

# **Village of El Portal**



## **Sustainability & Resiliency Task Force**

### **Immediate Storm & Flood Plan Recommendations for Adoption by the Village of El Portal**

August 26, 2020  
Version 1.0

VILLAGE HALL  
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MAYOR CLAUDIA V CUBILLOS  
VICE MAYOR OMARR C. NICKERSON  
COUNCILPERSON VIMARI ROMAN  
COUNCILPERSON ANDERS URBOM  
COUNCILPERSON LUIS PIRELA

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## 1. Background

As part of defining initial priorities for the work of the **Village of El Portal Sustainability & Resiliency Task Force (“Task Force”)**, and in recognition of the fact that the Task Force has come together at the start of an active hurricane season amidst an unprecedented national pandemic, the group began work immediately on a set of recommendations for a formal Storm & Flood Plan for the Village. These recommendations are designed to form the basis of a practical plan that the Village Council can adopt and the Village can implement to improve current safety procedures (a localized flood evacuation plan, improved communication, a proactive sandbag program) as well as longer term resiliency scenarios that might arise with climate change and advancing sea level rise. The goal is to provide the Village and its residents with an adaptable framework for increasing safety and security in the event of a major storm or flooding event by proactively developing and communicating a plan in advance. This will allow the Village administration and residents to take organized action in the event of emergency. These plans are designed to be additive to any existing Village Emergency Plans following learnings from Irma and other flood and storm events.

The Task Force recommends that the Village Council consider these recommendations and adopt a plan based on them as soon as possible, and that in the meantime the Police Chief and the Village Manager take these recommendations into consideration should a storm arrive before a formal plan is adopted.

## 2. Summary

In order to implement an official evacuation flood plan for The Village of El Portal, the Mayor, Chief, and Village Manager will need to meet with the Miami-Dade County Emergency Management to outline an El Portal-specific plan. This plan should be based on the identification of the flood zone recommendations below and should focus on evacuations of low-lying areas of the Village during Moderate to Major flood scenarios. **This should be a primary action point of any plan adopted by the Village Council.**

Given the acute timing of these recommendations (when a storm could impact El Portal in a matter of days), the Task Force urges the Village to not allow “perfect to be the enemy of good”. The Task Force recommends prioritizing the passing an initial plan as a “living document” based on these recommendations, and then setting a cadence to have the Official El Portal Emergency Flood & Storm Management Plan reviewed regularly for effectiveness, completeness, improvements, and corrections.

This allows for the Village to have the designated zones reviewed for accuracy; county guidance can be incorporated as necessary; and Village-wide efforts (such as septic to sewer conversion and other planning considerations) are continually reflected. The Task Force Recommends that the Village revisits and revises this plan at the start of every calendar year to ensure inclusion in the Village’s regular business.

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### 3. Key Recommendations

The Task Force has four, immediate recommendations that the Village can act upon to mitigate risk to life and property:

- Create two zones to identify properties most at risk for flooding
- Develop (or Enhance) the Official El Portal Emergency Management Flood & Storm Plan
- Develop a Public Service Campaign to communicate the Official El Portal Emergency Management Flood & Storm Plan to the community
- Develop a bulk sandbag / flooding mitigation program for the Village

#### 3.1. Create Two Zones to Identify Properties Most at Risk for Flooding

For internal Village purposes, define two zones to identify those properties most at risk during modest flooding and those at risk during major flooding.

- **Modest (nuisance) to Moderate Flooding:** Flooding of up to 6 ft. above sea level which could affect houses with lots up to 5 ft. above sea level (and any houses with a history of water capture, poor drainage, or adjacency to storm drains)
- **Major Flooding:** Flooding over 6 ft. above sea level, could present life-threatening scenarios for houses with lots under 5 ft. above sea level, as well as moderate flooding in some houses with lots over 5 ft. above sea level.

The Committee recommends that the Village use the elevation maps provided by Mr. Hugh Gladwin to define these zones, while cross matching the maps with resident information to develop internal communication lists for emergency communication. The east side map is at <https://c7riochico.net/epw/eastsideelevation.jpg>; the west side map is at <https://c7riochico.net/epw/westsideelevation.jpg>

#### 3.2. Develop (or Enhance) an Official El Portal Emergency Flood & Storm Management Plan

The goal for developing the Official El Portal Emergency Flood & Storm Management Plan is to provide advance warning to residents in low-lying areas when flooding is likely, providing them time to prevent loss of life and property. This Plan should have two key elements (with further execution plans to follow in the future):

- Centralized threat assessment for Major Flood & storm events
- Communication plan

##### 3.2.1. Centralized Threat Assessment for Major Flood & Storm Events

The Village should determine a protocol for tracking and evaluating relevant data as soon as a potential tropical cyclone (as defined by the National Weather Service) is approaching South Florida that could create a Major Flood event. The Task Force recommends that the goal for assessment and communication should be minimum of 48 hours for evacuation (however the final goals are at the discretion of the Council

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and the Police Chief as a part of an Emergency Management Plan, using guidance from the County and other governmental sources). The Police Chief should have a primary role in developing this protocol.

Additional suggestions include:

- Working with the Little River Conservancy to developing this protocol, as it could leverage and formalize citizen science efforts already underway
- Leveraging sources such as the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) online water level monitoring and county flood guidance communication

### **3.2.2. Communication Plan**

After the threat is assessed to be significant, communication to the impacted individuals is critical. The Task Force recommends that the Official El Portal Emergency Flood & Storm Management Plan:

- Use the defined flood zones to activate a flood communication plan based on the expected severity of the storm
- Focus the communication on major scenarios where endangerment of life is a consideration
- Address the immediate COVID-19 complications for the current storm season ensuring residents in at-risk flood areas have a firm evacuation plan
  - The best scenario is that they shelter within the Village at neighbors, but this will require advance planning and some thought for residents

### **3.3. Develop a Public Service Campaign for the Emergency Management Plan**

After the completion / update of the Official El Portal Emergency Flood & Storm Management Plan, it is important for the Village residents to understand the Plan's purpose, focus, and guidance. The Task Force recommends that the Village develop a Public Service Campaign for the Plan, that:

- Provides specific communication on the scenarios for Major Flooding
- Raises awareness, including specific guidance on how to prepare houses to evacuate in Major Flood or storm scenarios
- Uses colored zone descriptions and descriptive copy for residents to specifically outline what will happen in different flood scenarios
- Focuses only on Major Flood event scenarios which could be life threatening
- Leverages the existing Crimewatch structure to develop a communication chain
- Uses all of the channels the Village has at its disposal, including the Peacock, printed flyers, the website, and public meetings

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### 3.4. Develop a Bulk Sandbag / Flooding Mitigation Program for the Village

One of the noted issues many residents have in securing their homes during a storm & flood event is the acquisition and placement of sandbags and other flood mitigation items. The Task Force recommends that the Village develop a bulk sandbag / flooding mitigation program for the Village that:

- Could include centralized delivery of sand and sandbags to the Village for at-risk residents
- Could include bulk purchasing with discounted pricing for residents for materials like QuickDam instant sandbags, or other more permanent flood mitigation systems for residents
- Could leverage Federal, State, County, and private funding sources for resilience initiatives to help residents pay for sandbags and other mitigation supplies
- Could include storm drain monitoring / clearing activities by Village volunteers

*Note: The Village of El Portal Sustainability & Resiliency Task Force could work with the Village Manager on this specific initiative as a part of its ongoing activities.*

Name	Concur	Dissent
Elizabeth Carpenter, Chair	Y	
Maribel Fruitstone, Vice-Chair		
Kristen McLean, Member	Y	
Courtney Kurk, Member	Y	
Lynn Purcell, Member		