

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

*Board of County Commissioners*

04/10/18



## **Department of Public Safety Prepares for Hurricane Season**

**Niceville** – Hurricane season starts in less than two months, which means the Department of Public Safety begins to ramp up their preparations for any storms which could affect residents and visitors to our stretch of the Emerald Coast.

With hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria in mind, Okaloosa Public Safety professionals hosted a meeting with representatives from the State Emergency Response Team, Walton County, Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office, members of the military community, Fort Walton Beach Police, and other officials to prepare for an evacuation of our home in front of a summer storm.

Meteorologists from the state covered the meanings of maps, including the ones with the famous ‘cone of uncertainty, various storm map projections and some of the math behind predicting storm surges.

Storm surge is the single largest killer in a hurricane situation: according to the National Hurricane Center, storm surge kills almost half of victims in a hurricane.

As more and more people choose to live and vacation in Okaloosa County, County Public Safety Director Alvin Henderson says it’s of great importance to prepare before the season starts.

“We’ve changed in Okaloosa County. The growth we have experienced. We’ve seen record numbers of tourism coming into our area. That affects how we do our job in an emergency situation,” Henderson said.

After a potential storm passes, re-establishing locations to distribute food, re-opening pharmacies and businesses will be at the top of the list for public safety. Public Safety employees believe opening businesses has to be a priority, so people can return to normal as soon as possible.

Lessons were learned last year, even though Mother Nature spared our county from destruction. The county dealt with an influx of refugees who fled the storms which hit to the East. Henderson explained they learned to coordinate with local chambers of commerce and work with hotels, so they could properly house evacuees and compensate their lodgers. “We always plan for the worst,” Henderson said, “but we always want to hope for the best, too. Look out for critical needs and make sure you and your family are covered.”

**FOLLOWING THE LINK WILL BRING YOU TO THE COUNTY YOUTUBE PAGE, WHERE YOU WILL FIND A SOUND BITE FROM ALVIN HENDERSON ABOUT THE WORKSHOP. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO USE IN YOUR BROADCASTS, WEBSITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA.**

<https://youtu.be/vFzoFw5yXW0>

**PLEASE TAG @Okaloosacounty IN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS, SO WE CAN SHARE YOUR WORK WITH THE PUBLIC!**

*All photos attached can be credited to the Okaloosa County Public Information Office.*

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Okaloosa County Emergency Operations Hurricane Evacuation Workshop in full swing.



Public Safety Director Alvin Henderson speaks with a member of the State Emergency Response Team during the hurricane workshop