Less than two years ago, every American witnessed the devastation and destruction that can happen when individuals and governments are ill-prepared to respond and rebuild after a major catastrophe strikes. Since this hurricane season has already begun, it is imperative that we all do our best to prepare for what is expected to be an "above normal" storm year.

Since the haphazard response to Hurricane Katrina, federal, state, and local governments have made necessary steps to ensure that history does not repeat itself. David Paulison, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Craig Fugate, director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, have assured me that Florida and the nation have the necessary contingencies in place for this storm season.

However, disaster readiness should not solely lie on the shoulders of the government. Individuals must properly prepare themselves for the worst case scenario. Everyone should develop family disaster plans and create supply kits. I urge Floridians to take advantage of the Hurricane Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday, which runs through June 12, to stock up on potential life-saving items, like flashlights, radios, and batteries. It also is important to follow local weather forecasts and heed any emergency hurricane warnings.

While there is still much work to be done, if each of us - from individuals to the federal government - does our part, we can help ensure that a Katrina-type calamity is never repeated.

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