

YEAR 2016
CITIZENS INFORMATION GUIDE

FOR EMERGENCY EVENTS
CITY OF DESTIN OFFICE OF EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

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CITY OF DESTIN CITIZEN INFORMATION GUIDE FOR EMERGENCY EVENTS

PURPOSE: The purpose of this booklet is to provide basic information and a consistent procedure for handling inquiries during a time of emergency, particularly hurricanes.

SCOPE: This guide is applicable for all personnel who may deal with the public during emergency situations or is a citizen that wants answers to general questions.

GENERAL: This guide was created to complement the Okaloosa County “Citizen Information Center” (CIC), which is activated at these times:

- once a hurricane “watch” has been issued for our area,
- when a major flood event is expected,
- during communicable disease emergencies, or
- at any time an event might cause widespread public concern.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS:

The Okaloosa County CIC is activated and managed by the County’s Director of Emergency Management Services (EMS). The County EMS Division recruits and trains County personnel to answer calls about disaster-related issues. During times of activation, the CIC is staffed at the Okaloosa County Annex building in Shalimar with as many as ten people per shift.

The County CIC receives a status briefing by an Emergency Management staff member at the beginning of each shift. Updated information is forwarded routinely by the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) as it becomes available.

This *Citizen Information Guide* is produced by Destin’s Emergency Manager for operations at the City level. No formal activation is required to utilize this guide. Preceding major storm events and during periods of emergency when a high volume of calls inundate the system, all those answering the phones at any City facility may make use of the basic information and suggestions contained herein. As at the County level, updated information will be forwarded routinely to the City Manager’s Office, who will disseminate the information.

The job duties of *any* City of Destin employee responding to citizen inquiries at a time of emergency will be limited to the following:

- Refer to the Citizen Information Guide and written briefings to answer citizen inquiries as accurately, quickly, and politely as possible.
- Provide contact numbers of other entities and agencies, including the Okaloosa County Citizen Information Center, if activated.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- **People often want assurances we can't give.**
There are no guarantees of safety.
There are no guarantees of doom.

- **People sometimes just need a person to talk to.**
They may be scared, alone, confused.

- **Distinguish between rumors vs. facts.**
Rumor:
“I heard the Mid-Bay Bridge is going to close at 4 p.m.!”
Fact:
During hurricanes, the County closes bridges when the winds make them unsafe. There is no set time. Gale force winds begin at 35 mph.
In floods, the County closes bridges when water covers them or the road...EMS officials can only estimate the need and time of closing.

- **Don't mistake what you overhear as being the official word.**
Officials are not immune from spreading rumors.
Do NOT make guesses—if you don't know the answer, say so!

- **Rumors are persistent and die slowly.**
Ask the person where they heard it.
Inform the City Manager's Office of rumors you hear so that we can try to stop them.
Give only the official info.

- **For questions that another agency might better answer, refer the person to the phone number for that agency.**

- **Provide information about incorporated Destin and Okaloosa County ONLY.**

- **Provide callers with only FACTUAL information that has been verified and authorized.**
Refrain from sharing “personal opinions.”

- **In the event you have not been provided with the necessary information to adequately answer a question, then state:**
“I am sorry, but I DO NOT have that information; so I am unable to answer your question.”

- **Recommend:**
“Listen to the local Emergency Alert System radio stations for information as it becomes available: FM 99.5, FM 105.5, or AM 1260.

“Call Okaloosa County Citizens Information Center at 651-7444.”

“Check the Okaloosa County Web Site for updated information.”
www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/Emergency

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

CITY HALL

Main Number	837-4242
Building Dept Fax	837-7949
City Clerk's Fax	837-3267
City Manager's Fax	650-9250
Community Center	654-5184
Library	837-8572
Morgan Sports Center	650-1241
Permits & Inspections	654-1119
Public Services	837-6869

OTHER NUMBERS

Buck Destin Park:	664-6060
Chamber of Commerce	837-6241
Destin Airport	837-6135
Destin Elementary	833-4360
Destin Post Office	837-6312
FEMA	1-800-525-0321
	Or 462-9029
Mosquito Control	651-7394
Sunshine (Call before you Dig)	1-800-432-4770
TDD	651-7131
	Or 1-800-322-3319
Tourist Information	651-7131
US Coast Guard	244-7147

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Crisis Line	244-9191
	or 682-0101
Destin Urgent Care	837-9194
EMS	651-7560/61
Fire Dept	837-8413
Fire Dept (Walton)	267-2000
Ft. Walton Bch Hospital	862-1111
HAZMAT Emergency	651-7395
Poison Control Center	800-282-3171
Red Cross	314-0316
Salvation Army	243-4531
Sheriff's Office	651-7400
Sheriff's Annex – Destin	609-2093
Transportation for Elderly	833-9168
Sheriff Dept (Walton)	267-2000

OKALOOSA COUNTY

Chamber of Commerce-Crestview	682-3212
City Hall - Crestview	682-6131
City Hall of F.W.B.	243-3141
Clerk of Courts (Passports)	651-7216
Credit Bureau	862-2134
Crestview Annex	689-5000

Coordinated Transportation	833-9168
Driver's License Bureau	833-9122
Health Department	833-9240
Legal Services	862-3279
Marriage License	651-7216
Mosquito Control	651-7395
Operator at Courthouse	651-7100
Passports	651-7216
PAWS	243-8402
Public Works Dept.	651-7515
School Board	833-3100
Small Business Administration	904-443-1913
Supervisor of Elections	651-7272
Tax Appraiser	651-7303
Tax Collector	651-7300
Destin	651-7314
Transfer Station	651-7395

WALTON COUNTY

Building Dept	892-8160
Chamber of Commerce	267-3511
City Hall	892-8500
Courthouse	892-8115
Emergency Dispatch for Fire/Sheriff/EM	267-2000

UTILITIES

WM	862-7141
Cox Communications	862-0175
Destin Water Users	837-6551
Fax	654-5173
Gulf Power	800-225-5797
Or	244-4711
Okaloosa Gas	729-4700
Weather & Time	844-1212

INTERNET

www.cityofdestin.com

www.nwfdailynews.com/hurricane

BOAT PREPARATIONS

SITUATION: *A hurricane is approaching.*

RESPONSE:

If your boat is in storage and you have a trailer, consider securing the boat at home.

- If the boat is on a trailer, lash the boat and trailer down in a protected area. Let the air out of the tires before tying the trailer down.
- If you prefer, remove the boat from the trailer and lash each one down separately.
- Remove the outboard motor and electronics, and store them.
- Small boats can be filled with water to give them added weight after they have been tied down.
- If you like your boat more than you like your car, put the boat in the garage and leave the car outside.

For boats remaining in the water,

- Protect lines from chafing by covering rub spots with leather or old garden hose.
- Reduce dock or piling crash damage by securing old tires along the sides of the boat.
- Remove loose gear from the deck. Store it securely inside or take it home.

ELECTRICAL POWER/OUTAGES

SITUATION: *Wires down*
Power outages
Power restoration inquiries

RESPONSE:

- Gulf Power will respond to emergency outages first. However, you may wish to speak to them directly. Their lines may be busy, so you will need to continue trying. Their number is **244-4700** or **1-800-225-5797**.

EVACUATION

SITUATION: *When should I evacuate? How can I avoid the traffic?*

RESPONSE:

- Clearance times are based on the Category of storm and the tourist population. Evacuating the coastal areas of Okaloosa County takes 12-22 hours, a longer time than we often have notice of an approaching hurricane, particularly if the storm suddenly changes direction or speeds up.
 1. **Best advice:** If you live in a mandatory evacuation zone, **leave early!**
 2. Have alternate routes planned.
 3. Take a road map of the areas you will travel through.
 4. Stay with friend's in-county.

SITUATION: *Where do I find an evacuation map?*

RESPONSE:

- Okaloosa County does not make “evacuation maps.” Emergency Managers suggest you buy a detailed road map of Okaloosa County and plot your own evacuation route, planning alternate routes as well.
- From Destin, it is suggested that people use the Mid-Bay Bridge to Highway 20, where they should turn west to Hwy. 85 or 285 in Niceville.
- East on Hwy. 20 to Freeport is an **unsafe** route if storm conditions are already in the area.
- Bridge tolls are *supposed* to be lifted on the Mid-Bay Bridge once a mandatory evacuation order is given. But don't let the charge keep you from taking the most direct route out of town to safety!

EVACUATION – MANDATORY/RECOMMENDED

SITUATION: Evacuation has been ordered/recommended. *Why should I evacuate?*

RESPONSE:

- All of Destin is on a barrier island, an “extreme risk area” which, *ideally*, should be **totally** evacuated prior to a major hurricane (a level 3, 4, or 5 storm).
- **Mandatory** evacuation areas for **all** level hurricanes, 1 and 2 included, include all of Holiday Isle and Crystal Beach- everything south of Highway 98, as well as all low-lying areas prone to storm surge or tidal flooding.
- Evacuation is necessary to escape the storm surge. Mobile homeowners must also escape the wind. Most deaths from hurricanes occur due to drowning in the storm surge. The height and strength of the surge depends on the storm category and the storm’s path. The strongest side of a hurricane is its right (eastern) side.
- Your best option is to:
 1. Evacuate to a friend’s, co-worker, or relative’s home that lives in a non-evacuation area further inland in the County.
 2. Prepare and take your evacuation kit: (See next page)
 - Medications
 - Identification
 - Important Papers (Insurance/last utility bill)
 - Cash
 - Clothing
 - Personal hygiene items
 - (Bedding)
 3. Only evacuate to a shelter if you have no other place to go. **Shelters are a LAST RESORT.** There is no guarantee of safety, and no creature comforts. Elderly people must be accompanied by a younger family member to assist them.

Shelter rules: No alcohol No weapons No animals
Take your own bedding, lightweight folding chairs
Quiet toys for kids, reading material, puzzles, games
Special dietary needs, snacks
Battery operated portable radio or CD player with headphones

EVACUATION KIT

SITUATION: *What should I take with me if I evacuate or go to a shelter?*

RESPONSE:

Medications	Clothing
Pillow, blanket, air mattress, cot	Personal hygiene items
Special dietary needs	Snacks
Cash	Quiet games, reading
Identification	Lightweight folding chairs
Important Papers:	
<i>Insurance</i>	
<i>Last month's utility bill</i>	

Do not bring weapons, alcohol, or pets!

EVACUATION LOCATIONS & TRANSPORTATION

SITUATION: *Where can I go to evacuate?*

RESPONSE:

1. Go to the home of a friend or relative in a non-evacuation area.
2. Go to a hotel or motel in a non-evacuation area.
3. Leave the County and go north (east or west), opposite of predicted path of the storm.
4. If you have no other alternative, go to a County shelter. (See Shelter Locations).

SITUATION: *How can I get to the evacuation location?*

RESPONSE:

1. Use the transportation you normally rely on.
2. Ask a relative, friend, or neighbor for a ride.
3. No car or ride? People without transport can use Okaloosa County Coordinated Transport- 833-9173
 - must call as soon as Evacuation Order or Warning is issued
 - will only take you to a public shelter
 - be ready when they arrive!

Bed-ridden people can call EMS if they don't have transport, but a family member must go to shelter with them!

- Also available for elderly: Transportation for Elderly at 833-9168

FLOODING

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- **Flood warnings** are issued by the National Weather Service based on computer models.
- Crest forecasts are estimates.
- A warning is issued for an entire river, not just the measuring point.

- **Floods:** Rivers usually rise very quickly, jumping several feet in a matter of hours
- There are **NO** dams that directly influence the rivers.
- Do NOT drink water in flooded areas until the water supply has been tested.
- Snakes get into everything.

SITUATION: *Water is starting to come inside.*

RESPONSE:

1. If in life-threatening situation, call 9-1-1. Otherwise:
2. Get **up** and **out** of the water.
3. Do not use anything electrical.
4. Wait for the water to recede.
5. City personnel: Take name and address and forward to EM.

SITUATION: *Do I turn off the breaker box?*

RESPONSE:

- **ONLY** if you can do so without being in any water at the same time.
- Once the water recedes, it is recommended to have an electrician inspect the safety of your electrical system.

FOOD SAFETY

SITUATION: *Anticipation of a power failure (as prior to a flood or hurricane warning)*

RESPONSE:

- Set refrigerator and freezer to coldest setting.
- Keep refrigerator/freezer plugged in
- Keep freezer closed
- Foods usually stay frozen 1-3 days

SITUATION: *Following a lengthy power failure- food has thawed and/or flood waters have entered refrigerator/freezer*

RESPONSE:

- Dispose of all foods contaminated by flood waters if not sealed in metal airtight cans or glass jars.
- You may safely re-freeze some foods if they still contain ice crystals or if they have been kept at 40 F or below for no more than 2 days. If the temperature is above 50 F, throw the food away.
- Cook thawed frozen foods and frozen dinners immediately if they are still cold. Do not re-freeze. If any foods have an offensive or questionable odor, do not eat.

HOTEL GUESTS/TOURISTS

SITUATION: *A flood, tornado, or hurricane is threatening. What should I do?*

RESPONSE:

- **Flooding:**

Refer to page 10.

Evacuate to higher floors.

Get up and out of the water until it subsides.

Refrain from using the phone or any electrical devices.

- **Tornado:**

Refrain from driving.

Do **NOT** open any windows.

Move into the bathroom or interior stairwell areas for safety.

- **Hurricane:**

See Hotel/Motel Management. They are required to have a plan to help you.

MEDIA CONFLICTS

SITUATION:

The media has broadcast conflicting information that has not been verified by a county official (the ultimate local authority).

RESPONSE:

- “Sir/Ma’am, I am unable to verify that information.” OR
- “The most recent **VERIFIED** information that I have from the County Officials is ...”

PETS

SITUATION: *I have to evacuate. What do I do with my pet?*

RESPONSE:

- Pets are not allowed at public shelters. There are no established pet shelters operated by Destin or Okaloosa County.
- Try to take your pet to a veterinary hospital, boarding kennel, family or friends who live outside the evacuation area.
- You may call AAA at 1-800-222-1134 to find out which hotels allow pets.
 - Super 8 Motels/ Econo Lodges often allow pets (fee required)
 - Days Inns allow small pets only (fee required)
 - Holiday Inns – small pets only
 - Howard Johnson – small pets, fee and deposit
 - Comfort Inns – pets allowed with \$50 deposit

If you must leave them:

- Place pets in cages/carrying crates, etc., with food and water. Place them in the highest place possible.
- As an absolute last resort, place your pets in your vehicle, outside your evacuation shelter or site.

SITUATION: *Following a disaster, the owner is trying to locate a missing pet(s).*

RESPONSE:

- Recovered animals which have not yet been claimed have been taken by the Panhandle Animal Welfare Society (PAWS).
You may contact them at 664-0445 or 243-1525.

SANDBAGS

SITUATION: *Where can I get sandbags?*

RESPONSE:

- Be aware that sandbagging is not particularly effective for the type of tidal flooding we receive in Destin, and that it will take hundreds of sandbags and several hours of labor to be even the least bit effective. However, you can get sandbags at Public Services (until supply is exhausted), Home Depot and perhaps at other stores listed under “Sand and Gravel” in the Yellow Pages. The Destin Fire District also may have sandbags for distribution. Their number is 837-8413.

SCHOOLS/PUBLIC SERVICES

SITUATION: *When is _____ going to be open?*

Schools

Colleges

DWU

County and City departments

Roads/bridges, etc.

RESPONSE:

If known (you have **verified** information): Answer the specific question.

If unknown(or still unofficial): “You will need to monitor the local radio channels, FM 99.5, FM 105.5, or AM 1260 for that information. The media should release that information as it becomes available.”

SHELTERS/EVACUATION CENTERS

SITUATION: *Where is a shelter I can evacuate to?*

RESPONSE:

(Refer to the listings on page 21 and 22 for evacuation center addresses and locations.)

REMINDERS:

- ONLY REFER CITIZENS TO SHELTERS WHICH HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY OPENED!
- **Special Needs Shelter** - Choctawhatchee High School
- **Medical Shelter** – Crestview High School

Severe Weather Center

Emergency Shelter Information

Okaloosa County does not automatically open all emergency shelters during an evacuation. Several factors determine which shelters will be open. Listen to local radio stations for updates.

The Emergency Broadcast System stations in Okaloosa County are: AM 1260, FM 105.5 and FM 99.5. Listen to one of these stations during a hurricane alert for important information.

Shelters do not allow pets, but many hotels will allow small pets in the room.

Shelter Locations:

(Please note that this is just a convenient name for Evacuation Centers. We cannot guarantee any particular level of safety at a shelter. They are selected because they are outside of hurricane surge zones and are of generally sturdy construction.)

Addie Lewis Middle School

281 Mississippi Ave.

Valparaiso, FL

(On Mississippi Ave. in Valparaiso. Cross-street is John Sims Pky. It is just outside the Eglin East Gate.)

Antioch Elementary

4700 Whitehurst Lane

Crestview, FL

Baker School

1369 14th Street

Baker, FL

(Access off of Rte. 4 in Baker - look for signs on right side of road when you get into Baker. If you miss the sign, turn right at the caution light in Baker, then right again.)

Blue Water Bay Elementary

4545 Range Road

Niceville, FL

Bruner Middle School

322 NW Holmes Blvd.

Fort Walton Beach, FL

(On Holmes Blvd. in Ft. Walton Beach. Drive west on Hwy. 98 and turn north on Memorial Pky. Then turn right on Holmes Blvd.)

Crestview High School

1304 Ferdon Blvd. (N. Hwy. 85)

Crestview, FL

This is the shelter you should use if you have special medical needs. *(On Ferdon Blvd. - which is Hwy. 85 - just north of Crestview.)*

Davidson Middle School

6261 Old Bethel Road

Crestview, FL

First Baptist Church of Valparaiso

444 Valparaiso Parkway

Valparaiso, FL

(On Hwy 190, access from Hwy. 85 or Hwy. 20 (John Sims Pky.)

Laurel Hill School

8078 4th Street

Laurel Hill, FL

(Access off of Hwy. 85 north of Crestview - look for signs when you get into Laurel Hill.)

Shalimar Elementary School

1350 Joe Martin Circle

Shalimar, FL

(Access off of Eglin Pky. (Hwy. 85) just north of Shalimar.)

SPECIAL NEEDS

SITUATION: *Citizen says he has no transportation to evacuate.*

RESPONSE:

- You need to ask your family or friends to help you.
 - If unavailable:** Go ask a neighbor to help you.
 - If unavailable:** Ask someone from your church or civic club.

- As a last resort:** You may call Okaloosa Co. Coordinated Transportation at 833-9173.
Senior Citizens may call Transportation for the Elderly at 833-9168.

SITUATION: *Citizen is dependent upon electrical equipment such as respirators, IV/feeding tubes, monitors, oxygen machines; or is concerned about running out of oxygen*

*.

RESPONSE:

- Does the patient have transportation? (via family, friends, neighbor, church, civic group? See above.)

IF NO*, have patient call Okaloosa Co. Emergency Management Services at 651-7150 and register with the county's Special Needs Program. They will provide assistance after they have cared for those who have pre-registered.

IF YES*, refer caller to the Yellow Pages to locate a Nursing Home or Assisted Living Facility **with a generator** to which they could go for the duration of the storm; or

- Evacuation shelters providing special care are: Choctawhatchee High School (Special Needs) and Crestview High School (Medical care).

* If the patient requires oxygen, add: "Contact your oxygen supplier and request a 72-hour supply (this precaution will provide the citizen with an oxygen supply that does not require electricity.)"

WEATHER

WHAT TO DO WHEN WEATHER THREATENS

SEVERE THUNDERSTORMS

- Go/stay inside
- Stay away from windows
- Do not call 9-1-1 for information or to report power outages
- If you are caught driving, pull off the road
- Do NOT drive through puddles. They may be deep.

TORNADOES (Watch or Warning)

- Go/stay inside
- Stay away from windows
- Do NOT open windows
- If you see or hear a tornado, take cover in a room without windows.
- If you are in your car, get out and take cover in a ditch.

LIGHTNING

- Stay indoors and stay away from open doors and windows, metal pipes, and portable electrical appliances.
- Do not use electrical plug-in equipment.
- Do not use the telephone except to report an emergency.
- Get out of the water and off the beaches.
- With no shelter, avoid the highest object in the area.
- If you are outside and feel your hair stand on end, crouch down with only balls of feet touching ground, arms covering head, making yourself as small as possible. DO NOT LIE DOWN.

HURRICANES

GENERAL:

The Gulf of Mexico is a relatively small body of water, and once a hurricane enters or forms there, any change of its strength, direction, and/or speed- all of which a hurricane does that **NO ONE** can predict- catches the public off-guard. Valuable property and assets that might have been saved are not; mass evacuation poses its own horrors; even lives are lost.

It is not foolish for anyone living or vacationing in Destin to closely monitor any tropical disturbance in the Gulf and perform the activities suggested for the **Watch** phase (see on following pages). The National Weather Service updates hurricane forecasts every six hours. Be prepared to act. Residents are wise to make basic hurricane preparations at the beginning of the hurricane season, June 1, (see **Home Preparations**) so that, should it be one of “our” years, they can deal with an approaching hurricane with a minimum of confusion or serious omissions.

HURRICANE CATEGORIES:

- 1 74-95 mph sustained winds; 4-5 ft. (above normal) storm surge; danger of flooding low-lying areas; tree and sign damage.
- 2 96-110 mph sustained winds, 6-8 ft (above normal) storm surge; some trees blown down; damage to roofs, windows, and doors of structures; considerable damage to piers, etc.
- 3 111-130 mph sustained winds; 9-12 ft. (above normal) storm surge; large trees down; structural damage to smaller buildings; serious coastal flooding.
- 4 131-155 mph sustained winds; 13-18 ft. (above normal) storm surge; extensive damage to roofs, windows, and doors; major damage to lower floors of structures near shore; major erosion.
- 5 Winds 156 mph and greater; 18 ft. or more (above normal) storm surge within 500 yards of shore; extensive shattering of glass; complete failure of roofs on residences and industrial buildings; small buildings blown away.

HURRICANE WATCH

(Hurricane conditions could occur within 36 hours)

SITUATION: *What should I be doing?*

RESPONSE:

- Monitor TV/radio for weather updates every six hours.
- Check your hurricane supplies/survival kit:
 - Containers for water (9 gals per person)
 - Non-perishable food (3 day supply)
 - Manual can opener
 - Special dietary and infant needs
 - Prescription medicines (2 week supply)
 - Radio and extra batteries
 - Flashlights and extra batteries
 - Cash
 - First aid kit
 - Portable cooler
 - Pet necessities
 - Home repair supplies- lumber, buckets, sheets of plastic, etc.
 - Emergency restroom supplies
(5 gal. bucket with tight fitting lid, heavy plastic bags, chlorine bleach)
 - Insurance policies/agents' phone numbers
- Make sure car is fueled
- Prepare to evacuate if ordered to do so
- Inform friends & relatives what you plan to do, where you plan to go; coordinate efforts
- If going to hotel, make reservations
- Make arrangements for pets
- Make arrangements for elderly or sick
- Make home preparations (See **WATCH** and **WARNING** lists)

HURRICANE WARNING

(Hurricane Conditions could occur within 24 hours)

SITUATION: *What do I do?!*

RESPONSE:

- Protect your property by putting up storm shutters, bringing in loose objects, securing your assets.
- Protect your valuables by moving them away from windows, covering them with plastic bags, placing them in cabinets or appliances.
- Evacuate early if you live in mobile home or evacuation zone (anything south of US 98 plus bay and waterfronts). Advise family and friends of where you'll be.
- Before leaving, unplug everything **except** freezer and refrigerator.
- Take important documents- besides insurance policies and agents' phone numbers, **last utility bill** (matches your name to billing address – some other I.D.'s do not). (Refer to **EVACUATION**.)
- If you are remaining in place, make sure you have adequate food, water, and supplies to survive on your own for 72 hours (3 days) after the passing of the hurricane (see **WATCH** list on preceding page).

DURING THE STORM:

- Move everyone to your safe room.
- Stay away from unprotected windows.
- Turn on your battery-operated radio.
- Prepare for power outages. Have flashlight ready. When you lose power, turn off the main breaker if you can reach it safely.
- You may hear windows break. Do not leave your safe room until the **ALL CLEAR** is issued on the radio. You may be in the calm of the storm.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE HURRICANE

- Leave your safe room slowly and carefully.
- Inspect damage **inside only**.
- Begin to clean up most dangerous conditions, such as broken glass.
- Do not call **9-1-1** to report damage. **Life-threatening emergencies only**.
- Continue to clean up inside.
- Continue to monitor local EAS radio station for the most accurate and official recovery information.
- Begin to clean up outside, very carefully. Avoid downed lines.
- County and City crews will give priority to clearing debris from main arteries, not residential streets.
- Neighborhoods need to share labor and resources to clean up themselves.
- Power is restored in a priority order established by Gulf Power's need assessment; grids are restored first, not individual homes and businesses.
- **Wait for official authorization to drive/return home; emergency vehicles need priority.**

INITIAL HURRICANE RECOVERY

SITUATION: *When do you allow people back into Destin?*

RESPONSE:

- Both Okaloosa County and the City of Destin will allow evacuees back into their respective jurisdictions when EM officials think it is REASONABLY safe.
- Check the County website at www.co.okaloosa.fl.us/Emergency
- Okaloosa County Sheriff's Officers may block exits from I-10, Hwy. 85, Hwy. 90, and Hwy. 20 at the county line if damage is extensive.
- Residents who have safely evacuated are better to stay put until County/City has officially been declared safe to enter.
- Mandatory evacuation areas in Destin are prone to have suffered the most damages. Being allowed back into Destin does not necessarily mean residents of Holiday Isle, Crystal Beach, or other waterfront areas will be permanently allowed back into their neighborhoods. Until sewer and water lines are operational, public health and fire officials may not permit habitation in affected areas even if your structure is safe.
- Access to seriously damaged areas will be prohibited. Police and National Guard will protect and monitor such areas 24-hours a day. To gain temporary access to their property in these neighborhoods, residents must be able to prove their property ownership. Having last month's utility bill for that address and your driver's license is the best way to assure access without hassle.

SITUATION: *What kind of disaster assistance is available? How do I get it?*

RESPONSE:

- Insurance is the first (and best) defense against financial ruin from a disaster.
- Federal assistance is available only if the President declares a disaster for Okaloosa Co.
- You must apply for assistance. **To register, call FEMA's toll free number at 800-525-0321, or go to their webpage, www.disasterrelief.org.** FEMA aid does not replace all of your losses.
- You should contact the Red Cross and the Salvation Army for your immediate needs.
- Go ahead and begin cleaning up and making repairs, but document all damages and take still pictures. Save all invoices and receipts.