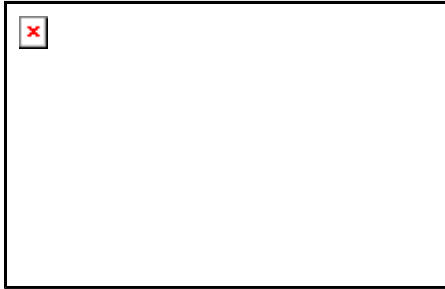


# Limited options loom for islands

By **ERICH LUENING**  
**CONTRIBUTING WRITER**

Although Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket are similar geographically - located miles off the mainland and surrounded by water - their hurricane preparedness plans are somewhat different.



On Nantucket, hurricane preparation is centrally coordinated by the Emergency Management Department, which develops plans for protecting life and property in the event of a natural or man-made disaster.

On Martha's Vineyard, emergency management is more complex because each town has its own emergency management entity, whether it's a single director or a whole department.

■ Bob Donovan, left, helps his father, Bill, board up the family summer home on Beachview Road in West Dennis in 1996 as Hurricane Edouard approaches.  
**(File photo/Cape Cod Times)**

In Vineyard Haven and Oak Bluffs, the two island towns with ferry service, coordination with each other and with the Steamship Authority is important.

"After Hurricane Bob we had stand-bys backed up for miles all the way to Vineyard Haven Bridge," said Peter Martell, emergency management director for Oak Bluffs. "Since then, we have designated the high school as the staging area for both terminal's standbys."

The Vineyard has no evacuation plan in place, which means providing shelter is the key.

"Evacuation is not possible," Martell said.

"In 24 hours using the whole fleet it has been estimated that we could only get 3,000 cars off of the island. We have the shelters in place at the local schools and the regional high school as a backup."

Although evacuation is not in the cards for the Vineyard, evacuation discussions are ongoing on Nantucket between state, federal and local emergency management officials.

Because of its remote location and smaller size of the summer and fall population - which peaks at 40,000 in August compared to 100,000 on Martha's Vineyard during the same time - evacuation is on the table, though not a preferred option.

"We are working with the Coast Guard now on feasible evacuation plans - percentages of people to evacuate and where to put them," said Mark McDougal, Nantucket's acting fire chief and deputy assistant emergency management director.

McDougal said his team revamped the preparedness plans over the winter because this hurricane season is expected to active.

"It would be great if residents would want to go, but a lot of folks usually prefer to tough it out," McDougal said. "We make sure now that we have the shelters and supplies in place as well as the transportation to get people to them."

McDougal, like Martell in Oak Bluffs, said the problem with evacuating islanders and visitors off the islands is that Cape Cod shelters will likely be cramped as well if the Bourne and Sagamore bridges are shut down.

"That is why most of our energy is spent planning for sheltering in place," McDougal said. "Not everyone chooses to go to a shelter, so a lot of our work is done educating people on house safety and precautions during a hurricane."

Anticipating and preparing for the big one is a long, tireless enterprise, McDougal said.

"It's an expensive process, but needed," he said. "It needs to be planned out over time bit by bit."

(Published: July 14, 2006)