

# Hurricanes and Home Watch: Why snowbirds and part-time residents have a choice in how to protect their Home Away From Home.

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Greetings!

June 1st marks the official beginning of Hurricane and Storm Season here on the East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico, and depending on the severity of previous storms in the area where your second home is located, you may take the potential threat more seriously than others...or not. Speaking from personal experience as a former vacation homeowner here on the coast of South Carolina while I was at home on the New Jersey Shore, I discovered the intense fear and anxiety of being so very far away from my place—while an “act of nature” was headed straight towards it. That fear and anxiety appeared each and every time I heard about the latest named storm, and where the “cone of uncertainty” was. Talk about feeling helpless? Being cut off from reliable information, and feeling all alone because I didn’t have people that I could really trust to look out for my best interests, was terrible. At the time, there were no Home Watch businesses that would prep my place—put away furniture and possible flying projectiles—and then document that it had been done with pictures and a report. And, afterwards, I had to wait to see if I could get someone over to my place to see if there was any damage. If I needed to get down there, would it even be possible? It was terrible, and I lost a lot of sleep. So I started my business, Coastal Carolina Home Watch and began to offer these services to people like me who kept second homes here in my area. And then the storms seemed to stop coming. There was a period when there were not many major storms on the East Coast or the Gulf of Mexico. As the years went by, and people began to get lulled to sleep because **most storms that threatened to be so destructive luckily failed to materialize**, It got to the point that people—intelligent people—stopped paying attention like they should have been. Storms named **Hugo, Andrew** and **Katrina** all became distant memories. And **Super Storm Sandy**, the tropical storm that did so much damage to the Northeast? Well, that really didn’t affect the Southern states. So, what was once a huge concern and was never far from people’s minds had, over time, become relegated to something that wasn’t really probable anymore.

Enter the Hurricane Season of 2017. Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water again (to steal a line from “Jaws 2”), **BOOM!** Hurricanes **Irma, Harvey and Maria** made their presence known by devastating the **Gulf Coast of Florida, the Texas, Louisiana and Alabama Coasts**, and a huge portion of the Caribbean, including **Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands**. Follow that up with **Michael and Florence**—Michael leveling towns on the **Florida Panhandle** this past year, and you can see why making arrangements with a professional, [NHWA Accredited Home Watch](#) company is so important. **These storms, and the actions (and lack of actions) by unaccredited Home Watch companies, exposed the weaknesses** of some homeowners’ storm and emergency plans in a big way. The old “My neighbor keeps an eye on things for me,” or “Some guy has been watching my place for years for a few dollars,” suddenly made some people realize that these folks were not the smartest choice. When people are doing you a favor by checking when they can—without pay, planning, training, efficient reporting, or even proper insurance—what guarantee do you have that they will even show up? You don’t. And your neighbors and friends? Are you going to stop associating with them if they make mistakes, miss things, or can’t do what need to be done?

Proper storm preparation takes time to plan. Proper communication—both pre- and post-storm, as well as realistic expectations of what is to be expected by both you, the client, and the Home Watch provider—must be discussed and then agreed to. And, all of this will come with a price, sometimes a portion of which will be pre-paid. A professional Home Watch company must plan and rehearse for your home, make sure any outside labor is trained, and schedule all of this, contingencies included. Accredited Members of the National Home Watch Association are bonded, insured, and hold whatever local registrations or business

licenses are required to operate legally. So if you have not made plans by now, you need to move quickly and reach out to your closest available NHTA Member. If you have any questions about this blog, please contact me at the NHTA office at (843) 357-6660.

Thanks for reading,