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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Flagler County releases Hurricane Matthew after-action report

June 21, 2017 – Flagler County has released its Hurricane Matthew after-action report, which overviews the response to the storm and its impacts as well as identifying 25 areas for improvement.

The [23-page report](#) is available on the county website. It is a thorough working document of the countywide response to one of the most powerful hurricanes to impact Flagler County since 1893.

“It required work and collaboration and the prolonged cooperation of numerous entities, including community, city, county, state, federal, law enforcement, as well as private and non-profits,” Emergency Manager Steve Garten said. “Even the most realistic training exercise would not provide us with the same opportunity to both reinforce effective responses and to identify areas for improvement, which is necessary to perform better in the future.”

Hurricane Matthew was the second major test of the Flagler County Emergency Operations Center, which opened in 2006. During the storm, the facility operated at its highest activation level for days on end to meet the needs of the community before, during and after the storm.

In all, there were 23 different agencies were represented in the Emergency Operations Center with a typical shift worked by between 80 to 120 staff members, and another 35 non-staff citizen volunteers who provided additional support in the kitchen and call center.

While the overall tone of the report is positive, there were areas identified for improvement.

“We would be remiss if we did not candidly seek ways to improve our response,” County Administrator Craig Coffey said. “Had the storm not shifted slightly away from Flagler County as it did, the pressure of any missteps could have compounded other issues, and/or hinder our response efforts.”

The 25 issues identified include the following: secure generators for public water supplies and private utilities; work with nursing homes and assisted living facilities earlier in the process if evacuation is anticipated; create pre-planned comfort stations for residents where devices can be charged and email checked; ensure generators are available for traffic control devices when power is lost; and open a disaster recovery center sooner.

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Other issues include developing a more comprehensive sheltering plan that re-evaluates shelter physical capabilities and stores of supplies. The solution also recommended auxiliary staffing and additional training.

The most critical issues included the staff and function of the Emergency Operations Center itself.

“We need to develop a more systematic battle rhythm,” Garten said. “We should conduct more mini briefings throughout the day and have a situation report (SitRep) that is constantly updated and can be widely shared.”

In recognition of the importance of these issues, Flagler County has already begun to address a number of the recommended solutions through creating mitigation projects and seek funding to enhance disaster resilience.

“We are committed to learning lessons from every emergency event,” Coffey said. “We are developing solutions for the issues we’ve identified to better serve the community in the future.”

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