



*From the desk of Commissioner Robert S. Weinroth*

## **Prepare for hurricane season now**

It is everybody's responsibility to be prepared for the next storm. Government alone cannot begin to handle all of the potential adverse impacts. It is also important to have a family evacuation plan in place and to make sure your residence is 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 forecast, *so it is important to be prepared.*

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 a backup 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](#)?

If you have questions, or would like 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 is helpful information on county's [Emergency Managements website](#).

## Sign up for alert system

[AlertPBC](#) is the county's Emergency Alert & Notification System that is 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.

To sign up for these up-to-date emergency notifications, please visit [www.alertpbc.com](http://www.alertpbc.com).

## Emergency social media and apps

Emergency officials will be communicating with county residents using [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). My office will also be posting on my [Facebook](#) page.

**There is also a free emergency app, [PBC DART](#)**, which will provide vital information such as storm surge evacuation areas, flood zones, shelter locations, grocery and building supply stores and gas stations with emergency generators.

PBC Dart also lets individuals and businesses send damage reports 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, there are still some basic pre-storm tips:

- Get cash early. This will be extremely helpful when the ATM screens are dark and swiping a credit card doesn't work during an outage.
- Get gas for the car. Fill up as far in advance as reasonably possible.

- Create an offsite or online data backup for important records, family photos, and other irreplaceable files that are stored on your laptop, desktop, or mobile device.
- Use solar-powered USB chargers. No electricity or battery needed - just a little sunshine!

## **Hurricane evacuation risk shelters**

A hurricane evacuation shelter is a refuge of last resort; a place to go if you can't stay at home or with a relative, friend, or co-worker or nearby hotel. While shelters are set up in schools, the timing of openings and locations can change due to circumstances of the storm. Not all shelters are opened for every storm. Monitor local and social media for shelter openings and locations. Remember, pets can only be accommodated at certain shelters and only with a reservation.

Palm Beach County and Palm Beach County schools manage public shelters. Shelters provide simple meals and beverages; if you have special dietary needs or want snacks, you must bring your own. Shelters provide basic first aid only; cots and medical care are *not* provided.

Also, if you plan on going to a shelter, each person is assigned 20 square feet of space. You must bring your own supplies such as bedding, blankets, inflatable mattresses, water, medicine, baby food and/or formula, water, and toiletries. For more information on shelter supplies, visit <http://discover.pbcgov.org/publicsafety/dem/Pages/Shelters.aspx>.

## **Sales tax holiday for disaster-preparedness supplies**

The Florida Legislature has approved a tax-free period or sales tax holiday for disaster preparedness supplies that will start at the end of May. It's an opportunity to save some money and get your supplies!

The following products will be exempt from [Florida sales](#) from May 31 through June 6, 2019:

- AAA-cell, AA-cell, C-cell, D-cell, 6-volt, or 9-volt batteries, excluding automobile and boat batteries (\$30 or less)
- Gas or diesel fuel tanks (\$25 or less)
- Ground anchor systems or tie-down kits (\$50 or less)
- Non-electric food storage coolers (\$30 or less)
- Portable generators used to provide light or communications or to preserve food in the event of a power outage (\$750 or less)
- Portable self-powered light sources (\$20 or less)
- Portable self-powered radios, two-way radios, or weather-band radios (\$50 or less)
- Reusable ice such as ice packs (\$10 or less)
- Tarpaulins or other flexible waterproof sheeting (\$50 or less)

## **Learning from past storms**

In 2017, Hurricane Irma was the strongest storm since Hurricane Wilma in 2005. It made landfall in Florida in Key West on September 10, 2017 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. Even though Irma was downgraded to a tropical storm, our area sustained over \$43 million in damages.

The following is a breakdown of the damages sustained by the county:

- Debris removal: \$2.6 million
- Emergency Measures: \$25 million
- Infrastructure: \$2 million
- Parks and Beaches: \$12.5 million