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## Hurricane Season Gears Up – Are American Travelers Prepared?

*Access America survey shows just 21 percent have factored storms into vacation planning*

**RICHMOND, VA., August 21, 2007** – As Hurricane Dean approaches category five wind speeds on the heels of Tropical Storm Erin in Texas and Hurricane Flossie in Hawaii, an Access America survey finds that just 21 percent of Americans have considered hurricanes when selecting a destination for their vacations.

In the two years since Hurricane Katrina earned the dubious title of most destructive natural disaster in U.S. history, just 41 percent of Americans say they know when hurricane season is. The NOAA National Hurricane Center, which monitors tropical waters for cyclone development from May 15 through November, defines the Atlantic hurricane season as the period between June 1 and November 30.

The survey, a telephone poll of 1,000 adults conducted by independent research firm IPSOS on behalf of Access America, found that 55 percent of respondents plan to take a vacation – either within the United States or abroad – during hurricane season, including the most active part of the season from August to November. However, only 14 percent said they have purchased travel insurance for their trip, a precaution that would offer some protection against any one of the season’s anticipated storms.

“August begins the busiest part of hurricane season, as we’ve already seen,” said Beth Godlin, executive vice president of Access America. “For vacationers traveling to hurricane prone areas, the best way to plan for the possibility of severe weather is by purchasing travel insurance. That also means planning ahead by purchasing the insurance before a storm is named, preferably when booking the tickets.”

In 2005, the year that Katrina made landfall, Access America processed more than \$1 million in hurricane-related claims. Hurricanes typically cause insured travelers to file claims for trip cancellation, trip interruption and travel delay, according to Access America.

For a sense of what travel insurance might cost a typical consumer, consider the following example: Say a couple flying round-trip from Richmond, Virginia to Miami, Florida for the weekend pays approximately \$900 per person for their airfare and one hotel room in the off-season, without special discounts or all-inclusive rates. Travel insurance typically costs between 4% and 10% of the booking, depending on the package. In this case, for just \$29, the couple could each be individually covered for cancellation, travel delay, emergency medical and dental care, medical evacuation and transportation and baggage loss, damage and delay. Included at no additional charge is a 24-hour assistance hotline offering travel, medical or legal assistance.

### **Survey Methodology**

The Access America telephone survey was conducted by independent research firm IPSOS from April 9 – 18, 2007. There were 1,000 respondents in regards to the timing of hurricane season and vacation plans in the next sixth months for a +/- 3.1% sampling error at 95% confidence level. There were 545 respondents who indicated they plan to take a vacation in the next six months for a +/- 4.2% sampling error at 95% confidence level.

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### **About Access America:**

Access America provides travel insurance and assistance to millions of travelers each year and is a division and service mark of World Access Service Corp. A global leader in travel insurance and emergency assistance, Access America uses cutting-edge technology to deliver customized solutions to enhance value for resorts, airlines, travel agents, credit card companies and more. World Access is a company of the Mondial Assistance Group and part of the Allianz family.

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### **Here are the complete results of the survey:**

1. Do you know when the official hurricane season begins and ends as defined by the National Hurricane Center? **Yes – 41%, No – 57%, DK/NS – 1%**

2. Are you planning to take a vacation in the next six months either within the United States or abroad? **Yes – 55%, No – 44%, DK/NS – 1%**
  
3. Did concern about hurricanes play a part in your choice of destination?  
**Yes – 21%, No – 79%, DK/NS – NA**
  
4. Did you purchase any kind of protection plan, such as travel insurance, for your trip? **Yes – 14%, No – 86%, DK/NS - NA**

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