



Fire Chiefs' Association of Broward County

Standard Operating Guidelines

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Subject: Emergency Vehicle Responses during Tropical Storms & Hurricanes

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I. Resource

Cross Reference: International Association of Fire Chiefs' (IAFC) Model Procedures for Response of Emergency Vehicles during Hurricane and Tropical Storms & Bergen County Fire Chiefs' Association Wind Tests for Rescue Vehicles.

II. Purpose/Intent:

- A. The purpose of this procedure is to provide clear guideline for the response of emergency vehicles and crews during high winds caused from storm events. Following the 2017 busy hurricane season it was evident to most that Broward County Fire Rescue Agencies lacked a consistent procedure in regards to emergency vehicle response during high wind conditions.
- B. It has been decided that an effort should be made to provide a consistent County wide approach in order to provide up to the moment Fire and EMS services during all phases of a storm event, to recognize each agencies ability to modify their response upon their local conditions and/or an imminent life/fire loss incident, and ultimately keep fire rescue crews safe during the event.

III. Definition(s):

Severe Weather Event - Any occurrence of strong winds, heavy rain, tornados, hail, lightening, or combination thereof creating a potential for moderate to severe damage to a location. Severe weather events can be planned (two or more days' notice), or unplanned (less than a few hours' notice, or no notice at all).

Sustained Wind Speed - Maximum sustained surface wind speed using the U.S. one minute average. Wind speed will not be estimated, only a wind speed detection device shall be used. If a wind speed device is not available the wind speed shall be determined by the communications center for that jurisdiction. If a wind speed detection device is available, the device may be used to detect wind speed in a specific location. Wind gusts will no longer be a determining factor for response.

Officer in Charge - Each agency may allow different and/or multiple positions to make operational decisions during normal operations. However, for the consistency of this procedure during storm events the Incident Commander or his/her designee shall be considered the Officer in Charge and the one ultimately making the response decision.

Imminent Life/Property Loss Incident - An incident where no response from Fire/EMS crews would in the Officer in Charge's determination cause a loss of life or catastrophic property damage.

IV. **Procedure:**

- A. The following wind speed guidelines will be used to determine vehicle responses during a severe weather event.
- Sustained Wind Speed < 50 Mph = Normal Response
 - Sustained Wind Speed > 35 Mph = No use of aerial ladders or extension ladders
 - Sustained Wind Speed > 50 Mph but < 75 Mph = Imminent life/property loss
 - Sustained Wind Speeds > 75 Mph = No Responses
1. Wind Speed detection and announcement shall be provided by the communications center for that jurisdiction and updated at 15 minute intervals and/ or when a wind speed change may affect the apparatus response as per the response guidelines.
 2. The Communication Center's wind speed determination shall be considered accurate across all areas of the County unless an agency has specific forecast instruments at their actual location. The Officer in Charge shall decide which determination will be used.
 3. Units will operate as normal to a wind speed of 50 Mph.
 4. Aerial ladders and extension ladders shall not be utilized in wind speeds > 35 Mph.
 5. Units will operate under the direction of the Officer in Charge for imminent life/property loss incidents for sustained wind speeds > 50 Mph but < 75 Mph.
 6. No units will respond to any incident with sustained wind speeds of > 75 Mph.
 - a. In the event units are out on location when the wind speed changes to sustained winds of > 50 Mph, the unit shall finish their assignment and return to the closest secured operating fire station or place of refuge.
 7. In the event units are out on location when the sustained wind speed changes to > 75 mph, the units shall immediately receive direction from the Officer in Charge as to finishing assignments, hunkering down in place, or return to a closest operating fire station or place of refuge.
 8. During the event, no individual shall respond alone
- B. **Patient Transport:** All agencies should work with their receiving hospitals to assure measures are in place to allow transferring of patients once the sustained wind speeds exceed the > 50 Mph normal response speed.
- C. **Auto/Mutual Aid:** In the event of a call for Auto/Mutual Aid, all responses will follow this guideline and if the responding agency is not using the Jurisdictional Communication Center's wind speed determination, it will be up to the Officer in Charge to advise if their location forecast instruments will allow for a response.

Additional Information, Requirements & Responsibilities

This information should be incorporated into each agencies Standard Operating Procedures or Guidelines and Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

This guideline shall be reviewed and evaluated periodically for necessary changes.