

Hurricane Irma - Lessons Learned

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KEN BURKE

CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER

PINELLAS COUNTY, FL



Before the Storm



Before the Storm

- Planning begins each year in the spring, when Pinellas County employees are required to submit a Disaster Planning Survey. Some of the areas covered include:
 - Do you live in an evacuation zone?
 - Do you plan to evacuate?
 - Employees are asked to select a preferred emergency job assignment from a list of choices. This is mandatory.
 - Employees are given an opportunity to request an exemption from emergency duty
 - Must provide a valid reason
 - Must be approved by upper management
- Records Management updates our department Disaster Contingency Plan and purchases supplies annually, prior to the start of hurricane season

Before the Storm

- EOC update conference calls began on Wednesday, September 6, and continued through Friday, September 15
 - Decision made to close Pinellas County Government offices on Friday, September 8 to allow staff to make hurricane preparations
- Clerk's Office planning session conference calls took place on Wednesday, September 6 and Thursday, September 7
 - Distributed contact lists
 - Distributed copies of the Disaster Contingency contract with Polygon to Records Management and to other key personnel

Before the Storm

- Determined who would be responsible for checking Clerk of Court offices post-storm
 - Designed and distributed a checklist for designated management team members to use for office status reports
 - Determined a communication strategy
 - Set up a schedule for distributing email updates to the management team throughout the weekend
 - Arranged to post emergency updates on the website and on our Facebook page for employees and public to view
 - Arranged for media broadcasts of emergency updates via local television and radio stations
 - Distributed emergency call-in and contact information to employees


Before the Storm

- Work out the small stuff
- Plan for as many details as possible, no matter how insignificant it may seem
 - Determined how time cards would be coded for days the office was closed due to the storm
 - Determined how time cards would be coded for those who were unable to return to work when the office reopened
 - This was put to the test in Records Management



Before the Storm

Records Management Department Preparations

- Lowered roll-down shutters
 - Verified location of storm panels & wingnuts with Real Estate Management
 - Verified provisions for sandbagging doors with Real Estate Management
 - Inventoried destruction-eligible boxes staged on floor
 - Covered equipment where possible
 - Covered FRS (cashier) station
 - Moved electronic equipment, boxes, etc. away from windows
 - Printed paper copies of administrative box inventory lists
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Under Siege

- **Friday, September 8, 2017**

- Pinellas County offices closed
- Tampa Bay area under storm surge warnings
- Mandatory evacuations ordered for Pinellas County
- Irma hits the Category 5 mark

- **Saturday, September 9, 2017**

- Tampa Bay residents advised to prepare for hurricane conditions from Sunday night, September 10, into Monday morning, September 11
- Direct hit in Pinellas County looking more and more likely

Under Siege

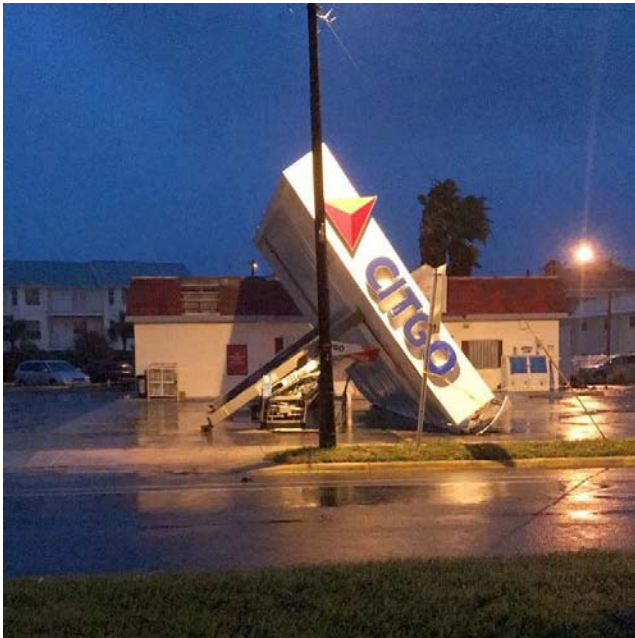
- Sunday, September 10, 2017
 - Irma slams into Pinellas County late Sunday night
 - Power, cable, etc. to most areas of Pinellas County knocked out around 11:00 pm
 - We dodged a bullet! Track shifted away from Pinellas County, sparing us the full impact of the storm
 - Irma entered Pinellas County as a Category 1, but still packed gusts of 100 mph



Aftermath - Pinellas County

- Pinellas County still sustained significant damage
 - Downed power lines
 - Trees, tree limbs, debris everywhere (Note: There are **STILL** debris piles scattered throughout the county)
 - Flooding
 - Power outages
 - Utility service interruptions
 - Cell towers out of service
 - Traffic signals out
 - Building damage

Aftermath - Pinellas County



Aftermath - Pinellas County



Aftermath - Clerk's Office

Pinellas County Clerk of Court offices did not emerge unscathed

- Closed 4 days (Friday, September 8 and Monday, September 11-Wednesday, September 13) due to Irma-related issues
 - Damage to some of our buildings
 - Water leaks in some buildings
 - No power or limited power in some buildings
 - Debris, downed power lines and malfunctioning traffic signals created unsafe travel conditions for our employees

Aftermath - Clerk's Office

Records Management Office

Irma

Us



Aftermath - Clerk's Office

Office of the Inspector General



Aftermath - Clerk's Office

- Some management team members did not have cell coverage or internet/Wi-Fi access, making communication difficult
- When the office reopened on Thursday, September 14 some buildings still did not have power
- Impacted staff were temporarily disbursed to other work locations
- Most locations fully restored by Monday, September 18

Aftermath - Clerk's Office

- Records Management reopened with no air conditioning and a partial power outage at our mid-county building
- Fire alarm was blaring. Volume was turned down but issue could not be resolved until power was restored
- I commandeered as many box fans as I could get my hands on to get us through
- Our air conditioning was not restored until September 18



Take Away

- Beef up communication plan
 - Explore additional forums
 - Will never be 100% fool proof
- Roof replacement – mid-county location
- Address bifurcated power feed at mid-county location
 - Sporadic power and A/C outage were the result of two separate power feeds coming into the building
 - Real Estate Management has been asked to address and resolve
- Purchase generous supply of fans for both offices

Take Away

- Migration to servers in safer areas
 - Box Management system migrated to a more robust server at PSC on September 29, 2017
 - Previous server was almost lost during IRMA
- Scan as much as possible
 - Scanning protocol for departmental applications involving long-term retention
 - Scanning protocol for long term documents retained in paper (FND) and microfilm (JOP)
- Reorganize microfilm on-site
- Continue to send record copy of microfilm to Iron Mountain

Thank You!

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