



## **Mother Nature and Our Hurricane Amnesia**

**A**t the beginning of each hurricane season Floridians are reminded and encouraged to remember past catastrophic events resulting from hurricane peril and use them as an example of how bad the next big one might be, given the exposure along the populated coastal boundaries of our State.

### Dick Tutwiler

*"This was brought home to me during the week of July 4th this year while visiting clients on a trip to the Caribbean when the unexpected happened. I felt the force of Mother Nature in the form of a strong earthquake."*

Unfortunately, the lack of even moderate hurricane activity in the last six years may have resulted in a malaise now called "Hurricane Amnesia." People forget, move on, new residents populate our State, and the young grow-up accruing responsibilities, and assets which in the past were not of concern.

We all forget or choose to ignore the wisdom and advice of others who have experienced the destructive wrath of Mother Nature. A Tropical Storm like Debby, while a discomfort and costly to some, can be viewed as beneficial if it helps wake us up and focus our attention on Mother Nature. Just image if Debby's winds were 30 mph or greater and the rising water had been 5 feet higher.

I confess, even with my background I am as guilty as the next person. I have more often than not chosen to disregard the accumulated wisdom of the past and forget

the costly learned lessons from prior events and place my worries about future events on the back burner. After all, why worry? It has not happened to me, so I must either have good luck, living right and thus blessed and spared.

Wrong. Your world can change in a blink of an eye. This was brought home to me during the week of July 4th this year while visiting clients on a trip to the Caribbean (that of course included some recreation) when the unexpected happened. While on the beautiful island of St. Maarten located in the Leeward Islands, I felt the force of Mother Nature in the form of a "strong" earthquake.

The quake (most on the island said it was the strongest they had ever felt) was a 5.1 to 5.2 on the Richter scale and hit on the afternoon of July 4th. First notice was a tremendous detonation, which sounded like a very large bomb or powerful explosion followed by the shaking of the earth. Then we heard another loud explosion. I have to admit this was a very unnerving event that reminds one how insignificant we as humans are. I'm still not sure how this sound traveled through the air when it was finally reported that the quake was located 17 miles away from St. Maarten just off the Island of Anguilla and 55 miles below the sea floor.

This was definitely a wake-up call for me and while not common in these parts, it was a reminder of the power of Mother Nature. I encourage everyone this hurricane season to consider the advice of local emergency officials. Plan, prepare and if caught in harm's way, listen to the experts. Trust me you don't want to underestimate Mother Nature.

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