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For immediate release

Prepare before extreme weather hits

TORONTO, ONTARIO – As Hurricane Isabel continues on its approach toward southern Ontario, the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction is reminding people to prepare themselves, their homes and their property for severe weather.

"The time to prepare is long before the storm hits," says Paul Kovacs, Executive Director, Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction. "However, even now, people can ensure that lawn furniture is safely put away and that any dead or damaged tree branches that may pose a threat are removed. And when the storm does arrive, remember to stay away from windows that may shatter if an object strikes."

"When this kind of storm hits central Canada, the major threat is not wind but rain, and lots of it is expected over the next couple of days," says Kovacs. "People should prepare for the possibility of flooding in low-lying areas and in basements where there is a history of water seepage. If possible, valuable property that is stored in a basement should be relocated," he adds. "For more information on preparing yourself and your property from severe weather, please visit iclr.org. You will learn what you should include in a disaster safety kit and other helpful hints."

Hurricane Isabel appears to be eerily similar to Hurricane Hazel, which struck the Greater Toronto Area 49 years ago next month. While it is not yet clear what the impact of the storm may be, the region is much better prepared to deal with the effects of extreme weather than it was when Hazel hit in 1954.

"As a society, we learned a lot from Hazel and took the necessary steps to move homes and businesses out of harm's way," says Kovacs. "These investments in infrastructure have lessened the impact of severe weather on our society over the years."

Established in 1998 by Canada's property and casualty insurers, ICLR is an independent, not-for-profit research institute based in Toronto and at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. ICLR is a centre of excellence for disaster loss prevention research and education. ICLR's research staff is internationally recognized for pioneering work in a number of fields including wind and seismic engineering, atmospheric sciences, water resources engineering and economics. Multi-disciplined research is a foundation for ICLR's work to build communities more resilient to disasters.

For further information, please contact: Glenn McGillivray, Managing Director, ICLR, tel. 416/364-8677, ext. 3216, fax 416/364-5889, gmcgillivray@iclr.org