Hurricane Irma - Lessons Learned

Presented by Sandra Tuller, CRM, FCRM, FRP
Manager, Records Management

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
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
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
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!

Sandra Tuller, CRM, FCRM, FRP
Manager, Records Management
Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Pinellas County, Florida
(727) 464-6458
www.mypinellasclerk.org
stuller@mypinellasclerk.org