

INTRODUCTION

This document provides domestic wastewater utilities with a set of recommended actions to prepare for, respond to, and recover from hurricane impacts.

While many utilities already have internal emergency response plans, the guidance offered here is intended to supplement those protocols and help facilities strengthen their resilience before a storm and restore operations safely afterward. In addition to practical preparedness and recovery measures, this document outlines the support available from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), including the use of WATER Tracker for reporting operational status and requesting assistance, and resources offered through Florida's Water-Wastewater Agency Response Network (FlaWARN).

To further assist with planning, links to state and federal emergency management agencies and other helpful resources are included.

Federal Emergency Management Agency
[fema.gov](https://www.fema.gov)

National Hurricane Center
[nhc.noaa.gov](https://www.nhc.noaa.gov)

FL Division of Emergency Management
floridadisaster.org/planprepare

American Water Works Association
[awwa.org](https://www.awwa.org)

Rural Community Assistance Partnership
rcap.org

Water Environment Research Foundation
werf.org

WATER Tracker

DEP's WATER (Water Assistance Tracking & Emergency Response) Tracker is a web-based tool that enables all Florida water and wastewater utilities to report their operational status and request assistance after major storm events. Information submitted through WATER Tracker helps assess statewide storm impacts and supports rapid deployment of resources through FlaWARN.

Storm-related wastewater incidents or spills must still be reported directly to the State Watch Office (1-800-320-0519) and the appropriate DEP District or delegated local program.

Utility owners, operators, or authorized representatives can register or request login assistance by emailing WATERTracker@FloridaDEP.gov or calling 1-866-742-0481. Please provide a name, email address, phone number, and facility ID(s).

If internet access is unavailable after a storm, utilities may report facility status and request support by calling 1-866-742-0481. When reporting multiple facilities, provide each facility's ID. Facilities in affected areas should wait until the storm has passed before logging into WATER Tracker or calling the hotline.

For more information visit:
flwatertracker.com



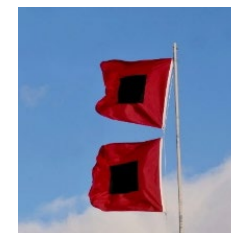
Florida's Water-Wastewater Agency Response Network (FlaWARN)

In recent years, Florida has experienced numerous tropical storms and hurricanes. Emergency preparedness is essential not only for Florida residents, but also for water and wastewater utilities. To support this need, DEP assisted in the creation of FlaWARN.

FlaWARN is a formalized system of "utilities helping utilities" which encourages mutual aid during emergency situations. It is available during man-made or natural disasters as well as blue-sky events. FlaWARN consists of water and wastewater utilities across Florida, with assistance from various regulatory, technical, and law enforcement agencies. The goal of FlaWARN is to provide immediate relief for member utilities during emergencies. The system works by matching a utility's needs with the tools and equipment necessary to assess and assist the impacted water and wastewater system as quickly as possible until a permanent solution can be implemented.

FlaWARN has developed an "Emergency Response & Preparedness Manual" to assist water and wastewater utilities in developing appropriate procedures to deal with such events. FlaWARN can assist water and wastewater utilities in developing procedures to deal with such events.

For more information visit:
flawarn.pwd.aa.ufl.edu



HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS FOR DOMESTIC WASTEWATER FACILITIES



BEFORE THE HURRICANE

1. Ensure updated copies of as-built drawings for the facility and collection system are available. These are essential for locating valves, electrical boxes, manholes, force mains, and other critical components.
2. Confirm all mechanical equipment is properly maintained and in good working order.
3. Review hurricane procedures with all personnel. Ensure staff understand their responsibilities, emergency assignments, and reporting protocols.
4. Assess areas prone to flooding (such as pump wells, pipe galleries, open tanks, and manholes). Ensure any specialized equipment needed to respond to flooding is available. The Resilient Florida Program (floridadep.gov/rcp/resilient-florida-program) provides resources, including grants, to help address vulnerable infrastructure.
5. Prepare a list of essential personnel and their contact information. Maintain accurate employee and emergency contact lists, as well as detailed action protocols. Because traditional communication systems may fail after a storm, ensure alternate communication methods—such as portable radios or satellite phones—are available, along with extra batteries. Establish protocols for communication outages.
6. Power outages are common after hurricanes. Inspect all auxiliary and standby power systems and repair or replace any malfunctioning equipment. Review the facility's power outage contingency plan. Ensure sufficient fuel and supplies are available to operate auxiliary equipment for 10–14 days. Fill fuel tanks and fully charge all batteries.
7. Identify the electrical load required to operate essential systems during an emergency so you can properly size portable generators. As a general guideline, multiply the total horsepower of equipment to be powered by 1.34 to determine the minimum kilowatts required. Using a generator with higher capacity can reduce fuel use, lower labor demands, and minimize the need for

- fuel deliveries. Maintain a list of required generator sizes and qualified electricians who can safely connect them.
8. Stock critical spare parts, including hoses, pumps, fuses, and control panels.
9. Ensure essential chemical inventories are sufficient for 10–14 days of operation.
10. Inspect all vehicles to confirm they are fully operational and fueled.
11. Designate personnel who will remain on duty during the storm (as long as conditions are safe). Allow staff time to secure their homes and families. Provide supplies to support on-duty personnel, including food, potable water, cots, coffee, flashlights, first aid kits, and other essentials.
12. Board up windows and secure or tie down any materials or equipment that could become airborne during the storm.
13. Maximize freeboard in holding ponds once a hurricane warning is issued.
14. Stop biosolids shipments to land application sites expected to be impacted by the storm. Securely store biosolids at the facility until conditions allow for proper management.
15. Ensure biosolids already delivered to land application sites have been either land applied or securely stored so they will not wash away. Storage should be located in elevated areas away from surface waters.
16. Review post storm plans for storing, transferring, or disposing of biosolids, and confirm procedures are in place.
17. Secure computers and print copies of electronic files necessary for emergency response.
18. Large chlorine gas systems may need to be shut down and secured. Ensure an alternative method for feeding chlorine is available.
19. Access to the facility after a storm may be obstructed. Stock equipment needed to clear debris, including chain saws (with fuel and oil), axes, and similar tools.

An in-depth Storm Preparation Guide is available at:
floridadep.gov/water/water/documents/storm-preparation-guidance-and-checklist-wastewater-facilities

AFTER THE HURRICANE

1. Survey the facility and assess all damage. Prepare a list of required repairs, estimate the time needed to complete them, and prioritize tasks. Assign staff to update WATER Tracker and report needs such as equipment or additional labor.
2. Determine whether power loss is localized or widespread. If localized, inspect electrical circuits for shorts or overloads. If widespread, coordinate with the power company to plan safe repair and startup activities. Implement the applicable portions of the facility's power outage contingency plan.
3. Shut off electrical current to any damaged equipment and begin necessary repairs.
4. Flooding from wastewater or biosolids can expose staff to health hazards, including waterborne diseases, toxic or explosive gases, oxygen-deficient areas, and electrical shock.
 - Disconnect power from submerged lines and equipment.
 - Use portable pumps for dewatering.
 - Test flooded areas for gas hazards or oxygen deficiency.
 - Ventilate enclosed spaces and avoid entering them alone.
 - Avoid using unprotected electrical equipment during cleanup.
 - Take precautions to prevent contamination of the potable water system.
5. Coordinate with the local water utility to prioritize repairs. Water systems may experience heavy damage, reducing flows to the wastewater system. Once water service is restored, the wastewater system should be capable of operating. If wastewater spills occur (raw or partially treated), they must be reported through appropriate channels (floridadep.gov/water/water-compliance-assurance/content/wastewater-incident-reporting).
6. Keep customers informed about facility damage and advise them of any public health or environmental concerns.

7. Respond appropriately to spills. This may include containing or recovering spilled material, collecting samples, applying lime or disinfectant, washing affected areas, and posting warning signs. Disinfect spills when appropriate.
8. Report major system damage immediately to the local DEP District or delegated local program office ([DEP District and delegated local program contacts](http://floridadep.gov/water/water-compliance-assurance/content/wastewater-incident-reporting)). Report minor damage as soon as conditions allow and inform DEP if assistance is needed.

For **immediate assistance during an emergency**, a utility should contact one of the following:

- Their local County Emergency Operations Center. Information is available at: floridadisaster.org/planprepare/counties;
- The State Watch Office at 1-800-320-0519; or
- WATER Tracker Hotline at 1-866-742-0481 and leave a message on the automated answering system.

DEP CONTACT INFORMATION

Compliance Assurance Wastewater Contacts
floridadep.gov/water/water-compliance-assurance/content/wastewater-contacts

Drinking Water Contacts
floridadep.gov/water/source-drinking-water/content/organization-drinking-water-program

DEP District Offices		
District	Phone No.	City
Central	407-897-4100	Orlando
Northeast	904-256-1700	Jacksonville
Northwest	850-595-8300	Pensacola
South	239-344-5600	Fort Myers
Southeast	561-681-6600	West Palm Beach
Southwest	813-470-5700	Tampa