



The Abrams Agenda

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Palm Beach County
Commissioner
Steven Abrams

Preparing for hurricane season now

Last year's Hurricane Irma refreshed our memories of how devastating these storms can be! While our area sustained major damage and inconvenience, we were lucky compared to our neighbors to the south.

Remember, it is everybody's responsibility to be prepared in case a storm hits. Government alone cannot begin to handle all of the adverse impacts. It is also important to have an evacuation plan in place and make sure your homes are secure. Emergency officials advise that residents should be prepared to survive on their own for at least 72 hours. Supplies sell out fast once a storm has been forecasted, ***so it is important to do what you can now.***



Some questions to consider:

- Do you depend on electric medical devices or oxygen to stay well? If you plan to go to a special needs shelter, you must preregister.
- Do you have enough canned goods and bottled water stocked? See checklist on all recommended supplies and other tips.
- Do you know the location of your closest shelter, gas station and/or grocery store with an emergency generator?
- Do you have a plan for your pet? The county operates a pet shelter, but you

are required to register in advance.

- Do you live in a mandatory evacuation zone?

Don't wait until a hurricane is bearing down to make these important decisions. If you have questions, or need us to mail you information, please call my office at 561-355-2204 or Palm Beach County Emergency Management at 561-712-6400. Also, in addition to the links provided above, there much more helpful information on county's Emergency Management's website.

Sign up for new alert system



AlertPBC is the county's new Emergency Alert & Notification System that will be used to notify users of imminent threats to health and safety via text messages, email or

telephone calls.

Users will be alerted to various weather hazards such as tornadoes, floods, tropical storms or severe weather alerts.

In addition, alerts are also issued concerning public safety issues such as law enforcement activity, missing persons, and significant road closures.

We encourage all Palm Beach County residents to register themselves and their families to receive up-to-date emergency notifications. To receive up-to-date emergency information, register for AlertPBC at www.alertpbc.com.

Important emergency social media and apps

Emergency officials will be communicating with residents using Facebook and Twitter. I will also be posting on my Facebook page.



In addition, there is a free emergency app, PBC DART, which will provide you with vital information such as your storm surge evacuation areas, flood zones, shelter locations, grocery and building supply stores with emergency generators, and gas stations that remain open.

PBC Dart also lets individuals and businesses send damage reports, in real time, to the Emergency Operations Center, which will enable emergency workers to access and respond to areas needing attention during and after a storm.

While the new technology is terrific and great advances are being made, there are still some basic tips:

- Get cash early: it will be extremely helpful when the ATM screens are dark and swiping a credit card doesn't work during an outage.
- Gas for the car: fill up as far in advance as reasonably possible.
- Offsite data backups for important records, family photos, and other irreplaceable files that are stored on your laptop, desktop, or mobile device. A hurricane or other weather disasters can destroy computer equipment. It is highly recommended that you store backup disk(s) at a different location, such as a safety deposit box. Another option is online backup services to which you upload your data.

- Solar-powered USB chargers: No electricity or battery needed - just some sunshine!

County updates storm plans with lessons from Irma



Last year, the county took over the responsibility for staffing and managing the shelters from the Red Cross. This was no small undertaking! Consequently, thousands of county employees were tasked with working at the shelters.

For Hurricane Irma, the county opened 13 emergency shelters including one pet-friendly shelter and two special needs shelters. Nearly 17,000 people including 545 special-needs clients and more than 300 animals were safely sheltered. It was the first time in recent history that the western communities were evacuated due to the potential storm-related hazards near Lake Okeechobee.

In addition to county employees and Red Cross volunteers, each public school shelter is managed by the school's principal, with guidance from the county's emergency operations staff. Along with the principal, the school district staffs each shelter with two to three dozen employees, including police officers, cafeteria workers, janitors and facility experts. All non-school shelters also have a local law enforcement presence.

The special needs and pet-friendly shelters exceeded capacity for Hurricane Irma. Consequently, the county is in the process of obtaining more hurricane-hardened space.

Emergency managers also provided training for staff assigned to work during these emergencies. After feedback from shelter workers, significant changes have been made including wristband identification bracelets for shelter clients, enhanced security strategies, internal radio communication and more televisions.

Also, if you plan on going to a shelter, you must bring your own supplies such as bedding, blankets, inflatable mattresses, water, medicine, baby food and/or formula, water, and toiletries. Shelters provide simple meals and beverages; if you have special dietary needs or want snacks, you must bring your own. For more information on shelter supplies, visit

<http://discover.pbcgov.org/publicsafety/dem/Pages/Shelters.aspx>.

Hurricane Irma by the numbers

Hurricane Irma was the strongest observed in the Atlantic since Hurricane Wilma in 2005. It made landfall in Florida on Cudjoe Key, 20 miles north of Key West on September 10, 2017 at 9:10 am as a Category 4 storm with sustained winds of 130 mph. By the time it hit Palm Beach County, it was a tropical storm with winds at 67 mph and gusts up to



91 mph along with 8 to 9 inches of rain.

The following costs were incurred by Palm Beach County as a result of Hurricane Irma, (submitted to FEMA for reimbursement):

- Debris removal: \$2,660,568
- Emergency Measures: \$25,161,427
- Road Systems: \$4,170
- Water Facilities: \$56,994
- Buildings and Equipment: \$1,786,439
- Utilities: \$197,439
- Parks and Beaches: \$12,470,110

Total: \$43,337,328

In addition, the county had more than 682,000 power outages, and within 24 hours, nearly half had power restored. More than 840 traffic signals were damaged, and the county received almost 22,000 calls to the Emergency Information Center.

The Solid Waste Authority of Palm Beach County reported that they removed nearly 3 million cubic yards of vegetation at an estimated cost of approximately \$33.3 million and finished mid-November ahead of schedule as a result of increased collection sites. The 3 million cubic yards of debris collected is equivalent to filling up the Empire State Building! Most of the debris was turned into mulch for use on farmland in western Palm Beach County.

Shortly after the hurricane hit, the Board of County Commissioners approved a \$35.5 million loan for the SWA to cover the cleanup expenses. The county expects to receive reimbursement from FEMA of approximately \$31.2 million sometime within the next 12 to 18 months. No increase in the solid waste fee were imposed on unincorporated county homeowners by the SWA.





If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact my office at 561-355-2204 or email at sabrams@pbcgov.org.
