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LESSON LEARNED

Mass Evacuation: Using Portable, Programmable Signs to Direct Evacuees

SUMMARY

Major storms such as hurricanes can force mass evacuations that strain transportation networks. Jurisdictions in hurricane-prone areas should acquire and employ portable, programmable signs that direct evacuees and replace destroyed signage.

DESCRIPTION

Hurricane Andrew in 1992 forced the evacuation of 750,000 people from four Florida counties. Many residents who were not in evacuation zones also left their homes, exacerbating traffic problems and stranding many motorists on the road when the storm hit. The Governor's Disaster Planning and Response Review Committee Final Report on the Hurricane noted that mass evacuations place significant stress on transportation networks. Major storms with high winds can destroy signage and other markers on roads, necessitating temporary solutions to direct evacuees and other motorists.

In order to ease the flow of traffic and direct vehicles to less crowded routes, the Committee's Final Report recommended that Florida increase its supply of portable, programmable signs to be used during and after mass evacuations. These signs can direct traffic to alternate or less crowded evacuation routes and replace damaged or missing signs to assist evacuees with reentry. The Report recommended that the signs be programmable in multiple languages.

CITATION

Florida Governor's Disaster Planning and Response Review Committee. *Final Report: Hurricane Andrew*. January 1993. (<http://floridadisaster.org/dem/files/lewisr.pdf>)

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