

The City of Boynton Beach



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To: Mayor Taylor
Vice-Mayor McCray
Commissioner Ferguson
Commissioner McKoy
Commissioner Ensler

From: Kurt Bressner, City Manager

Date: February 25, 2005

Subject: Hurricane Report

I am attaching an after action report prepared by Fire Chief William Bingham. Boynton Beach was hit by two major hurricanes in a four-week period (Frances and Jeanne) and had diverted resources to assist other communities impacted by an earlier hurricane (Charley).

The first storm (Frances) had a major impact on the community in three key areas:

1. Extensive and prolonged loss of electrical power – immediately after the storm approximately 95% of the City was without power. The only exception was a small pocket near Bethesda Hospital. That institution had taken steps to have the hospital on two different power grids.
2. Extensive damage to trees and vegetation on public and private property throughout the City.
3. Extensive structural damage to public and private buildings resulting in the need for emergency relocation of residents and businesses.

The second storm (Jeanne) moved faster and did not cause as much damage as the first storm. In addition, there was less of an impact with the loss of electrical power. Initially, after the storm about 60% of the City was without power. Restoration was faster owing to the location of an FPL repair facility at the Boynton Beach Mall.

The damage to public facilities is estimated at \$225,000.00, and the total costs, including overtime, contracted debris and removal and other associated cost assumed by the City was \$2,460,855.00. A breakdown, by Storm, is as follows:

Hurricane Emergency and Clean-up Costs 2004 Summary

	<u>Overtime Wages and Benefits</u>	<u>Contracted Debris Removal</u>	<u>Other Costs</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
Frances	\$696,155	\$1,132,070	\$272,963	\$2,101,188
Jeanne	<u>\$203,098</u>	<u>\$ 128,412</u>	<u>\$ 28,157</u>	<u>\$ 359,667</u>
	<u>\$899,253</u>	<u>\$1,260,482</u>	<u>\$301,120</u>	<u>\$2,460,855</u>

From my vantage point as City Manager, I cannot be prouder of the combined effort of the City staff to:

Maintain water pressure and basic sewer utility services in the face of catastrophic power losses.

Public safety services provided by Police and Fire were active and functional despite lack of power to many City facilities.

Clean-up and restoration services by City staff was completed in a prompt and professional manner and despite conflicting information from FEMA as to what would be reimbursable.

Assistance by staff to displaced residents.

An engaged and active senior management team working together to resolve problems and anticipate events so that solutions were in place when the problem actually emerged.

Several comments and suggestions are noted for the consideration of the City Commission:

1. Pay policies for hurricane emergencies – The City was forced to rely on several collective bargaining agreements (CBA’s) and the Personnel Policy Manual (PPM) to craft a pay determination for staff. It is recommended that the City Commission adopt an emergency pay policy to be put in place upon declaration of an emergency by the City Commission. Such an ordinance could supercede the CBA’s and the PPM.
2. Develop a more refined public information program involving the Mayor. We learned from the first storm that residents wanted to hear from the Mayor and took steps to include him in public affairs announcement on our AM Radio Station. By the second storm, the Mayor was actively involved in the public information program including national exposure on a news network show. My research of emergency operations plans from other organizations reveals that other jurisdictions also do not have defined roles and responsibilities for the Mayor and other elected officials in a declared emergency situation. The City developed a series of recovery newsletters that contained crucial information. These were hand-delivered by staff and volunteers to churches and stores as well as “pushed” electronically to Chamber of Commerce members.
3. Examine the City Code and determine if retrofitting of City facilities is warranted for strengthening these facilities for storms. I recommend a case-by-case review as some of the facilities are lower priority buildings that cannot be retrofitted in a cost effective manner. I am pleased to note that our new fire stations and Library are being built to comply with the

- more restrictive Miami-Dade code for roof construction.
4. Re-evaluate the food service provisions for staff required to be on duty. Our current policy of providing just the basics in food (canned goods, etc.) is not adequate. Staff should develop steps to convert one of our facilities into a commissary with adequate provisions for food service. We were fortunate to have been able to supplement our food provisions with donations from stores and restaurants, however, the basic food service was lacking. In addition, having one or more commissaries will give the crews from different departments an opportunity to better interact.
 5. Standby fuel before and after the storm event is a critical need. Most departments took the necessary steps before the storm to see to it that standby fuel was arranged and that tanks were full. I recommend that the Public Works Department through fleet maintenance be given the responsibility to verify fuel reserves and to coordinate and direct post-storm fuel delivery.
 6. Retro-fitting City facilities with appropriate stand-by generator or transfer switch capabilities. As with #3 above, this will require a building-by-building review.
 7. Verify the number and size of Utility standby generators for lift stations and well fields. Generally, the City did well in this area despite the loss of three generators loaned to the Hurricane Charley effort. I believe additional generators or dual electrical feeds for key City lift stations and wellheads are needed.
 8. Provide several extra generators to be deployed in the community to support private relief efforts at churches or faith-based agencies. There were instances of several churches providing excellent relief services without use of public funds. Their efforts were hobbled, however by lack of electrical power. Perhaps the City's Grant's Team can identify funding sources for these facilities to 'retrofit' the buildings with transfer switches or generators so that a second tier of relief facilities can be identified.
 9. Continue to support hosting FPL as a power restoration site in Boynton Beach. I believe the location of the FPL site at Boynton Beach Mall was a crucial element in Boynton Beach's faster utility recovery.
 10. Improve intersection safety in power outages. The City did not have stand-by stop signs in place at intersections until about two days after Hurricane Frances left. In addition, our traffic control with personnel present at key intersections needs to be reviewed. I do not favor use of volunteers for this work. We may wish to engage the services of the Florida Highway Patrol Reserve or our own reserve units to assist regular on duty staff.
 11. Improve our public information on trash and debris removal. The City staff did a superb effort in the cleanup. However, as residents began cleaning their private property of debris, this material inevitably ended up on the street side. This played havoc with our schedule and advise to residents as to when our first, second and third pick-up would occur. The one-two punch of Frances and Jeanne also played into concerns by residents that items they left on the curb would be missiles in the second storm. Four days before Jeanne, we shifted our pick-up of landscape debris to building debris and damaged personal property. This was a good decision because the landscape debris basically stayed intact in piles during Jeanne. Also, I believe the City may wish to revisit the current policy of not picking up storm related damage from industrial and commercial areas.
 12. Seek better information from FEMA on eligibility of what is covered under the storm reimbursement programs. Current regulations are dependent on a state and national declaration of a disaster area. Once the initial scan is completed, by FEMA and the state, a

decision is made as to what areas of recovery would be eligible for reimbursement. In the case of Frances the reimbursement included debris pick-up from public property and damage to public buildings. Later, FEMA made several changes in approach, which were not readily available to the City. City staff had to do some digging and research to uncover the latest rule that “if you get to the curb of a public street, you can include this on the reimbursement.” This still left a number of private gated communities to their own devices to remove their storm debris. We had to advise them to document their costs and that the City could not do much more than the basic cleanup in these areas. I do understand that the Florida congressional delegation has requested a more definitive word from FEMA. Absent FEMA clarification, private gated communities are on their own for debris removal. The City should work actively with our delegation, Palm Beach County League of Cities and the Palm Beach County League of Cities to obtain clarification before the 2005 hurricane season.

The above are several suggestions I have on our Hurricane response plan. As noted above the detailed after-action report is attached for the Commission’s review and comment. I could not be prouder of the City’s prompt, professional and compassionate response to the two 2004 storm events. We learned a lot from the storm and were fortunate to have a very good storm plan in place. Special thanks goes to Fire Chief William Bingham and Assistant Fire Chief James Ness for continuing to remind senior staff that our plans needed to be updated and ready. Your staff took serious note of this advice and was ready for both storm events.

Cc: CMLT