



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **SFWMD Recognized as First 'StormReady' Government Agency in South Florida**

*National Weather Service designation is part of the District's storm readiness program*



**West Palm Beach, FL** — Building on a dedicated storm preparation program, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) has become the first agency in South Florida to receive the National Weather Service's (NWS) "StormReady Government" designation.

By joining the StormReady program, government agencies and communities strengthen preparedness, communication and safety skills that are critical to help protect lives and property before and during weather-related events. Acceptance into the program means the District's suite of emergency management procedures meets the NWS advanced planning, education and awareness standards.

"I cannot stress enough how vital storm preparation is for this agency and every South Floridian," said Tommy Strowd, SFWMD Director of Operations, Maintenance and Construction. "District preparation work served us well during the recent Tropical Storm Debby, and we are deploying available field crews and equipment including portable pumps to assist water managers in North Florida, where the storm hit hardest."

#### **Storm Facts**

Americans are impacted by an average of 10,000 thunderstorms, 5,000 floods, 1,000 tornadoes and an average of two deadly hurricanes making landfall each year. Approximately 90% of all presidentially declared disasters are weather related and account for nearly \$14 billion in damage.

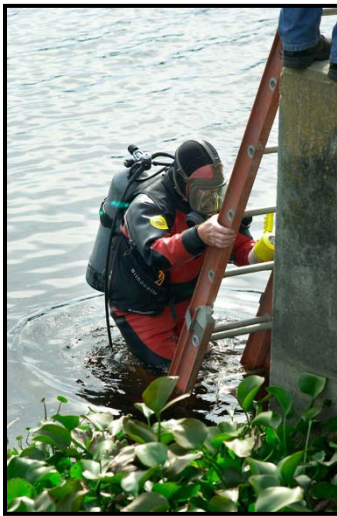
Source: NWS

Weather service personnel recently inspected the District's West Palm Beach headquarters to evaluate the Emergency Operations Center, control room and operating

plans and procedures as part of the agency's storm readiness. Emergency storm plans were put into practice during the District's intense, two-day Hurricane Freddy exercise earlier this month.

### **Maintenance: Keeping the Flow Going**

To sustain the regional flood control system's capability for handling storms and wet season rainfall, the District has a robust program of structural maintenance and upgrades. Accomplished primarily during the dry season, these activities are critical to ensuring that the regional flood control system of more than 1,600 miles of canals and 1,000 miles of levees and berms operates at optimal capacity. During the past five years, the District has invested approximately \$240 million in essential maintenance work, including:



- Hardening and overhauling pump stations
- Overhauling gated spillways
- Replacing project culverts
- Upgrading microwave towers with control buildings
- Dredging canals
- Stabilizing canal banks
- Enhancing Stormwater Treatment Areas

Each year as the summer rainy season and hurricane season approaches, many canals and lakes from Orlando to the Florida Keys reach the lowest level in their seasonally varying operations. During that timeframe, District crews also inspect many of the approximately 1,300 water control structures and 64 pump stations.

### **Know the Flow**

Flood control in South Florida is a shared responsibility between the District, county and city governments, local drainage districts and residents. Residents can do their part by:

- Knowing whether they live next to a primary canal maintained by the District or a secondary canal maintained by a municipality or drainage district.
- Making sure trees or other vegetation do not encroach on canal maintenance right-of-way.
- Reporting the location and condition of any clogged or damaged facilities to the proper authority.
- Keeping ditches, swales, drainage grates and retention lakes clear of debris, trash and other discarded material.

More tips on how residents can prepare for the rainy season are available on the District's Rainy Season Readiness [website](#). For updates from the District in case of an emergency, follow the District's Twitter feed: [@SFWMD](#).

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**About the South Florida Water Management District**

*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state’s five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.*