

September is national preparedness month. South Alabamians got a head start in formulating their emergency plans as Hurricane Isaac churned along our shoreline during the final days of August. While the bulk of Isaac largely missed our state – flooding some low lying areas – it was a poignant reminder that major disasters can strike our region at any time.

Seasoned hurricane veterans know that vigilance and preparedness are the watchwords when faced with potentially deadly storms. While our lines of communication are steadily improving, many threats are unpredictable.

Tornadoes and flash floods are all too common in our region and their effects can be swift and devastating. In short, to combat these and other potential threats we must be prepared.

While huge storms don't pass our way every year, the last decade has witnessed two catastrophic hurricanes in our backyard. Ivan made a direct hit in Baldwin County in September 2004, flooding coastal areas and severely damaging many homes and businesses along the coast and up through central Alabama. A year later, Katrina assaulted Biloxi and New Orleans but the enormous size of the storm ensured that its path of destruction spread into Alabama. Even today – seven years after Katrina – its impact is still felt in Louisiana and Mississippi Gulf Coast communities, which were devastated by the historic hurricane. Isaac's landfall near New Orleans on the seventh anniversary of Katrina's arrival raised fears and prompted coastal evacuations from Louisiana to Alabama.

The 2012 hurricane season is already well underway with up to 17 named storms predicted and the potential for three major hurricanes. September is therefore an opportune time for each of us to think about disaster preparedness and to work out our own plans to deal with emergency situations.

For tips on putting together emergency kits and preparing your home and family for storms and other disasters, visit the State of Alabama's web site: <http://www.readyalabama.gov/>.

Of course preparation is only effective if it is paired with prompt information about pending emergencies. Social media is increasingly popular, but is particularly vulnerable to disruption

due to power and communications outages during storms and other disasters. Alabamians are encouraged to add a battery-operated weather radio to their stock of supplies in addition to tuning into their local radio and TV stations for timely bulletins.

Remembering the Terror Attacks of September 11, 2001:

Tuesday marks the 11th anniversary of the terror attacks of September 11, 2001.

Without warning, a great evil struck America with the intent to terrorize our nation. No amount of time can diminish the loss suffered by so many on that dark day. Nor will we ever forget the remarkable heroism demonstrated by first responders and ordinary citizens who were suddenly faced with choices of life and death.

Amid the shock and horror of those fateful hours, America came together like many have not seen in their lifetimes. Our country was unified in its determination to combat this evil and triumph.

Today, most of those responsible for the attacks of 9/11 are either dead or in U.S. custody. America's military and our first responders remain our heroes – protecting our shores and our streets. We will never forget.

Saying Goodbye to a "Reluctant Hero":

On September 13, the National Cathedral in Washington, DC will host a memorial service for one of the most famous Americans of the 20th Century. On July 20, 1969, Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped out of the Eagle Lunar Module and onto the surface of the Moon. His words, "That's one small step for 'a' man, one giant leap for mankind," electrified and inspired a nation and the world.

Neil Armstrong passed away on August 25, 2012, in his home state of Ohio. He was 82.

Although an icon of the American space program and the first man to walk on the Moon, Mr. Armstrong never sought fame or fortune for his historic contribution. He largely lived his life out of the glare of media attention. In a statement released by his family after his death, he was described as "a reluctant hero, who always believed he was just doing his job."

For those of us who watched those black and white images of the first lunar landing back in the summer of 1969, Neil Armstrong and the crew of Apollo 11 will live forever as symbols of mankind's indomitable spirit.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

For release: September 10, 2012