

Wm. Weston J. Newton, Chairman
August 2010
Hilton Head Island Monthly Magazine

As we approach the height of another hurricane season, it seems a fitting time to remind everyone of the Golden Rule of Hurricane Evacuation: **He who leaves early gets the best and closest hotel room!** So says William Winn, Beaufort County Public Safety Director.

Fortunately, we haven't had a mandatory hurricane evacuation in Beaufort County since 1999. However, if you haven't heeded William's adage in the past, you may want to do so this year. Predictions for the 2010 hurricane season are daunting with fifteen named storms, 8 hurricanes and 4 of them intense hurricanes. Also, scientists say there could be a total of 35 hurricane days and 75 storm days.

Hurricane season always coincides with the tourist season on Hilton Head Island. Due to the large number of visitors and one single roadway off the island, we must plan ahead carefully. During a worse-case scenario, it is expected to take 21 hours to move everyone out of Beaufort County during an evacuation. So, if the order comes – please know the issue has been thoroughly vetted and discussed by state and local officials. But, public safety is paramount, so don't hesitate. Go! If you have the option, leave early during a voluntary evacuation. If you wait until the Governor makes it mandatory, you may find yourself in the midst of heavy traffic with even heavier competition for hotel rooms. Once out of the County, there are a limited number of restaurants along the evacuation route. Those you do find will be crowded.

If you are unprepared for a hurricane evacuation, you could put life and property at risk. I recommend you visit the Beaufort County website at www.bcgov.net and educate yourself. Select the “Departments” tab at the top of the home page. Click on the option for “Emergency Management.” Here, you will find brochures, current evacuation maps and other valuable information to help you and your family stay safe.

You can find some important, useful material in our Post Disaster Assistance Manual which is also located at the County website and can be accessed at the bottom of the home page. It includes chapters from the American Red Cross, FEMA and other groups regarding health, safety, debris removal, food and water distribution and home repair following a disaster. It's a very good idea to review it before you need to put it to use.

In addition to hurricanes, this time of year brings the annual budget cycle. County Council approved the FY 2010-11 budget with no tax increase for County operations. But, there was a 1.5 mill increase for County debt which primarily represents funding for the voter-approved Rural and Critical Land Preservation Program. And, during the recent budget process, County Council was able to include the purchase of some critical safety tools – new, state-of-the-art emergency communication radios for ALL agencies in the county (including those in the cities and towns) that respond to emergency calls, disasters and numerous other crises. It came at no cost to the

municipalities. These new radios will allow our emergency personnel to communicate effectively and provide greater control in life and death situations.