certificates in a Ziploc bag.

"If you have to get help from FEMA or the state you have all the information readily available," Vidrine said.

They should also pack a blanket, pillow, food, clothes, medication, doctor's phone numbers, extra batteries, extra pair of eyeglasses, hearing aid batteries and cash for gas, she said. Evacuating residents should pack one gallon of water per day per person.

But don't forget to secure your home and patio furniture before leaving home, Vidrine said. Residents should also make sure their insurance policies are up to date.

Bobby Degueyter, Leonville volunteer fire department chief and town manager, said there are low-lying areas in St. Landry Parish that are prone to flooding.

Degueyter said his volunteer fire department can fill and bring sandbags for Leonville residents who request them, but if the request are made early enough.

St. Landry Parish Sheriff Bobby Guidroz also said parish jail inmates will be available to put together sandbags.

To contact the Leonville Volunteer Fire Department about sandbags, call 879-3200. The sheriff's office can be reached at 337-948-6516.



Lisa Vidrine, St. Landry Parish Office of Emergency Preparedness director, speaks to Leonville senior citizens on hurricane preparedness during a meeting. Pictured with Vidrine is St. Landry Parish Sheriff Bobby Guidroz. (Photo by Freddie Herpin)