

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the 22nd Annual Governor's Hurricane Conference. With over 1,350 miles of coastline, Florida is uniquely vulnerable to the effects of hurricanes. It is through the bravery and commitment of first responders that Florida has been prepared to take on the challenges that hurricane season presents. I appreciate both your willingness to serve and dedication to your communities.

One of the easiest aspects of hurricane preparedness is keeping up the level of public awareness and preparation in the wake of a storm. We have found the real challenge comes in the quiet periods between storms. Memories of the destruction and the mental and physical hardships of the last storm start to fade, despite the inevitability that one day another storm will be knocking at the door.

The theme for this year's conference, *Maintaining the Vigil While Preparing for the Inevitable*, addresses the challenge Floridians face heading into the 2008 Hurricane Season. The urgency of preparing for the hurricanes that will one day return is as high as ever. This urgency is remembered whether we are convincing Floridians that our state will sustain another hurricane in the future or educating the ever-increasing number of new Floridians who have never experienced a hurricane.

Florida has experienced a welcome respite the last few years. With this respite, we have also had the opportunity to prepare, train, educate and build in order to be ready. This year's conference will help provide the framework and tools to ensure this window of opportunity is not wasted.

Two-and-a-half days of our conference are devoted to a variety of courses that will train those responsible for maintaining the public's health and safety during hurricane emergencies. Additionally, over 100 workshops will be offered that provide the latest developments on ways to prepare, respond, recover and mitigate the consequences of hurricanes. We hope you find this year's program helpful in addressing the ever-changing hurricane preparedness needs of Florida.

Again, thank you for your commitment to the Sunshine State and its 18 million residents. It is through your efforts that our state remains strong, safe and prepared for whatever weather we face.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlie Crist". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charlie Crist