



Hurricane Season

Hurricane season begins June 1st and ends November 30th. Now is the perfect time to stock up on medications, food, ice and water. Secure legal documents and irreplaceable items such as family photos, compile important names and contact numbers for insurance claims, and please, check on your neighbors. **Despite all of the good intentions of government, it takes time to get help to you** – sometimes as much as 24 to 48 hours. As residents living in an area prone to these types of natural disasters, we **must** be accountable for ourselves. Preparation is key.

The Palm Beach County (PBC) [Division of Emergency Management](#) (DEM) encourages all residents to “[Know Your Zone](#).” I highly encourage you to visit the DEM webpage for lists of PBC gas stations, Home Depot, Lowe’s and Publix stores with generators or that are generator-ready. One of my favorite DEM publications is their suggested [Emergency Supply Kit Shopping List](#). Shopping for supplies can be expensive and strenuous but shopping for items a little at a time before an event can reduce the stress of recovery by avoiding long lines and empty shelves. Disasters can happen without warning. It is a good idea to have disaster supplies on hand year-round. I am also a big fan of this printable [Hurricane Survival Guide](#).

Since District Five residents are well inland and far from any storm surge threats, evacuation is extremely unlikely. Residents are encouraged to shelter in place or with family and friends. [Special needs](#) and [pet](#) shelters require advance registration. It is important for anyone who is power dependent for health reasons to pre-register for the shelter at the Fairgrounds. Animal Care and Control does not limit the number of animals that citizens may bring to the pet shelter, however, only one person per household can stay with the animals. All other family members have to go to another shelter. **Remember, a shelter is a life raft, not a cruise ship!** There is an excellent [video](#) on the DEM website to explain what you would need to bring to a shelter should the need arise.

If you are a senior living alone, [Ruth & Norman Rales Jewish Family Services](#) (JFS) is offering a registration for older adults living alone who wish to have someone check in on them before and after a major weather event. There is no charge to register for this program but it is only available to residents in the JFS service area of Boca Raton, Delray Beach and Highland Beach. Participants do not have to be an existing agency client to register. Last year, 200 residents or their family members registered for this service and many found it invaluable in helping them feel safe and secure to know someone would be checking in on them and aiding as needed. Seniors can register (or their families can register them) for the program by visiting www.ralejfs.org/stormreg or by calling (561) 852-3380.

Preparations can help minimize property damage and make our communities safer. Now is the time to complete major vegetation trimming since it is too late to trim trees once a storm threatens. The [Palm Beach County Solid Waste Authority](#) (SWA) offers the following advice to ensure your yard is as prepared as possible:

- Cut back all trees and weak branches that could come in contact with buildings.
- Have foliage thinned so wind can flow freely through branches, decreasing the chance that trees or plants will be uprooted.
- Containerize small pieces of vegetation, such as pine needles, leaves, twigs, etc. in bags or cans that weigh less than 50 lbs. when full and place at the curb on your scheduled day.
- Clean your yard of any items that could pose a danger to you or your neighbors in hurricane-force winds, such as old lumber, broken lawn furniture, etc., and place them curbside on your bulk waste collection day.
- Place vegetative material from routine maintenance at the curb on your regularly scheduled collection day. This should not exceed 6 cubic yards – equivalent to 3 standard size refrigerators.
- Follow the 6/50 rule: each piece of vegetation cannot exceed 6 ft. in length or 50 lbs. in weight.

As our community recovers from a storm, the SWA advises residents to pile yard waste, such as branches, limbs and tree trunks (less than 6 feet in length) at the curb as soon as they can. However, yard waste debris in plastic bags should not be placed on these large piles. Any yard waste placed in bags and cans at the curb will be picked up by regular curbside collection haulers, along with small vegetation piles that are 4 cubic yards or less. Emergency debris collection teams are only removing the large piles of yard waste on the first pass. Construction debris, such as fencing, will be removed during the next pass. Mixed yard waste with construction debris or other trash will be collected last.

To assist the effort, waste and debris should be separated into three different piles at the curb:

- Put garbage and recyclables out by 6 a.m. on your regularly scheduled day. These will be picked up first to remove any spoiled food.
- Put all vegetation only in a second pile.
- Put all other construction storm debris in a third pile.

Be sure to keep these three piles separate and away from fences, fire hydrants, mailboxes, power line equipment (such as poles, transformers, downed electrical wiring), canal rights of way, storm drains and water meters. Again, please practice patience during this emergency collection effort. There is a tremendous amount of yard waste at the curb, and everyone will have their debris collected in a safe manner.

In closing, I would like to thank all who came out with me to observe Memorial Day at Veterans Memorial Park in West Boca to honor the men and women who died while serving in the United States Armed Forces. Additionally, I encourage you to mark your calendars for the 4th of July celebration at the [Sunset Cove Amphitheater](#) in the [Burt Aaronson South County Regional Park](#) cohosted by our [Parks and Recreation Department](#) and the [West Boca Community Council](#). This free community event will feature a kids interactive Fun Zone, live music and a fireworks display. Gates open at 5:30 p.m.

As always, I invite your comments on any issue of interest to you. As your Commissioner, I am here to help you. You may write me at 301 N. Olive Ave., West Palm Beach, 33401 or at MBerger@pbcgov.org. You can call me or my staff at 276-1310 or toll free at 877-930-2205. Please visit me on the Web at www.pbcgov.com/d5.

Yours in Public Service,