

After Action Review
Hurricane Irma

1. What was our mission?

On September 4, 2017, Irma, a severe category 5 hurricane, was headed toward Florida. My mission at that time was to alert island residents, the UCCA, rental agencies and property managers of the possibility of the storm hitting our area and notified them, by phone, of a probable evacuation of the island, the fire department included, if it headed our way. The objective was to give enough notice to have all those affected enough time to prepare for the worse and make plans accordingly.

2. What went well?

With the notice given, preparations began to secure property and give non-property owners notice to leave the island. A meeting was held at the NCIC office on Wednesday 6th, attended by Chief Kinniry, Commissioner Zeke McDonald, NCIC manager Bryan Brillhart and property manager Duncan Rosen. Pineland Marina was closing Wednesday the 6th after the 5:30pm Island Girl Charter run per a conversation with marina manager, Jeff Wilson. NCIC, Boats and Fun, and Duncan Rosen offered their boats for departure through Friday morning in necessary. Fire department staff began door to door notification of the evacuation of the island. Notice was also given that the fire department would be shutting down and no services would be available until the storm passed and it was deemed safe to return to the island. Any resident who refused to leave was required to fill out a refusal form.

A mandatory evacuation of flood zone A was given which included the barrier islands with the 4:00pm EOC conference call. The fire department staff made a second door to door and phone notification Friday morning the 8th, of the mandatory evacuation notice effective Friday the 8th at 9:00am. The fire department shut down and departed the island after 9:30am.

3. What could have gone better?

I failed to check the level of propane in the tank that supplies the station back-up generator before hurricane season began in June. I also failed to turn the fuel supply off to the generator before shutting down the station and departing the island. This caused the fuel supply to be depleted before returning to the island after the storm had passed. The station had to use portable generators to supply electricity to power the station until a supply of propane could be delivered or power was restored to the island.

4. What might we have done differently?

Having a checklist of procedures and duties to be performed when a major storm event hitting our area is eminent could have prevented the department being without power. I could have been better supplied when hurricane season approached. This could be included in a pre-season checklist.

5. Who needs to know?

There is an emergency response guide published on the fire department page of the UCCA website. It is available to anyone who is interested. There are also local hurricane guides available at the station.

Chief Kinniry