



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

NEWS RELEASE

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SFWMD Recognizes National Preparedness Month *Recent tropical activity highlighted the importance of having a plan*



(Click on the graphic to view the District's Emergency Management Twitter feed.)

West Palm Beach, FL — In recognition of National Preparedness Month, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) is highlighting the importance of communities and families having a plan to communicate and stay safe in an emergency.

“Carrying out a solid emergency plan was on display here at the District in late August as two tropical storms threatened to impact South Florida,” said Beth McElroy, SFWMD Director of Emergency Management and Safety. “The agency was created to provide flood control, and because we had a solid plan, the regional flood control system and our staff were prepared well in advance of potential storm impacts.”

Each September, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sponsors National Preparedness Month and provides online information through Ready.gov. The theme of Week 1 focused on having a plan for flooding.

Florida's Unpredictable Weather

As long-time residents know, South Florida is known for extreme weather. The 16-county region from Orlando to the Florida Keys can experience the highs of torrential

rains and the lows of extended droughts, all within a matter of months. Such dramatic changes in weather may result in many different emergency situations, such as flash flooding, brush fires and tornadoes, all of which call for expert emergency readiness.

Unpredictable weather – and its potential for destruction – requires a network of resources as well as experienced people who can respond with skill and speed.

Emergency Planning, Training and Exercises

Each year in preparation for hurricane season, District emergency response personnel conduct an annual exercise known as "Hurricane Freddy" to test agency emergency operations capabilities in response to and recovery from a major hurricane.

Trained District staff exercise their emergency management and flood control procedures in response to Freddy, a simulated hurricane. The virtual scenario includes persistent, heavy rainfall and flooding in portions of the District's 16-county region, challenging water managers to address hurricane-related incidents and demands on the flood control system. Conducting practice exercises is a critical part of the emergency management process.

During actual hurricanes and other hazardous situations, the District activates its Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to coordinate response missions, including assessment of the disaster impacts, drafting operational plans to address the emergency, managing resources, mapping storm activity and planning for recovery operations.

In addition, the District assists state emergency management efforts as part of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) and can provide state resources such as heavy equipment, generators, pumps, personnel and emergency equipment for emergencies in and outside of its 16-county service area.

More information:

- SFWMD: [How We Prepare for Emergencies](#)
- [Ready.gov](#)

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About the South Florida Water Management District

The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.