

Hurricane Information from MUD 18 (updated 5/31/2011)

Before, during and after a storm event, Bentwater residents can take specific action that will help MUD continue basic services. If a hurricane is heading our way, the National Hurricane Center, local news media and other agencies will provide information for residents in the upper Gulf Coast. Issues within Bentwater will be addressed by the POA and MUD 18. During a storm event the POA will serve as the Command Center and can mobilize a trained Community Emergency Response Team. MUD's role focuses on potential problems related to water supply, sewage treatment, garbage pickup and drainage of storm water. The following is helpful information in dealing with potential problems in hurricanes.

Background: Operation of MUD facilities depends heavily on electrical power: to pump water, to pump sewage out of 24 lift stations within Bentwater and to treat waste water. During brief electrical outages these systems continue to perform because of reserves of pressurized water and extra holding capacity at the lift stations and at the waste treatment plant. During an extended electrical outage, MUD 18 uses diesel generators to provide the power for keeping critical facilities operating. Natural gas generators have been installed on 17 of our lift stations. The District has a portable diesel generator that is used on the remaining generators as needed. We have increased our diesel fuel storage within Bentwater and we have access to certain supplies outside Bentwater. Even with systems and procedures for emergency operation, event specific challenges (such as street blockages and diesel fuel shortages) make it impossible to guarantee normal operations during an extended electrical outage.

Residents should understand the importance of minimizing use of water, minimizing the production of waste water and other helpful actions during a large storm event with an extended electrical power outage.

Some Guidelines for Advance Preparations: The following procedures are useful for minimizing overload of MUD facilities, prolonging their successful operation and providing extra protection:

1. Drinking water. Accumulate gallon jugs of drinking water early in hurricane season. Don't wait until a hurricane is about to strike, since hoarding may have already begun. Unfortunately, MUD cannot guarantee an unfailing supply of safe drinking water in all possible circumstances. Water may always be available but might not always be drinkable. If there is any doubt, MUD will post signs around Bentwater, saying "Water Is Safe" or "Boil All Water."

Once there are hurricane warnings, disable all automatic sprinkler systems; do this at least a day before landfall is expected. If you choose to leave the area, turn your sprinkler system off. This will allow us to enter into an emergency with a bigger reserve supply of water.

2. Sewage backups. Even with the natural gas generators on some lift stations and a portable diesel generator to provide relief to the remaining lift stations, extreme circumstances may make it impossible to keep a lift station operating. Houses in low areas can be vulnerable to backups and owners need to be aware of this. Some homeowners have spring-loaded relief valves installed outside the home in place of the screwed-in plug of the sewer cleanout pipe. These should be mounted lower than the slab level of the house and should be kept clear of debris or other obstructions. Some homeowners have flapper valves for backup prevention; usually these are installed during home construction, so the status of this protection may be unknown. A reputable plumber can assure proper installation of these devices.

3. Drainage of storm water. An intense storm can potentially overwhelm our drainage facilities. Drainage problems in Bentwater arise because of blockage of the drainage path which should be preserved between all homes. While the deed restrictions deal with this issue, many homeowners end up with raised elevations between homes, creating dams which give excess water no place to go except into the homes. Some landscaping is installed in a way that restricts water flow between homes. Neighbors should take care not to create problems for neighbors. Storage of some items can be a problem; for example, leaving a wheelbarrow next to the house turned upside down so it does not blow away may save the wheelbarrow but cause flooding of the house. Homeowners need to think through all these issues because homeowner situations differ greatly. Those in low lying areas need

to be much more cautious than those living at the very peak of a hill. **Deal with these issues as soon as they are observed to avoid any headaches connected with home flooding.**

If there is a lull in the storm, check for any debris in drainage paths and attend to it as soon as possible.

Dealing with the Aftermath of the Storm

- 1. Water** Once electricity has been lost, do not start filling bathtubs, do not operate irrigation systems, etc. This will overtax our facilities and accelerate the potential loss of our capacity due to drawdown.
- 2. Sewage** In an electrical outage, minimize the production of waste water. Minimize water used for bathing; wash clothes only when there is a full load; flush toilets only when there is a significant incentive to flush them. We have the capacity to operate our waste treatment system at full capacity with dedicated diesel-driven electrical generators and storage tanks for fuel, but we need to minimize fuel consumption so that supplies last. In addition, these practices will reduce consumption of water.
- 3. Garbage** Collection of garbage may be delayed for a week or more, depending on the number of obstacles to traffic, and depending on area-wide availability of diesel fuel for trucks. Do not let garbage cans sit out on the street for days in anticipation of return of garbage service; secondary storms can scatter garbage into the neighborhood and contribute to storm drainage issues. If possible, keep garbage cans inside the garage, or at least keep true garbage (food waste) in the garage; double-bagging or triple-bagging may be desirable for the most problematic garbage. When MUD get word about resumption of garbage service, we will get the message out.

Getting Information

After the last hurricane it seemed that erroneous "information" circulated better than useful information. MUD has set up procedures to provide access to the most reliable information. Some of these may not work perfectly during a full-scale emergency; adaptations will be made as necessary.

- 1. Sources of information** The best source of the most recent information about what to expect and what to do will be a Board member. (Lou Tichacek: 597-7010, Linda Pierce: 597-5463, Roy Champagne: 597-8786, Joe Constantino: 597-8029 and Chris Uzelmeier: 449-5198)

The following websites will provide updated information if conditions allow:

www.mcmud18.com; www.bentwaterpoa.com; and www.bentwaterclub.com.

Information notices will be posted at several high traffic places around Bentwater – especially at the POA office, Country Club entrance, and the entrance gates.

To report water, sewage or garbage problems, call Hays Utilities (936-588-1166) or Waste Management (713-686-6666 or 800-592-1102). If those channels fail, contact a Board member.

- 2. Access to information** Phone lines may work occasionally but not always. Some people found repeated attempts to use land lines sometimes produced results. Cell phones may work for some brands but not others. Text messaging was more successful than voice during high traffic cell phone usage. Internet access will likely require repeated attempts to find useful circuits.

When all else fails the only method of communication may be by word of mouth from one resident to another. In past hurricanes this proved to be only slightly useful at best. The major problem seems to have been that well-intentioned people thought they had useful information and then spread it as quickly as possible. In too many cases this information was wrong and displaced some really useful information. It is important not to spread "information" which is not known to be really authoritative. Do not assume that information about issues in other MUD districts will apply directly to MUD18.

Take action early. Be considerate of neighbors. Stay informed. Be safe.