

Hurricane Response Planning in Florida

Edward B. Williams

On August 24, 1992, Dade County, Florida experienced a hurricane of catastrophic proportions. Hurricane Andrew was the third most powerful storm to hit the United States and became the most costly natural disaster ever recorded. Andrew caused property damages exceeding \$20 Billion and left nearly 200,000 Floridians homeless. This disaster resulted in a severe and prolonged disruption of normal activities, including government services, in an area of approximately 100 square miles.

In addition to describing the impact of Andrew, this report examines the extreme difficulties that were faced by criminal justice administrators in responding to this event. As is always the case, law enforcement was called upon to quickly mobilize, adapt and restore some degree of normalcy in the stricken area. Andrew was a tremendous learning experience and should result in a better-prepared and more effective response to the next "big one". Specifically this report explores criminal justice planning. Certainly a key major success factor in properly responding to a major disaster is the thoroughness of advanced planning by criminal justice administrators. Preparations must be made far in advance of a disaster occurring. Criminal justice administrators must take advantage of the lessons learned from hurricane Andrew to develop or modify hurricane plans, training, and general preparedness. The experiences of all agencies should be examined. This report outlines major legal authorities and requirements, recommendations, and detailed checklists for comprehensive planning.