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City of St. Petersburg Reports Back from Hurricane Irma
THE STORM, ITS IMPACTS, AND THE RESPONSE

Hurricane Irma
City of St. Petersburg
Hurricane Irma

■ She was **HUGE**
  - 650 miles wide! Tropical storm force winds 600 miles wide!

■ She was **STRONG**
  - Category 5 clocking sustained winds speeds up to 185 mph!
  - Strongest storm on record to exist in the Atlantic

■ She was **EXPENSIVE**
  - $64.8 billion in damage

■ She was **LONG-LIVED**
  - August 30, 2017 – September 13, 2017

■ She was **DEADLY**
  - 134 fatalities
City Preparations for Irma
Activated City Disaster Operation Plan (DOP)

- In days before the storm
  - *City departments review internal staffing and disaster operations plan*

- Thursday, Sept. 7
  - *Meeting of Executive Policy Group for strategy review and decision making*

- Friday, Sept. 8
  - *Partial activation of the EOC*
  - *City staff on alert, beginning to stage at critical locations*
  - *Assets strategically staged around the city to ensure a swift response post storm (high water vehicles, boats, search and rescue teams, and debris push teams).*
  - *Sandbag distribution*
  - *Mandatory Evacuation Order given by Pinellas County*
    - Special Needs Transportation, PD/FD @ shelters
City Preparations for Irma, cont.

- **Saturday, Sept. 9**
  - Full EOC activation
  - Emergency Critical Staff on duty
  - Family shelters opened
  - Citizens Information Center open

- **Early Sunday, Sept. 10**
  - Evacuations nearing completion
  - City buildings were prepared for hurricane conditions
  - All City Staff in place

- **Evening of Sunday, Sept. 10**
  - Street operations were terminated until hurricane and tropical storm conditions ceased
  - City-wide curfew in place
Impacts

- Irma was nothing more than a tropical storm for St. Petersburg
  - Sustained winds in 50s, gusts in the 70s
  - Expecting catastrophic impacts!
- Mandatory evacuations for zones A, B, and all mobile home parks
  - That’s 321,053 people, countywide!
- 17 shelters opened in the county, 6 in St. Pete
  - About 24,000 sheltered total
- All City services were at least partially interrupted by Hurricane Irma.
- City did not reopen for business to the public until Wednesday, September 13.
- Extensive debris, property damage, and widespread power outages
Irma by the numbers in St. Pete

- Before the storm, St. Pete had 551 registered Special Needs Shelter clients. SPFR processed an additional 733 just in time requests for citizens!
- Fire Rescue picked up 411 special needs residents and transported them to shelters
- Distributed 152,000 sandbags
- 640 trees cleared
- 11 confirmed storm related structure fires
- 103 physical inspections of healthcare facilities for a welfare check during power outage.
- The Citizens Information Center processed approximately 5,774 calls during activation period.
- Over 24,000 citizens sheltered county-wide, at least 8,000 of those in St. Petersburg
- In the state of Florida, 15 million people without power. Pinellas County reported 87% of customers without power.
- Many residents had 7 days of NO POWER
- At its peak, about 130 intersections were not functional, triggering over 100 portable stop signs and dozens of generators at intersections across City.
- Initial city-wide damage assessment (public property only) was over $10 million!
Inside the Emergency Operations Center

- **Staffing**
  - Legal
  - Mayor’s Action Center/Citizens Information Center
  - Planning Section (Emergency Management and Fire HQ staff)
  - Operations (Police, Fire, Debris Mgmt.)
  - Logistics (DoTs, Fleet, Procurement)
  - Executive Policy Group (Mayor’s Office, Department Administrators, PIO)

- **Operations**
  - Situation reports
  - Support sub-center activity
  - Communicate with PC EOC
  - Coordinating resource requests
  - Coordinating recovery efforts
  - Problem solving
EOC Communications and Public Information

Team made up of City’s PIO, Marketing, and Mayor’s Action Center

- Citizens Information Center
- Social Media
- AlertStPete
Recovery Post-Storm

- Search and Rescue Teams
- Push Teams
- Damage Assessment
- Damage reporting from public
- Wellness checks of healthcare facilities
- Status checks of Special Needs client homes
Documents Generated Following Hurricane Irma

■ After Action Report (AAR)
  - High level overview of City response with Strengths and Areas for Improvement.

■ Corrective Action Plan (CAP)
  - Documents gaps and deficiencies
  - Identifies the Issue, Action To Be Taken, Who is Responsible, and Start/Completion Dates
  - Living document
Hurricane Irma After Action

Strengths

- Internal coordination and communication was clear and timely.
- The City’s Executive Policy Group response decisions were timely and productive.
- The use of the newly formed “Street Teams” proved to be highly effective and successful.
- Damage Assessment was complete and submitted to the County within 48 hours.
- The use of public buildings as relief centers for cooling off and power stations.
- Social media campaign was responsive and highly effective.
- Issued over 150,000 sandbags.

Areas for Improvement

- Ensure critical City facilities are hardened to withstand high-wind storms.
- Streamline process for reporting down power lines and trees to the appropriate departments.
- Planning for pro-longed power outages based on lessons learned.
- Have pre-identified relief centers that are advertised to the public pre-storm.
- The current City Code was found to be cumbersome to implement.
- Public education for preparedness and recovery.
- Sandbag distribution was a frenzy.
Conclusion

- This storm tested our City like we haven’t been tested before
  - Mandatory evacuations
  - Large amount of debris
  - Power outages

- Overall the City was able to coordinate large-scale response and recovery activities, involving a variety of partnering response agencies, to quickly and effectively meet most citizens’ needs following the disaster.

- The strengths and areas for improvement in this After Action Report will help to further enhance the City’s preparedness for future emergency events.

- The City will work diligently to take these lessons learned and implement solutions before the next storm finds its way to St. Petersburg.
  - See Corrective Action Plan