

# **Hurricane Exercise Hones County Emergency Response**

By Hector Flores

County staff participated in a hurricane preparedness exercise Friday at the Emergency Operations Center. The exercise involved a fictitious Hurricane Nicholas off the Southwest Florida coast south of Charlotte County. The scenario projected imminent local impacts, including between 8 and 12 inches of rainfall, with locally higher amounts possible, and life-threatening storm surge.

In the exercise, evacuations were ordered for residents in red and orange evacuation zones and five shelters were opened to house evacuees. Evacuation orders issued in all Southwest Florida counties produced traffic congestion on Interstate 75 and hotels reported no vacancies in Charlotte County and neighboring counties.

In the exercise, county staff and officials from partner agencies simulated storm preparations and conducted meetings to discuss anticipated impacts and responses to immediate needs post landfall. Throughout the meeting, scenarios were introduced that required staff to implement responses.

Conducting exercises like this tests our emergency readiness and hones staff's response plans and both internal and external communications skills. I've personally witnessed how my colleagues' demeanor and execution of plans during exercises has been replicated during actual storm events. It eases my mind to know how prepared we are for whatever Mother Nature throws at us.

I encourage all residents and stakeholders to be as prepared as possible by creating or reviewing your emergency plan, monitoring local weather forecasts throughout the hurricane season and be ready to respond to scenarios that may put your property or life at risk. Use our Disaster Guide (online at [CharlotteCountyFL.gov/EM](http://CharlotteCountyFL.gov/EM)) to help you put together your plans for before, during, and after a storm.

Charlotte County has experienced a devastating hurricane before. We all stand a better chance of making it through another one when we plan and practice our responses.

## **FAC election**

Congratulations to Charlotte County Commission Chairman Bill Truex, who was named president-elect of the Florida Association of Counties executive committee July 1.

"I am honored to continue serving the association by advancing my position on the executive committee," Chairman Truex said. "The board is comprised of such talented public servants, and I am extremely humbled to work alongside them as we represent our communities on many levels."

"Commissioner Truex has excelled during his time as first vice president of the association and proven to his commissioner peers he is the right person to represent them on the executive committee in years to come," said FAC Executive Director Ginger Delegal. "I am looking forward to seeing his accomplishments as president-elect."

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