

## The “Perfect” Nor’easter

By Andrew Chandler

Living in New England it is important to always be prepared for the dangers of a Northeaster. But before you can prepare for a Northeaster you must understand what one is. A Northeaster or “Nor’easter” is a storm blowing from the northeast. These storms often consist of intense winds, high tides and heavy rain or snow. Northeasters form when a storm moves up the east coast and then crashes into strong winds coming from the Atlantic Ocean. During a Nor’easter winds circulate counter-clockwise. These winds can strongly affect tides and waves. Within a twenty-four hour period, there are normally two high tides as well as two low tides. However, a Nor’easter can do two things to change the tides. One, strong winds can give high tides even more energy. Two, the winds keep tides high and do not allow for the tide to go out. Both of these affects on tides can cause flooding. Furthermore, Nor’easters affect marine life as the disruption in tides and abnormally big waves can cause displacement for coastline organisms.

One of the most notorious Nor’easters in recent years was “The Perfect Storm,” which was even made into a major motion picture. Right before the end of the 1991 hurricane season, a Nor’easter combined with hurricane Grace and warm air from the Gulf Stream current. This storm violently crashed into the northeast coast. Tides were about fourteen feet bigger than average and waves in some areas reached up to thirty feet. At Duxbury beach in Massachusetts wind gusts were reportedly up to eighty-five miles per hour. The storm also brought tragedy with six members of the *Andrea Gail*, a fishing vessel out of Gloucester, MA, dying in the storm. Six members of the Air National Guard were lost at sea as well, trying to save helpless fisherman. The Boston National Weather Service estimated the cost of the storm to be just under one billion U.S. dollars.

### Fact Box: Preparing for a Nor’easter

- If you live on the coast make a flood plan with your family and include evacuation routes out of your home
- Know where flashlights and candles are located in your house in case you lose electricity
- Make sure anything that could be blown away by the wind outside is strapped down or moved to a safer area
- Check with your parents that you have plenty of food and drinking water in your home prior to the nor’easter
- Keep all pets inside during the storm

If a powerful Northeaster were to hit the New England coastline several things would happen to damage coastline communities. Strong winds could cause damage by knocking down trees or power lines and pulling up shingles from houses. This could lead to property damage. Erosion of sediment could occur and make many foundations that are right on the ocean vulnerable to movement. Irregular tides and oversized waves would cause flooding and would also put communities at risk. Overall, Nor’easters are dangerous storms that bring changes to tides, waves and can

seriously damage coastal communities. However, living in New England we must be aware of the violence they bring and always be prepared for the worse.