



Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Dorai, Florida 33178-1404
Phone: 305-468-5400

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management
Testimony for Hearing – May 1, 2009

- Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Diaz-Balart – Good afternoon and thank you for asking me to speak before you today about the Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security and the County's state of readiness for the 2009 Hurricane Season.
- Miami-Dade County is approximately 2,000 square miles in size and has a population of about 2.5 million people.
- In terms of square miles, Miami-Dade County is larger than the District of Columbia and the states of Rhode Island and Delaware.
- Miami-Dade County government provides services to roughly 1.1 million residents in the unincorporated areas, employs more than 30,000 people, and has an overall annual budget of \$7.5 billion and an operating budget of \$4.9 billion.
- The other 1.4 million residents live in 35 municipalities in the County.
- The cities of Miami, Hialeah and Miami Gardens are the most populous municipalities in the County.
- Miami-Dade County is bordered by two National Parks, Biscayne National Park to the east and Everglades National Park to the west.
- Miami-Dade County is one of only three locations in the United States that has ever been struck by a Category 5 hurricane, and that storm was Hurricane Andrew on August 24, 1992.
- Since 1992, Miami-Dade County has activated its Emergency Operations Center 45 times – 20 of those activations were because of the threat of a hurricane or tropical storm.



Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178-1404
Phone: 305-468-5400

- Since 1992, Miami-Dade County has ordered evacuations and/or opened hurricane evacuation centers 20 times because of the threat of a hurricane or tropical storm.
- The 2004 and 2005 hurricane seasons were by far the busiest for the County. Our EOC was activated seven times to deal with the threat of hurricanes.
- The last three hurricane seasons have been relatively uneventful. The County activated its EOC in August 2006 because of Hurricane Ernesto, in August 2008 because of Tropical Storm Fay and in September 2008 because of Hurricane Ike. Thankfully, those storms did not cause any significant damage or injury in Miami-Dade County.
- While we are thankful for three consecutive years of relatively uneventful hurricane seasons, we are always concerned that complacency could set in among residents because of the inactivity.
- The Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security works tirelessly to keep residents prepared for hurricane season.
- The County produces all hurricane and emergency preparedness publications in English, Spanish and Creole to serve the three major languages spoken in the County.
- The Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security actively organizes and participates in local hurricane preparedness fairs and expositions no matter how small or large they are or where they take place.
- The County works closely with local municipalities to ensure that all residents, not just those in the unincorporated areas, are prepared for a hurricane.
- While Miami-Dade County is rich in resources, the County works closely with the Florida Division of Emergency Management when certain resources cannot be identified within the County. The Florida Division of Emergency Management then works to provide those resources to the County.



Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178-1404
Phone: 305-468-5400

- The Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security manages Miami-Dade Alerts, a wireless emergency notification system that alerts residents whenever a hazardous situation like a hurricane threatens Miami-Dade County. The system currently has more than 120,000 subscribers.
- The Department also engages private sector businesses through its Local Mitigation Strategy. The program celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2008 and its participants include major corporations and small businesses.
- Together, the public-private partnership has completed more than \$250 million in strengthening infrastructure around Miami-Dade County. This program's members are represented in the Emergency Operations Center during activations.
- Some examples of the work completed by the LMS group include several major flood mitigation projects and the shuttering of critical infrastructure such as hospitals and public safety agencies.
- Miami-Dade County has completed approximately \$800 million in public assistance enhancements when restoring infrastructure after declared emergency events.
- The County works closely with the Miami-Dade Public Schools system to establish hurricane evacuation centers that can be opened should the County Mayor order an evacuation.
- Presently, there are a total of 56 hurricane evacuation centers throughout Miami-Dade County with a capacity of 85,500 spaces. These totals include primary, secondary and tertiary hurricane evacuation centers.
- In addition to the hurricane evacuation centers, Miami-Dade County has six special needs evacuation centers (SNECs) in order to serve our vulnerable population.
- The County established the Emergency Evacuation Assistance Program. This free program provides transportation to special needs evacuation centers that are operated by medical personnel. There are currently 2,000 people registered for the program.



Curtis Sommerhoff, Interim Director
Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security
9300 N.W. 41 Street, Doral, Florida 33178-1404
Phone: 305-468-5400

- The Miami-Dade County Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security works closely with the National Hurricane Center.
- Any storm within 1,500 nautical miles and with a forecast track bringing it in the general direction of South Florida is closely monitored. As well as is any system that initially develops in the Gulf of Mexico or Caribbean.
- The Department of Emergency Management & Homeland Security issues readiness advisories to all of our EOC partners and engage in conference calls with local agencies and the National Hurricane Center.
- These advisories include things like the storm's position and forecast track. We also provide a tentative planning schedule in which we enter data provided by the National Hurricane Center such as a direct path calculation, forward speed, the arrival of tropical storm force winds, etc.
- The advisories provide a timeline for preparedness activities, including the issuing of Press Releases, conducting our special needs population call-downs, the opening of evacuation centers, establishing EOC activation levels, considering a Local State of Emergency declaration, beginning evacuations and Bus Pick ups, and completing evacuations.
- With that, Madam Chairwoman, I conclude my presentation.