

County in recovery mode from Hurricane Helene

By Hector Flores

The unprecedented storm surge from Hurricane Helene left hundreds of families with flooded homes and sparked dozens of electrical fires. In the 24 hours after the storm the county's three fire departments responded to more than 400 calls for service, including rescuing people trapped in their homes and stranded in their stalled-out cars.

Our staff leapt into action at the Emergency Operations Center to execute a response and recovery plan, spread critical information to the community and coordinate with our public and private partners to provide assistance to residents.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance for individuals and businesses is available and we urge residents and business owners to apply as soon as possible. Visit www.DisasterAssistance.gov or call 1-800-621-3362, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week. A Disaster Recovery Center and a Business Recovery Center have been established at the Port Charlotte Town Center.

For people who have turned off their power and are busy removing water-logged possessions and tearing out soggy drywall, the American Red Cross has set up a comfort station at Harold Avenue Regional Park. There are restrooms, showers, washers and dryers and an air-conditioned tent to cool off.

The county has contracted with a debris collection company, which will begin operating soon. As you will recall from Hurricane Ian, you need to sort out your debris when placing it next to the road. Keep vegetative, construction and demolition, white goods and electronic debris in separate piles. Continue to use your carts for household waste and recyclables.

If you don't want debris hanging around, our two mini-transfer and recycling facilities are open Monday through Saturday. The Mid-County Mini-Transfer & Recycling Facility is located at 19765 Kenilworth Blvd., in Port Charlotte and the West Charlotte Mini-Transfer & Recycling Facility is located at 7070 Environmental Way in Englewood.

If you need help clearing debris, request clean-up assistance by calling Crisis Cleanup at 844-965-1386. The deadline for requests is Oct. 11.

Residents whose homes have been damaged and rendered uninhabitable from Hurricane Helene can temporarily live in recreational vehicles and mobile homes on their property until Sept. 23, 2027. Only occupants of the damaged home may reside in the temporary RVs or mobile homes.

To register a temporary RV, visit bit.ly/rvregistration to review qualifications and other regulations. To obtain a permit to set a temporary mobile home, visit the Community Development Department at 18400 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte, to fill out necessary paperwork and provide plans. For questions about RV registration, call 941-743-1201.

The county needs assistance from residents who incurred home damage to conduct an assessment. To report storm damage, visit tinyurl.com/reportingdamage. FloridaCommerce is also conducting a survey of business owners at FloridaDisaster.biz.

To receive text updates on recovery resources, text CHARCOCARES to 888-777.

For additional storm recovery information, visit CharlotteCountyFL.gov or call 941-833-4000.

*Readers may reach County Administrator Hector Flores at
Hector.Flores@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.*