

Hurricane Idalia

August 28, 2023 - September 1, 2023

After Action Report and Improvement Plan

Storm Statistics:

Landfall Location – Taylor County, Florida

Maximum Windspeed – 125 MPH

EOC Activation Level – Level 1, Full Activation



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Administrative Handling Instructions

1. The title of this document is 2023 Hurricane Idalia *After Action Report/Improvement Plan* (AAR/IP).
2. The information gathered in this AAR/IP represents the collective input of personnel participating in the preparedness, planning, and operation of Hurricane Idalia, which impacted Pasco County in August through September of 2023. Observations and opinions about the response vary widely and the outcomes and recommendations in this report can change or be modified as further analysis and evaluation continued.
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Executive Summary

Purpose

The After Action Report/Improvement Plan (AAR/IP) is a post incident debriefing tool, which incorporates both the technical and human factors of Hurricane Idalia.

1. It allows items identified during the incident to be developed into a system cycle where they can be properly improved upon.
2. Provides a platform for discovering the root of successful performance and how those successes can be used to avoid failures in other areas.
3. Aid in establishing common perception of the incident to all those involved.
4. Establishes practices from communication and conflict resolution amongst stakeholders.

Overview

In August of 2023 a tropical disturbance over the Eastern Pacific basin began to form. As it formed, it moved off the Central American coastline and made its way into the Western Caribbean Sea. Unusually warmer water temperatures provided the perfect environment for the storm to strengthen and develop into a hurricane within a matter of days. The storm was stationary between Cuba and Mexico for a day which allowed the intensity of the storm to manifest into a much stronger category than anticipated. The majority of the Big Bend and Nature Coast areas were anticipating impacts from Idalia as most forecast models had a similar projection on landfall location. Along Pasco County's coastline, several residents experienced firsthand Idalia's strong storm surge. Water inundated businesses and homes all along the coastline displacing several hundred residents. Residents and Damage Assessment Teams reported up to 5 feet of standing water inside structures along waterways. After Idalia passed by Pasco County and the Damage Assessment Teams were allowed to enter neighborhoods to conduct assessments, it was determined that there was roughly \$2.64 million in minor damages, \$4.6 million in major damages, and \$148.8 thousand in total losses to residential structures. Following the aftermath of Idalia, Pasco County immediately began setting up resources for the community and working with non-profit organizations to aid citizens. A Mobile Registration Intake Center (MRIC) was established at the Hudson Library to serve those impacted by the storm.

General Information

Location: Pasco County

Activation Type: Hurricane

Date of Event: August 28, 2023 – September 1, 2023

Major Strengths

The major strengths identified during this incident are as follows:

- Cooperation and coordination were superb across multiple agencies and levels of government (i.e., State Emergency Response Team, Florida Department of Health- Pasco County, Pasco County Board of County Commissioners employees).
- Situation Reports were published in a timely manner allowing for immediate actions to be taken based on the information in each report.
- Shelter call down process was more streamline and effective when it came to calling in BOCC employees to work shelters.

Primary Areas for Improvement

Throughout the incident, several opportunities for improvement were identified. The primary areas for improvement are as follows:

- There was confusion on special needs sheltering versus general population sheltering requirements.
- During County Stakeholder calls and the hotwash it was mentioned several times that majority of the county was confused on the pay policy for the activation and there were many questions about compensation.
- Shelter staff had issues with getting supervisor signatures on 214s.
- Food was subpar and not suitable for an activation of this magnitude.
- There was no identifier in the EOC for who was working what position aside from the organization chart (such as vests, placards, or ID badges).

Incident Participants

ARES/RACES

City of New Port Richey Fire Department

City of New Port Richey Police Department
City of Port Richey Fire Department
City of Port Richey Police Department
District School Board of Pasco County
Duke Energy
Florida Department of Health – Pasco County
Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM)
Pasco County Board of County Commissioners
Pasco County Employees
Pasco County Sheriff’s Office
Withlacoochee River Electric Company

Section 1: Flood Hazards and Storm Preparation

Pasco County flood hazards are known ahead of time and are noted in the Local Mitigation Strategy. However, Pasco County experiences three types of flooding: Coastal, Riverine and Closed Basin. Coastal flooding is caused by storm surge and has the potential to greatly impact all coastal areas as far inland as US-19 causing significant damage to all structures and roads. Coastal flooding can also impact flooding along coastal rivers. The Pithlachascotee River and the Anclote River both are vulnerable to flooding caused by surge. Areas along the rivers can experience significant flooding of roads and structures further inland, almost as far east as Little road. Closed-basin flooding is caused by high-volume rainfall in a short amount of time. Pasco County has several low-lying areas that are prone to flood during these periods. Closed-basin flooding can occur across the county or in pockets where high-volume rain has fallen. Notable areas are defined in the Pasco County Local Mitigation Strategy as Repetitive Loss (RL) areas. Areas such as Elfers, Holiday, Port Richey, and Zephyrhills all experience Closed-basin flooding. Riverine flooding occurs when surface rains drain into rivers and cause the rivers to flood. The Hillsborough River, The Anclote River, and the Pithlachascotee River all are prone to riverine flooding. The highest risk of flooding from riverine flood is the Elfers area, the area north of Trouble Creek in New Port Richey, Crystal Springs and Lachoochee. It is imperative during a hurricane or event/incident that Pasco County monitors these notable areas by checking river gauges and flood gauges to understand what the potential impacts on the community may be.

Prior to Hurricane Idalia, the flood gauges and river gauges were being closely monitored by Pasco County Emergency Management and Pasco County Public Works. None of the flood gauges were near their peak flood stage in the days leading up to Idalia’s landfall. Thirteen flood gates were opened in anticipation of rainfall and storm surge. Pasco County stationed sandbag locations on Monday, August 28th for the residents of the County. The EOC was also at a modified level 2 activation beginning on August 28th and transitioned to a level 1 full

activation on August 29th. Prior to the storm impacting the county, Points of Distribution (POD) sites were placed on standby if they needed to standup operations the day after landfall. A total of 6 shelters were open to the public by Tuesday, August 29th

Section 2: Impact and Damages

Once tropical storm force winds exited Pasco County, the GIS team opened the ARCGIS Dashboard for damage assessments to be recorded. As of September 14th, there were 2 homes considered a total loss, 72 structures with major damages, 80 structures with minor damages, and 20 structures affected by the storm but still habitable. A total of 303 reports were filed on the ARCGIS Dashboard; however, FEMA Damage Assessment estimates of the number of impacted homes was closer to 5,000. The majority of reports were from damaged roofs, rising waters from storm surge, or structure fires. Several hundred homes and businesses experienced temporary power loss, but it was all restored within a few days of the storm passing over Florida.



Figure 1. Storm Surge impacting a residential home along Pasco County's coastline

Section 3: Analysis of Capabilities

This section of the report reviews the performance of the capabilities and tasks associated with the incident. In this section, observations are organized by capability and associated activities. The capabilities linked to Hurricane Idalia are listed below, followed by corresponding activities.

Capability 1: Public Information and Warning

Capability Summary: Deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to the whole community through the use of clear, consistent, accessible, and culturally and linguistically appropriate methods to effectively relay information regarding any threat or hazard, as well as the actions being taken and the assistance being made available, as appropriate.

Activities

- a. Pasco County's Joint Information Center consistently pushed out public information in a variety of formats via the county's Emergency Operations Communications Plan, utilizing news releases; media alerts; e-mail blasts; dozens of county social media pages on various platforms; MyPasco.net; MyPasco App; Alert Pasco; news conferences; phone, radio & TV media interviews; digital billboards; graphic design; video production & Pasco TV.
- b. Information such as the opening of sandbag locations, the issuance of evacuation orders, the opening of shelters, and the damage assessment report link was promptly shared with the public through multiple mediums.
- c. Sharing prompt and actionable messages with the public and other stakeholders, as appropriate to aid in the preservation of life and property.

Capability 2: Mass Care Services

Capability Summary: Provide life-sustaining and human services to the affected population, to include hydration, feeding, sheltering, temporary housing, evacuee support, reunification, and distribution of emergency supplies.

Activities

- a. The Mike Fasano Regional Hurricane Shelter (Fasano) opened its doors to the public on August 28th as a Special Needs and General Population shelter.

- b. GOPASCO provided transportation assistance to those needing sheltering assistance
- c. A total of 6 shelters were open to the public to include Fasano, Fivay High School, Wiregrass Ranch High School, Sunlake High School, River Ridge High School, and Centennial Middle School.
- d. An MRIC was established at Hudson Library to assist residents with applying for FEMA Individual Assistance (IA).
- e. POD staff were placed on standby and resources orders for PODs were placed on hold in WebEOC to aid in a faster turnaround time on opening PODs.

Capability 3: Situational Assessment

Capability Summary: Provide all decision makers with decision-relevant information regarding the nature and extent of the hazard, any cascading effects, and the status of the response.

Activities

- a. Situation Reports were published throughout incident.
- b. The EPG meetings were held at regular intervals for the duration of the event.
- c. Stakeholder Briefings were held on a regular schedule throughout the duration of the event. This allowed for constant communication between the Executive Policy Group (EPG) and Key Stakeholders.
- d. A briefing for all Department Heads within the county was included in the Idalia Battle Rhythm for the first two days of the Activation to provide necessary information to all leads within the county.
- e. Pasco County Fire Rescue (PCFR) and Pasco County Sheriff's Office (PSO) provided insight to events within the community through liaisons positioned at the EOC as well as through WebEOC Activity Log reporting.



Figure 2. EOC Operations August 29th, 2023

Section 4: Conclusion

Hurricane Idalia was the first Hurricane in recent years to produce the magnitude of storm surge that was seen along the coastline in Pasco County. While Idalia did not make a direct landfall in Pasco County, several hundred residents felt the heavy impacts of storm surge, rains, and wind. By coming together as one entity, Pasco County and its many stakeholders were able to prepare for and respond to Hurricane Idalia. About 150 residents were rescued from homes impacted by water due to timely response from Pasco's first responders.

For many of those affected by this storm, recovery will be measured in years, not months. Pasco County Department of Emergency Management plans to continue making improvements to the activation process and will conduct training and exercises to validate plans and identify gaps. This AAR/IP represents the building of relationships, correction of past issues, as well as continued growth for future incidents.

Appendix A: Improvement Plan

This Improvement Plan (IP) has been developed specifically for Pasco County Department of Emergency Management because of the Hurricane Idalia activation in Pasco County.

Item #	Observation	Recommendation / Improvement Actions	Responsible Agency	Start Date	Completion Date
1.	Food was inadequate for those working the storm	Obtain a food vendor contract and solidify it annually before hurricane season	Emergency Management/ Human Services/ Logistics	9/19/2023	
2.	Fasano did not have necessary equipment (laptops, binders, bins, supplies) for general population sheltering	Consider stocking Fasano annually with resources for general population sheltering	Emergency Management	9/19/2023	
3.	Shelter staff had no one designated to sign 214 forms	Identify a BOCC lead for each shelter to sign 214s, consider a shelter working group to meet biannually to discuss these issues	Emergency Management	9/19/2023	
4.	Sharing information about the pay policy for the activation was not timely and many were left with unanswered questions about compensation	Prior to landfall and in the first EPG meeting determine pay policy for activation	EPG / County Administrator	9/19/2023	
5.	There was nothing in place to identify who was working what positions	Consider ICS vests, lanyard usage, or placards with positions	Emergency Management	9/19/2023	
6.	There was a lack of understanding the difference between general population sheltering and special needs sheltering which caused confusion at Fasano	During shelter trainings reduce discussion on special needs clients and defer special needs clients to DOH.	Emergency Management	9/19/2023	
7.	The shelter form in WebEOC was taking too long to register clients	Consider reevaluating the form and condensing it	Emergency Management/ IT	9/19/2023	
8.	Sleeping arrangements at the EOC were not ideal and many were unable to rest due to noise concerns or lack of space to sleep	Identify sleeping arrangements prior to hurricane season and notify all who are to work in the EOC	Emergency Management Director	9/19/2023	
9.	B shift needed more control	At shift change, turn	All	9/19/2023	

	of their shift as A shift ran B shifts ops briefing	over all duties to incoming staff			
10.	B shift needed more support personnel at check in/ registration desk during the shift change	Assign one more person to B shift to assist with this	Planning Manager	9/19/2023	
11.	A good portion of people who showed up to the EOC did not know what position they were working	Identify who will be working each position on the org chart for both shifts and email this list with their expectations	ACAs/ Department Heads/ Emergency Management Director	9/19/2023	
12.	There was no map to display where assets in the field were working	Have GIS create a map for this and attach it to the SitRep. During activations request maps immediately from GIS when needed.	GIS/ Planning Section Chief	9/19/2023	
13.	Many facilities do not have showers for staff to utilize during an activation	For long-term events consider ordering shower trailers at these locations	Emergency Management	9/19/2023	
14.	Some individuals were reporting issues in WebEOC under the resource request board	During WebEOC training reiterate documenting issues on the Activity Log form	Emergency Management	9/19/2023	
15.	There were attitude issues between DOH, BOCC staff, and the Red Cross as too many individuals were trying to run Fasano and implement their own process	Consider not utilizing the Red Cross in the future at shelters	Emergency Management/ DOH	9/19/2023	

Appendix B: Acronyms

AAR	After Action Report
ARES/RACES	Amateur Radio Emergency Services/Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services
EM	Emergency Management
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPG	Executive Policy Group
FDEM	Florida Division of Emergency Management
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOUO	For Official Use Only
IA	Individual Assistance
ICP	Incident Coordinating Procedure
ICS	Incident Command System
IP	Improvement Plan
MRIC	Mobile Registration Intake Center
PCFR	Pasco County Fire Rescue
POD	Point of Distribution
PSO	Pasco Sheriff's Office
WPGC	West Pasco Government Complex