



July 18, 2016

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Lessons learned from Pasco County's historic flooding.

This Sunday, July 24, 2016, marks the first anniversary of the beginning of the 500-year flood event in Pasco County. The summer of 2015 was a devastating one for hundreds of families and business owners who were forced to evacuate as the Anclote River swelled out of its banks. Less than two weeks later, Governor Rick Scott declared a state of emergency for Pasco County.

One year later, recovery is still underway.

Some important lessons came out of this historic flooding and since we're in the beginning of the Atlantic hurricane season, it's a good time to review.

Insurance. Insurance. Insurance. We can't stress enough the importance of having the proper coverage to protect your home, business and belongings. Do an insurance policy check-up. You should have enough insurance to cover what it would actually cost to rebuild your home. Know what's covered – and what's not. Flooding is not covered in standard homeowner policies – you need to have separate flood insurance. Why? Because we're surrounded by water and hurricanes come with storm surge. And if that's not a good enough reason, consider this: Even if we have a federal disaster declaration (which we did not in 2015) the MOST amount of money you can get from FEMA is \$33,000. The average payout is \$6,000. Probably not enough to rebuild your home and replace your belongings.

Know exactly where you live. Are you in an evacuation zone and if so, how does that affect you? Take a look at the Pasco County Disaster Planning Guide online at pascoemergencymanagement.com to see an evacuation zone map. Or download the MyPasco App for interactive maps. If you had to leave, where would you go? Don't wait until a storm is heading our way to figure that out. And know this – you don't have to travel hundreds of miles to evacuate. If you have friends or family further inland, try to make plans ahead of time to stay with them. If you're the one in a safe area, invite your family or friends to stay with you.

Disasters are local. No matter what potential disaster you're preparing for – flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes – work with each other to stay safe. Help your neighbors. Whether they're older, have an illness or just don't have friends or family nearby – everyone should prepare and have a plan. Help each other cover windows, brace doors and secure things in your yard the wind could pick up. If you help neighbors secure their homes, you're potentially protecting yours, as well.

These are just a few things we should all be thinking about – not just during hurricane season – but throughout the year. Disasters can happen anywhere, any time. Being properly prepared is half the battle.

And keep in mind; if you have any questions or concerns, Pasco County Emergency Management is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kevin Guthrie
Director/Pasco County Emergency Services

OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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