



Brooks County Georgia

Office of The County Administrator

Phone 229-263-5561

Fax 229-263-9345

jdevane@brookscoga.com

September 7, 2017 / 12:00 P.M.

Re: Hurricane Irma Statement

Dear Community,

I wanted to take this opportunity to address our community and provide important information regarding the arrival of Hurricane Irma to the southeast. As of the writing of this letter, the storm should be tracking somewhere around central Florida by Monday, we will begin to experiencing storm related weather, well before this time. I have been pleased with the steps that many of you and our businesses have already taken to be prepared for this storm. I expect that we should start seeing visitors in our area starting today and lasting through the weekend as those who have chosen to leave Irma's path are travelling our direction. Please remember that many of these folks have been stuck in cars, travelling through higher than normal traffic, with whatever possessions that could be packed in their vehicle. These people will be tired, and for a lack of a better word, "lost". Let's all remember that how we act and treat our visitors will be remembered.

I would also like to discuss what Brooks County residents should expect from your public safety departments. Ambulances and fire trucks are very top heavy and will blow over in winds that begin to exceed 50 mph. Depending on the track of this storm, we could experience such winds. Should that happen, EMS and Fire may not be able to respond to your request.

EMS - If you are someone that needs electricity for life support devices like O2, you should consider plans now for how you will continue to operate those machines. If you are unable to transport yourself or a loved one, please consider calling South Georgia EMS (229-263-4195) and arrange a plan now if you need a transport. They will be happy to speak with you about your situation. Residents on unpaved roads that have become impassable in the past during storms, should consider what steps they need to take now so that emergency services can reach them if needed. The County does operate some 4-wheel drive vehicles that can reach additional areas, but you would only want to use these services if absolutely necessary.

Fire Departments - Fire will be manned by paid and volunteer staff, so long as conditions are safe for us to respond. As a precaution, if there are trees down or on service lines to your home, consider turning off your breakers to help prevent arcing and damage to your property. Some members of the department will also be out with regular vehicles to try and help provide service for as long as it is deemed safe.

Sheriff Department – Depending on the severity of the storm in our area, which we will know more about in the next day or so, Sheriff Dewey has discussed with me bringing in additional shifts to help with calls. They will also provide service for as long as it is safely possible, just like EMS and Fire. Should this storm cause damage to your personal property, be advised, that with the Department's limited staff, your request for non-emergency reports may be prioritized until it is safe for officers to leave other calls, such as entrapments, vehicle incidents, down power lines, road hazards and other life threatening situations. It is recommended that people with property damage requests should contact your insurance companies first. Please wait until the situation has passed and we have a day or two to return to normal operations. Just because the rain and wind has stopped, doesn't mean we don't have officers out on roadways responding to calls.

Emergency 911 / EMA – The 911 Center will have additional dispatchers called in to handle excess calls during the peak hours of the storm. That does not mean that you may still experience some difficulty reaching us. Please, if it is an emergency situation, continue to try calling 911. If it is not an emergency, please try our non-emergency number at 229-263-4262. EMA will also be working behind the scenes should shelters or supplies need to be open in our community. If you live in a mobile home or wish to leave your residence, we encourage you to travel out of the path of the storm, or monitor shelters in Lowndes County. Should shelters become available in Brooks County, they are generally coordinated through the churches in our community. If you feel the need to reach out for assistance or relocation, please call the non-emergency number (again, that number is 229-263-4262) and we will see what is available.

Road Department – The Road Department will have crews that will be ready and waiting for the storm. You may also notice that crews will be out working after hours today, tomorrow, and Saturday in preparation. Crews will be prioritizing calls they receive for water over roadways, washouts, trees down during the storm. US/State Highways and major County roads will receive high priority for calls as these routes are needed to keep other services running. As calls are handled and completed for these areas, they will filter to the other paved roads and unpaved roads. Residents who see issues or problems now, are encouraged to call the Road Department now, at 229-263-8817. We will try and do our best to get out there, if possible, correct that issue before the storm hits. Residents who wish to report road issues or trees down are encouraged to try the Road Department number first if the issues occurs during normal business hours. We are also looking at having the number above forwarded to our EMA center where someone can take your non-emergency call after hours and during the storm. If you are unable to reach the Road Department, please contact the non-emergency number for 911 office at 229-263-4262.

County Solid Waste / Curbside Trash Service – Residents on unpaved roads should expect a disruption to their service next week. I have already spoken with our representative from Advanced Disposal, the County's curbside solid waste provider, and they are expecting to not be able to reach cans on unpaved roads. I have encouraged them to consider avoiding those roads as their vehicles tend to create more problems on wet roads. Residents on dirt roads should begin planning ahead and make accommodations for their trash if they can, as it may be an extra week before your can is dumped. If you are on a dirt road and your trash is skipped, please be patient and wait before reporting it to the County office. Should you wish to report a skipped service, you can contact the Building Inspector's Office at 229-263-5184 or the County Office at 229-263-5561.

County Offices – Depending on the nature and track of this storm, it may become necessary and in the best interest of our employees, to close County offices during the storm. I am sorry for any inconvenience this may cause, however, should the situation in our area deteriorate to where asking our

employees to come to work would endanger them, we will make the decision to close. Our public safety offices and road department will not be closed if this order is given, those services again will only be suspended if the weather prevents us from reaching you.

Board of Commissioner's Regular Monthly Meeting – The Board normally meets for its regular monthly meeting on the first Monday of each month. Due to the Labor Day holiday, our meeting was rescheduled until September 11 during the August meeting. Depending on the weather conditions on Monday, that meeting may be postponed to a later date. We will probably try to move the meeting to Thursday, September 14th if necessary.

News & Information – Due to the limited number of staff the County has, many of us wear many hats. As the storm approaches and more information is available, we will use the Brooks County Fire Department Facebook page as a primary source for information from the County. The Brooks County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) page will also have information and will serve as a secondary source from the County. I am also pleased that the staff at the Brooks County Development Authority and the Quitman-Brooks County Chamber have also offered to help provide information to the public. Please Like and Share these agency's Facebook pages with your friends and family. Residents are also strongly encouraged to visit the Brooks County web site, at <http://brookscountyga.us> and use the CodeRED Weather Alert link to sign up for voice and text message updates for severe weather in our area. The service is provided at no charge to subscribers. There is also an app you can download in the Play Store or in the iTunes store for your smartphone.

Good Samaritans – Residents equipped with chainsaws, tractors and other equipment who wish to help should do so only after the weather has cleared. Please do not try and go out during the storm when it is not needed. Down power lines, flooded road crossings and various other dangers await those who are not prepared for such a situation. If you do want to help, please make sure your family and neighbors are safe and taken care of first in your area. If you do find a down tree and move it yourself from a roadway, please call the non-emergency number to 911 and report it. Even if you have completely moved the tree off the right-of-way. If a disaster is declared for our area, we need a count of each instance that occurs on a County road. In addition, you may come upon a tree that has already been report to 911. If you do remove a down tree, let us know so we can send our services somewhere else.

The safety and best interest of our residents and properties is the main goal of the leadership in Brooks County. Please do what is best for the safety and well being of your family. If you are not planning to leave, please make sure you have what you need to take care of yourself. Please pray for our nation, our friends, our neighbors, our public safety and families all over the southeast during this storm event and the aftermath.

God Bless,



Justin DeVane
County Administrator