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Tampa Tribune (Florida)

May 31, 2006 Wednesday  
FINAL EDITION

## Don't Bet Your Life That Government Will Come To The Rescue

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**SECTION:** NATION/WORLD; Pg. 11

**LENGTH:** 512 words

Hurricane season starts Thursday. If the last one taught us anything, it was to be prepared and not to depend on government to bail you out.

A recent poll seems to indicate that those lessons weren't learned. Among coastal residents polled by the Mason-Dixon organization, The Associated Press reported, "60 percent of those questioned have no disaster plan, 68 percent don't have a hurricane survival kit and 83 percent have not taken steps to make their homes stronger."

National Hurricane Center director Max Mayfield, dismayed over the poll results, offers a few pointers: Check your homeowners insurance now and make sure it's accurate; have at least a three-day supply of food, water and medicine for each family member; fill up your gas tank; stock up on flashlights, battery-powered radios, extra batteries and cash; and leave promptly if ordered to evacuate.

Following that advice would have saved a lot of headaches and even lives in hurricane seasons past, but it seems that many would rather wait for government to save the day.

There are two main problems with that mind-set. First, government isn't exactly the best entity to trust when things get rough. Last year's Hurricane Katrina debacle displayed that. Those relying on government to protect them from the storm got a rude awakening.

And even when government does help, it's not very efficient. Stories of unused mobile homes and abuse of debit cards meant for storm relief bolster that. It's pretty much an axiom that just about everything can be done by the private sector, and even sometimes individuals, more efficiently than government can do it.

Second, it's not a good practice to rely on government instead of taking personal responsibility for your life and safety. When you rely on government, what you're really doing is relying on other people - taxpayers - to bail you out. Granted, there are instances when reliance on government is unavoidable, but it shouldn't ever become the norm - even during a hurricane (something that can happen every year).

That you live in Florida should be reason enough for you to know to prepare for hurricanes. The ultimate responsibility lies with you. Such independence is the cornerstone of what this country was built upon: self-reliance, freedom and personal responsibility.

But personal responsibility requires a bit of courage and conviction. It's always easier to step back from taking any

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responsibility and put it all on others, particularly government, to take care of things.

To make it through this hurricane season, we all have to put aside the notion that government is solely responsible for taking care of our property damage, property insurance, housing and the like. The responsibility needs to shift back to where it belongs: on each individual. And it won't be an easy shift for us to make.

Adam Fowler has a degree in political science from the University of South Florida. Keyword: Community Columnists, to read other recent columns.

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**LOAD-DATE:** June 1, 2006

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**NOTES:** COMMUNITY COLUMNIST OTHER VIEWS

**GRAPHIC:** .

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

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