June 1 was the declared first day of the 2010 Hurricane Season. An “active to extremely active” hurricane season is expected for the Atlantic Basin this year according to the seasonal outlook issued by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) – a division of the National Weather Service. Regardless of the prediction, the key is always to be prepared for the Hurricane season.

The airport is an important facility to the community in good times and bad. Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport prepares for many types of emergencies, including Tropical Storms and Hurricanes. We participate in preparedness exercises and training for all types of disasters every year. As always, the number one goal of our airport is safety for our passengers, our neighbors and staff.

The airport’s Hurricane Readiness Plan includes coordination with local, state and federal governmental officials, airlines, tenants and vendors who operate at the Airport. The airport staff conducts a yearly review of the plan to monitor any changes that may be in effect since the last storm season.

If a tropical storm or hurricane is approaching the New Orleans Metro area and River Parishes, the Airport will remain open to the flying public for as long as flights continue to operate. It is important to note that the airline’s decisions to cease flight operations will vary from airline to airline. If you plan on traveling by air out of the region, due to an impending storm, plan early. If you are traveling with pets, check with your air carrier prior to coming to the airport. Please be aware that not all of the airlines allow pets and there are federal limits as to the number of pets allowed on each flight.

If you are traveling on a scheduled flight when a hurricane is approaching, please carry with you some form of flight confirmation and personal identification. The flight confirmation can be an “email” flight confirmation, boarding pass or ticket receipt. If you do not have the necessary documentation, it may delay your entrance to the Airport terminal. In the event of a tropical storm or hurricane, necessary Law Enforcement will be deployed to the Airport to ensure a secure environment and access to the Airport facilities. At the height of the storm, access will be restricted.

For the latest storm information regarding your scheduled flight, refer to your airline’s web site, reservation telephone number or the Airport’s web site at www.flymsy.com. The latest information about the storm status of the Airport may be found at the Airport website as well.

Those who plan to participate in city or parish assisted air evacuations should follow the directions of their city or parish authorities and proceed to the designated pick up locations. Transportation for airlift evacuations will be managed and operated through a designated government agency, not Armstrong International Airport. It is important to note that as in the past, the Airport is not an authorized storm shelter. For safety reasons, no one will be allowed to ride out a storm at the Airport. Should the call for evacuation come this season, please monitor your radio and/or television and follow the instructions given. It could save your life and the life of your loved ones.

We hope that the NOAA Hurricane forecast for this year does not come to fruition, particularly for the Gulf Coast. However, in the event a storm does pass our way, it is imperative that everyone be prepared to respond in a fashion to stay out of harm’s way. If you have not made storm evacuation plans for this year, please do so immediately.

Iftikhar Ahmad may be reached at director@flymsy.com. Watch “Airport Alive”, the Armstrong International Airport TV show. Check your local TV listings for day and time in your area or watch it on the web at www.flymsy.com - click the Airport Alive link on the home page to view the 30 minute program.