

CITIZENS FOR RESPONSIBLE SPENDING



Post-Hurricane Recovery Best Practices Task Force

October 24, 2016

Preamble

The Post-Hurricane Recovery Best Practices Task Force is a bi-partisan group of concerned citizens who offer the following recommendations to local government officials with the goal of improving our community's preparedness and response to hurricanes and other severe storms. Our recommendations focus primarily on improving organizational structure, including the establishment of a clear chain of command; implementing a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) with appropriate coordination between the County and City; improving communications with the public before, during and after a storm; and prioritizing services to those with the greatest need. We hope these recommendations are received in the spirit in which they are offered---to make our community better, safer and stronger. Any member this Task Force will be glad to discuss the group's basis for making these recommendations. We welcome your interest and questions.

Task Force Leadership

Hon. Jeff Kottkamp, Chair

Former Lt. Governor and State Representative

J. Sam Bell, P.E., (Ret), Vice Chair

Former Utility Executive, Energy Consultant & Assistant City Manager

Task Force Members

Lisa Ard, Owner of Sweet South Cottage and Farms

Steve Bahmer, President & Chief Executive Officer of Leading Age Florida

Bert Bevis, Owner of Bert Bevis Realty, Inc.

Michael Brawer, Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer of Association of Florida Colleges

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Colleen Castille, Chief Executive Officer and Partner of Terra Conservation Group

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Emily Fritz, Retired Association Executive

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Irv. "Doc" Kokol, Retired, former Director of Communications for Florida Wildlife Commission, Department of Health & Agency Health Care Administration

John McEachern, Retired, former Bank President and Mortgage Company Executive

Tom Napier, Community Activist, and appointed by Governor Rick Scott to State Board of Administration as Commissioner of State Retirement System

Victoria Vangalis-Zepp, appointed by Governor Rick Scott to the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council & former Executive Director of Florida TaxWatch's Center for Competitive Florida

Technical Assistance

Raoul Lavin, Tallahassee Assistant City Manager

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RECOMMENDATIONS

Before the Emergency (Planning)

1. Local government chain of command

- a. Review and clarify the memorandum to Leon Board of County Commissioners from Herb Thiele, County Attorney, dated 9-12-2016, regarding Emergency Management Powers.
- b. Update and clarify the analysis in Section 1, Emergency Management Powers and in Section 2, Director of Leon County Division of Emergency Management, regarding coordination of emergency management activities and transfer of job functions.
- c. Establish a clear County/City chain-of-command process that removes non-law enforcement elected officials from intervening in response and recovery operational decisions. According to state statute, counties are in charge before, during and after all natural disasters. The appropriate professionals should be calling the shots: Emergency Management Director, Sheriff, County Administrator and, where appropriate City Manager.
- d. Review the County Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) to assure that it complies with Florida statutes.



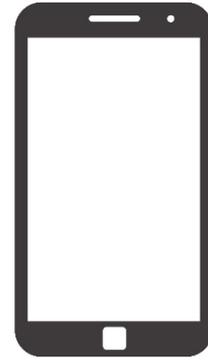
2. Organization and training

- a. The County Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) should be reviewed annually.
- b. The County/City/State should practice and drill hurricane and other disaster response plans regularly and with more frequency (at least at onset of the annual hurricane season) to ensure that everyone knows their proper roles and responsibilities.
- c. Provide training to non-utility County and City personnel to provide post-storm damage assessment reporting in order to expedite response and recovery processes.



3. Communications

- a. Develop outgoing (push) public communications system utilizing social media, mobile app and other commonly utilized platforms to provide the public with ongoing and just-in-time information and ensure the public knows how to access this information even during power outages.
- b. Ensure that the public and other stakeholders are aware of the CEMP-codified restoration priorities and the master plan for disaster recovery.
- c. Ensure adequate communications staffing through paid and volunteer networks to provide an ongoing flow of accurate information to the public.
- d. Engage County and City communications departments to work with all local media outlets to regularly educate and advise citizens on basic storm preparation in a concise manner.
- e. Incentivize all special needs citizens to register with County/City Utility emergency operations departments so that their needs and specific locations are known well in advance of storm. If being without electricity, even for a short time frame, is critical to their well-being, they should have plans to go to a nearby medical facility or shelter that is able to support them during and after the storm. Currently, the County and the City Utility maintain separate lists of special needs people, but these lists need to be consolidated and confirmed annually.



4. Utilities

- a. Seek and finalize signed mutual aid agreements from public and private utility companies, and execute them far in advance of storm. These mutual aid agreements should be specific to all potential costs incurred under all scenarios.
- b. Develop a systematic implementation plan for utilizing mutual aid providers and drill for this annually. This includes embedding one City utility crew member with each outside public and private utility company crew, even if the total number of local utility crews must be reduced to free up personnel. This will ensure that the greatest number of electric recovery teams are on the ground working while ensuring that safety protocols are maintained.
- c. Ensure prioritized restoration planning is adequate and leaves no unnecessary vulnerability. This means that a priority list must be created in advance, between the County and the utility, with specific addresses of those facilities that need to come on-line and in what order. For example, law

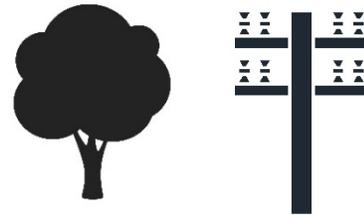


enforcement, hospital and medical facilities, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, special needs residents, juvenile justice facilities, child care facilities, hospice, etc.

- d. The State of Florida should be encouraged to utilize their procurement resources and purchasing power to make personal-use emergency generators affordable for local municipalities. This would allow residents to buy emergency generators to keep their refrigerators/freezers/stoves operational during and immediately after a storm. This could be managed similar to the *Energy-Efficient Loan* program and would allow residents to purchase a personal generator through a no-interest or low-interest basis. In addition, like the Energy-Efficient loan program, the resident would pay the loan back through their utility bill by adding a few dollars to their monthly bill. This would empower low and middle-income residents to be more self-sustaining during emergencies.

5. Tree and power line mitigation

- a. The County and City should jointly study tree mitigation issues, including cable burial, and establish clear policies that balance safety and environmental aesthetics with the cost to taxpayers to ensure minimal damage to main lines. This is particularly important along major thoroughfares and feeder lines in all neighborhoods.



- b. Assess tree growth and pruning throughout the year to limit possible power line interference in the event of a storm. Consider up to a 10-foot radius around feeder lines similar to what Investor Owned Utilities do in other parts of the state. This has very real financial implication to the taxpayers and will likely contribute to quicker electricity recovery.

During the Emergency

While the County and the City will be activating their Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and preparing to activate the Emergency Service Functions, the public wants to hear from those trusted to protect them. To this end, clear and concise communications is the primary focus for recommendations during the emergency.

There are some axioms of communicating during a crisis:

- A. You cannot over-communicate;
 - B. Given accurate information, people will not panic; and
 - C. People receive and process messages differently during a crisis than in times of calm.
1. Communication during the storm when the power is out and the wind is howling empowers the County and City with an opportunity to build a bond with their audience that will continue after the storm and well into the recovery phase.
 - a. Simple safety messages, weather updates and reminders that the County Emergency Operations Center will provide timely and valuable information secure a leadership position for the County as the voice of calm and authority.
 2. There needs to be **one trusted** source of information that both County and City residents can rely on for accurate and timely information.
 - a. The public needs to know who is in charge. Is it the Emergency Management Director, the Sheriff, County Administrator, or others unseen?
 - b. The clearer the lines of responsibility, the more trust you will find from the public.
 3. Messages should be crafted and presented by trained spokespersons.
 - a. Elected officials should resist the temptation to create and share information at any stage of the storm that has not been approved and released by the official spokesperson. This will drastically minimize confusion. A stronger communication process and tool should be established to allow elected officials to drive constituent queries to the appropriate portal/app.
 4. The City of Jacksonville's JAXReady smart phone application should be considered a best practice and emulated to the greatest extent possible.
 - a. JAXReady, created by the Emergency Preparedness Division and Information Technologies Division of the City of Jacksonville, Florida, helps Jacksonville monitor weather threats and plan for evacuation in the event of a natural disaster. JAXReady



provides access to current threat levels, weather reports and wildfire updates, as well as up-to-the-minute news feeds for emergency preparedness and evacuation.

5. The Leon EOC should review the Florida Power and Light operational plan for communication with their customers as a best practice. Below is a sample of their messages to customers during Hurricane Mathew.
 - a. *“As we continue to make progress in South Florida, we have moved our resources into the central and northern parts of our service area, aggressively attacking outages. The Treasure Coast and northern East Coast counties can expect to be restored by end of day Sunday, Oct. 9. You may have already heard from one of our automated phone notifications that we are now working on the main line serving you and may have your power back on by end of day today, unless there is severe damage, flooding, or additional issues with your neighborhood’s line. We thank you for your patience and will continue working to get your power back on safely and as quickly as possible. We have thousands of resources in the field working to restore power safely and as quickly as possible. Our crews are being helped by in- and out-of-state workers from other utilities and electrical contractors. We’ll continue to work around the clock to restore power to your neighborhood. We sincerely appreciate your patience and ask you to please stay away from downed power lines and flooded areas.”*
 - b. This message provides three important pieces of information.
 - i. Where are they working now?
 - ii. When can I expect my power to be restored if they’re in the current work area?
 - iii. A consistent safety message reminder.
6. The County’s Emergency Operation Center activated a Joint Information Center (ESF 14), but it seems the bulk of the effort was to provide press releases and press conferences. Many if not most, residents did not receive their information through this source because the power was out.
7. Today’s communication hub for most residents are their smart phones.
 - a. While they may be comfortable using web pages, Facebook and Twitter, during a storm, text seems to be the most reliable method of receiving messages.
 - b. Web pages provide a wealth of information, but they require an internet connection and a web page that is mobile-friendly or responsive in design for smart phones. During a storm, high-speed internet may not be available, as was the case with Hurricane Hermine.
8. The public wants to know the truth/facts, and they want to hear as soon as possible.
 - a. If the storm has caused serious infrastructure damage, explain what the implications are.
 - b. Rather than concentrate on what percentage of the power has been restored, let the public know how long it will be to restore all of the service.
 - c. Never speculate.



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9. There needs to a viable method for citizens to make an inquiry and feel confident they will receive a response from the County or the City. This was not the case during Hermine.
 - i. County and City Communication specialists can predict most of the questions citizens will have. These questions should be identified and answered in advance. This information should reside on a custom web page, the aforementioned mobile app and other digital platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Residents will then be encouraged to seek answers to their questions through these approved platforms.
 - ii. Commercial live operator systems can be pre-staged with pre-approved scripts and serve as that human voice so valuable to people in crisis if the volume is too large for County or City staff to manage.

After the Emergency (Recovery)

1. Provide consistent and accurate updates via a website and social media regarding the storm damage and recovery efforts.
2. Create a web-based and phone system for citizens to communicate with either the County EOC or City Utility regarding needs, questions and concerns.
3. In advance of the storm, specific areas for staging assets and post-hurricane supply distribution should be established and communicated to the public so they know where and when to go to get critical supplies such as water/ice/food. During this recovery stage, residents should be reminded what supplies are available and where the distribution centers are.
4. In advance of the storm, negotiate with the Florida Department of Transportation for assistance in early tree removal of downed trees. This will assist electrical crews in reaching areas with downed lines.
5. Provide debris removal status reports, similar to what Governor Rick Scott did with his Department of Transportation color-coded and simple-to-understand status reports, each day to the public during the clean-up effort.
6. Conduct a post-storm accounting of all government-owned equipment that was used/distributed (generators) so that a plan for maximum utilization can be implemented for the next natural disaster.
7. Tallahassee is the nexus for associations representing grocery, fuel, hotels, insurance agents, debris removal and transportation, etc.
 - We believe the County and City can leverage the near real-time information these associations receive from their members and then provide that accurate information to citizens through their smart phones via an e-portal.
 - What gas stations, grocery stores, debris removal companies are open? What hotels have rooms available? A web platform (e-portal) should be replicated/designed that would allow local businesses to provide such information on a timely basis that they are open and in business to assist residents.
8. Within 60 days of the completion of recovery, conduct a post-storm self-critique of the response effort.

