

Staten Island Severe Storm Evacuation: Go to High Ground and Bring your Automobile

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Staten Island , NY has been hit by hurricanes in the past. More than half the deaths in NYC from Superstorm Sandy occurred on Staten Island. In addition thousands of cars on Staten Island were submerged in the floodwaters of Superstorm Sandy. Not only did some residents lose their home but they also lost their only means of transportation and an emergency shelter. They were not able to get to work because of poor public transportation. In our experience in disaster planning we have taken an interdisciplinary approach in order to deal with the issues of human impact, and the economic and political aspects. Therefore, our interdisciplinary team has developed a storm surge survival guide. Modeled after the "Living On Shaky Ground" guide for the Oregon coast which focused on Tsunami survival this guide focuses a different geologic hazard, namely hurricane storm surge. The guide includes a map that shows the inundation area from hurricanes and the high ground "safe" areas of Staten Island. Also shown on the map are some high ground parking areas. We have even delineated some potential high ground parking areas. In addition to material which is available from the New York City office of Emergency management we have provided measures to protect families and properties. Included is signage that one of our authors (WJF) has developed that would warn residents to go to high ground with their cars in case of hurricane storm surge. Throughout history geologists have given the warnings and in many cases no one listens. Here is a chance to educate the residents of Staten Island in order to better prepare for evacuation from storm surge zones. Staten Island has topography on its side. High ground is close by. Furthermore, it is noted in the GSA Position Statement Draft in GSA Today June 2013: "Geoscientists have a professional responsibility to inform government, the private sector, and the public about coastal hazards and the risks they pose, thereby encouraging and supporting responsible and sustainable policies and actions."

