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U.S. offers \$1.8M to study storm warnings

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration is offering \$1.8 million in research grants to study storm warnings and how they might help save lives during disasters like superstorm Sandy.

As the storm pummeled the region a year ago this month, flooding homes and hammering marinas, many coastal residents opted not to immediately evacuate.

Sandy landed south of Atlantic City but ravaged communities more than 100 miles away on Long Island and in Connecticut, causing more than \$62 billion in damage and about 140 deaths.

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Experts believe some of those deaths would have been prevented -- if more residents had heeded pre-storm advisories.

To learn how people responded to the warnings and why some chose not to evacuate, Sea Grant programs in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut will dole out federal funding for social science research projects.

"The intention is to help to reduce future storm fatalities and injuries," said Cornelia Schlenk, assistant director of the New York Sea Grant program, headquartered at Stony Brook University.

The research, which could include surveys, will also examine how future storm warnings can be more effective. The grants are open to scientists, professors, nongovernmental organizations and others.

Letters of intent are due by Oct. 28, and full proposals are due by Nov. 22. The money will fund about 10 projects, with research scheduled to start Jan. 1 and end by April 30, 2015, Schlenk said.

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Long Island native and noted character actor, Ed Lauter has passed away from mesothelioma at the age of 74.

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Ed Lauter, 74, a character actor who carved out a niche in the 1970s playing mostly heavies in

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Peter Rowe, director of research and extension at the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium, said many factors may have influenced decisions not to evacuate, including past storm experiences.

Some people may have believed Sandy wouldn't affect them because it made landfall miles from their community, but, Rowe said, "It's better to be safe than sorry."

Of deaths linked to Sandy, 48 were in New York State. Long Island recorded 13 deaths, the National Hurricane Center said.

Chris Squeri, executive director of the New York Marine Trades Association, which represents western Long Island nautical businesses, commended the federal research effort.

But Squeri, co-owner of Atlantic Yacht Haven in Freeport, said some people refuse to heed warnings.

"Trying to get everyone to do what they are supposed to do is great; we make laws all the time to do that, but at the same time, people don't always listen," he said.

To learn more, contact Schlenk at 631-632-6905.

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