

Sanibel Hurricane Action Plan Awards

Florida Governors Hurricane Conference - Hurricane Management Award 2005

Hurricane preparedness has been a priority for the City of Sanibel since its incorporation in 1974. The City of Sanibel was one of the first communities to recognize the importance of the hurricane hazard to sound growth management. Its planning efforts included many community partners and covered hurricane education, evacuation, reentry, and recovery. It also became a willing participant in the County's emergency planning effort and brought a neighboring unincorporated Island community under its wing. This preparedness program was fully tested when Hurricane Charley struck Florida, and the program passed with flying colors. Because Sanibel Island was evacuated, the City established an off-Island Emergency Operations Center in a hotel and staffed it 24 hours a day and seven days a week. It held daily meetings with the Island residents to keep them informed and used a website to post information and photographs of the storm's impact on the Island. The City put together reentry packets and provided them to residents when they returned to Sanibel Island. It also worked with private and public recovery organizations to find ways to cooperatively speed up relief efforts. This diligent work to take care of its citizens serves as a model of customer service under the most adverse conditions.

Program Excellence Award - 2005 ICMA Public Safety

As a Gulf front barrier Island, the City of Sanibel has always taken hurricane planning and public education seriously. Hurricane Charley put the City's Emergency Management Plan to the ultimate test on August 13th, when the eye of the Category 4 hurricane swept across the Island with sustained winds of 143 mph, toppling trees and destroying the Island's electrical utilities. It was through the City's advance planning and public information efforts that the Island suffered no loss of life throughout the evacuation, reentry, and ongoing restoration process.

Public information communication included:

- 1.) Due to the forecast, the entire City Government was evacuated off-Island, 12 miles from Sanibel and continued to operate from a remote location 24 hours a day, including daily community meetings attended by thousands of residents;
- 2.) A Community Alert System to phone every citizen on the Island;
- 3.) Updates to the City's 800 Hurricane Hotline;
- 4.) Community updates and media briefings;
- 5.) Real-time updates to the City's website;
- 6.) Radio alerts updates for citizens who purchased emergency weather radios through the Sanibel Police Department and;
- 7.) Notification to the volunteer Ham Operator Network to be prepared to help as back-up communications. As evacuation orders shifted from voluntary to mandatory on August 12th, police officers literally went door-to-door to encourage citizens to evacuate the Island.