According to the National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration, the average number of storms per hurricane season dating back to 1980 is 12 named storms, 6 hurricanes, and 3 major hurricanes. Don’t wait for the experts to predict a severe storm—prepare your business now to avoid damage to your property or loss of important information.

USE THE TIPS BELOW TO PREPARE FOR SEVERE WEATHER THIS HURRICANE SEASON:

1. Your hurricane survival plan should be written down and reviewed annually. This plan should address policies and procedures for employee safety regarding hurricanes, business continuity and contingency plans in the face of damage to the business's facilities, and customer/vendor communication.

2. Have an emergency communication plan with telephone and emergency numbers for municipal fire and police along with utility companies. These should be readily posted throughout your office.

3. Create a list of emergency contact numbers for employees. Which employees are required to be on-site in the event of severe weather? Who is essential, but can work remotely? Communicate areas of responsibility for key employees and how to perform their emergency-response duties effectively.

4. Backup all critical data and remove it to a secondary protected location. Storms are typically the strongest within 50 miles of the coast.

5. Inspect the property from the outside for loose items that could be blown away, and develop a plan to protect windows and doors from flying debris. Remove any branches or trees adjacent to your building that could potentially fall and damage it.

6. Have roofs, drains, gutters, and flashing evaluated by a professional to ensure they can withstand a storm.

7. If you have an emergency generator, test the unit for proper operating condition and make sure fuel tanks are filled.

8. Inspect fire protection equipment for proper operation. Make sure sprinkler systems are in service.

9. Shut off natural gas supplies (except to emergency generator if fueled with natural gas).

10. Raise stock above floor level to avoid water damage and sandbag any areas that are susceptible to flooding.

Visit FEMA.gov or OSHA.gov for planning tools and additional information on hurricane preparedness planning. For more information about how Arbella can help you prepare for severe weather, please contact your local, independent agent.