

A Chat with your County Manager

By Jim Mudd



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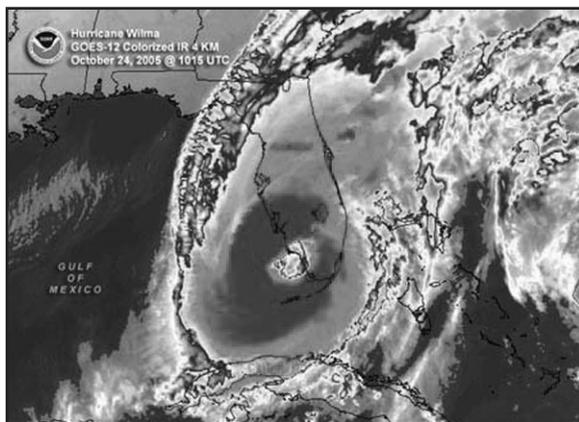
Welcome to our monthly chat. We are in the middle of the 2006 hurricane season and although it has been a quiet season thus far, it's important that we as a community do not become complacent about the need to be ready for these life-threatening, destructive storms. Collier County received high marks from the governor and federal officials for our storm preparation and recovery efforts in response to Hurricane Wilma. This is due, in part, to a sound emergency preparedness program that is closely coordinated between the county, state and other local government agencies. We are fortunate to have county leadership that understands and supports the necessity of having a disaster-resistant community. Large, catastrophic disasters like Hurricane Katrina will always require intervention and assistance from the state and federal governments, but "less damaging" storms like Hurricane Wilma, which made landfall just south of Marco Island, require more local preparation and planning in order to mitigate the storm's impact. The lesser damage caused by Hurricane Wilma can be attributed to our strong building codes, good planning by our emergency management team and a well-prepared community.

We learned many lessons from Wilma and have taken steps that we believe will better prepare our community for this hurricane season and the future. We have added and trained additional staff, updated the county's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), gained state and federal approval of a Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS), purchased additional equipment, finalized plans for an updated and hardened Emergency Services Complex and

coordinated for improved countywide FM radio coverage for emergency information (WGCU 90.1). Our Persons with Special Needs (PSN) program will provide assistance to persons requiring additional help in an emergency.

If you or a family member has special medical needs, such as oxygen dependency, you should register now by calling 774-8000. Our special needs shelter is located at Palmetto Ridge High School and is equipped with special cots and medical gear. We have expanded the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program to all of our communities and have begun coordination of our volunteer groups through the Collier Emergency Response Volunteer (CERV) organization. The Citizen Corps Advisory Committee meets monthly with all of our local preparedness and response organizations to discuss issues and provide recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners for improvements.

We practice our plans, not only with our first responders, like law enforcement, fire departments and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) paramedics, but also with Public Utilities personnel, the American Red Cross and organizations like the District School Board. Additionally,



our three municipalities, neighboring county representatives, the Florida Department of Emergency Management, National Guard and yes, even the Federal

Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are frequent visitors to our operations center for training and orientation.

A critical component to local preparedness, which is largely beyond our control, is individual and family preparedness. Each of us needs to take personal responsibility to know what our individual risks are, follow evacuation orders, have a 72-hour emergency supply kit ready and encourage others to do the same. The 72-hour emergency kit should include:

- * Food and water (one gallon of drinking water per person per day)
- * Change of clothes and sturdy footwear
- * First aid kit including any prescription drugs you require
- * Emergency tools including a battery-powered radio, flashlight and extra batteries
- * Extra set of car keys, credit card and cash (in case ATM machines

are disabled)

* Supplies such as all-purpose cleaner, bleach, mop, broom, tools, a heavy-duty tarp, duct tape and plastic garbage bags

* Insurance policies, other important papers and a photo ID

If you have to evacuate, have a plan in place so you can leave early and avoid the heavy traffic. Review your insurance coverage to be sure it is what you need to protect your home and possessions. Have a communication plan with your family members, both locally and out of state, to reduce your anxiety and the demands on response personnel. If you have situations that require special planning, such as an elderly or infirmed family member, or pets, you must plan for that as well.

Let's not forget that Hurricane Wilma caused more than \$1.2 billion in property damage in unincorporated Collier County. There were 617 homes destroyed and more than 14,000 of our residents applied for FEMA assistance. Wilma stretched available resources but our community recovered quickly, thanks to dedicated and hard-working government employees and the self-reliance of our citizens. About 11,000 people move into Collier County every year...most have never experienced a hurricane and we urge our new residents to be especially mindful of the need to prepare. It's been a quiet hurricane season but all of that could change quickly. Take action now to prepare before the next hurricane is on the horizon. Collier County publishes an "All Hazards Guide" which provides much of the information you need to know to be prepared. The guides are available at all county libraries and government centers. You can also contact the Collier County Emergency Management Department at 774-8000 or log on to the EM web site at www.collierem.org for more information.

Be prepared and safe during this hurricane season.



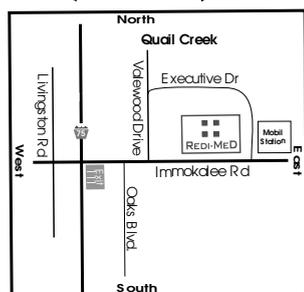
Shawn B. Miller, M.D. & John M. Smyser, P.A.C.

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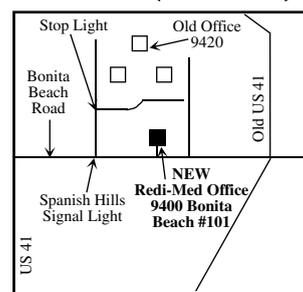
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