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Now Is Not The Time To Pile Up Yard Waste; Storm Preps an Ongoing task

BREVARD COUNTY, Fla. – While monitoring developments of Hurricane Matthew, Brevard County Emergency Management reminds residents that now is not the time to pile lawn debris, tree limbs and other types of yard waste at the curb.

Residents should avoid piling tree limbs up at the curb when it's too late for waste collection to occur. This helps avoid the problem of debris becoming airborne or getting into storm drains and blocking the free flow of runoff.

Residents often wait until storm warnings have been issued to tend to overgrowth and potential storm damage that might result from limbs falling onto their property or homes. As routine preparation for hurricane season, property owners are advised to visually inspect their home and property and to make any repairs necessary. Check the roof for loose shingles; the gutters and drains to ensure proper drainage; and the trees for loose branches.

Now is a good time to store and batten down lawn furniture or other lawn items that might blow around or become potential projectiles in high winds.

Residents are also encouraged to become familiar with the drainage system in their neighborhoods: where the stormwater drains are located, where there could be problems, who is responsible for maintenance, and how to contact them. To help reduce flooding, residents should make sure storm drains are free of debris so water can drain freely.

Blockages should be reported to the appropriate authority: the homeowners' association, the city's Public Works Department or the Brevard County Public Works Department. County contacts are:

- North area -- from the Volusia County line south to Gus Hipp/Roy Wall Boulevard on the mainland: call (321) 264-5084
- Central area -- All of Merritt Island and south to the Pineda Causeway on the beaches: call (321) 455-1389
- South Area -- from Gus Hipp/Roy Wall Boulevard to the Indian River Countyline on the mainland, and from Pineda Causeway south to the Sebastian Inlet on the beaches: call (321) 255-4310.

Brevard County Public Works crews routinely inspect and clear drains, ensure pumps are functional and operational and make sure grates and inlets at major outfalls are free of debris and flowing. They don't wait for storms to appear in the Atlantic Ocean before these efforts are made.

"The truth is we do this stuff all year long," said Public Works Director John Denninghoff.

Other preparations include making sure all machinery, pumps and vehicles are gassed up, barricades are ready for deployment and mowing has ceased to prevent blockage in storm drains.

"Something we always do before every storm, typically, is we go around and check all major outfalls in the county to ensure they are clean enough and to ensure we don't have any blockages," Denninghoff said. "We also look at major subdivisions, big subdivisions that have outfalls that affect thousands of people. Even though it's their obligation to maintain, we go in and clear it.

"There are a whole lot of places we know from experience in the past or from complaints that there's a problem or could be a problem, so we check. Also, there are locations where we know from experience there's a large amount of sedimentation, so we go in and clean those locations."

Public Works crews are involved in training exercises on how to deal with flooding four times a year, Denninghoff said. During those exercises, they practice deploying pumps – an effort that can take as much as 8 hours, but with training and practice can now be completed in as little as an hour.

"We are much more prepared now to deal with these things than ever before, " Denninghoff said. "We have done everything that our experience tells us we should do in advance of a storm and we are prepared to respond with the resources at our disposal. We're doing things the public won't notice, but we're doing things that will improve our effectiveness to our response to flooding that may come about as a result of a major storm event."

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