Hurricane Irma: What did we learn this time

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Hurricane Irma Evacuations September 9, 2017

- Evacuation of Coastal and River Zones A and B
  - 149,000 residents
Shelter Set-up Begins

• Six Shelters were identified to open on Saturday morning:
  • 3 General Population
  • 2 Pet Friendly
  • 1 Special Needs

• St. Johns County Animal Control maintains 2 trailers w/ crates, bowls, and shelter supplies. The mini-mare housed at the St. Johns County Pet Center was also utilized.
Saturday, September 9, 2017

- Shelters opened at 6:00 am Saturday morning.
  - Transportation to shelters began simultaneously.

- Shelter Registration forms were customized for Pet Friendly Shelter.
  - Photos of Pet and Owner were attached to registration form.
  - Owner and crate were tagged with numbered arm bands.
Special Needs Pets

• Special Needs Client pets transported from Special Needs Shelter to Pet Friendly Shelter.
  • Special needs clients pets were registered on a yellow form at the special needs shelter, and then transported to the Pet Friendly Shelters.
  • Pets were kept in an designated area of Pet Friendly Shelter for easy identification and to be cared for by Animal Control Staff.
Operational Improvements as a result of lessons learned from Matthew…..

• Pet Containment and Care –
  • Animal Control set up all crates anticipating most pets arriving uncrated
  • Bowls, litter, litter pans, and food was on standby at each shelter
  • Owners were allowed to care for and visit their pets as often as they wanted too

• Shelter clients were more accustomed to the rules of the pet friendly shelter as thus, there were fewer issues
Inside our Shelters....
St. Johns County sheltered 180 Pets during Hurricane Irma
Post Disaster Operations

• Shelters closed on Tuesday, September 12 – remaining shelter clients relocated to post disaster shelter.
  • Pets not allowed in post disaster shelter.
• St. Johns County Animal Control housed 7 animals for displaced families.
Why we were successful

• Hurricane Matthew – October 2016
  • Identified problems encountered during Hurricane Matthew and resolved as many as possible in the short 11 months before Irma

• Strong Partnership with St. Johns County School District, Animal Control, and Emergency Management!!!
Opportunities for Improvement

• Additional training for Shelter Staff in regards to ADA requirements for Service Animals.
  • Emotional Support Animal vs. Service Animal – how do we differentiate?

• Homeless population with pets
  • Keep pets with owners, transport owners to pet friendly shelter

• Special Needs Shelter clients with Service Animals
  • Assign Animal Control Vet Tech to Special Needs Shelter to assist in the care of Service Animals
Pets weren’t the only ones needing assistance …..

• Around 7 am the morning of September 11th with Irma still raging, Animal Control received a call from St. Augustine Wild Reserve

• A Tiger cage had been compromised by a falling tree and they needed help cutting the tree and moving the tiger before it escaped.
Tiger Rescue

• St. Johns County Animal Control, Sheriff’s Office and Fire Rescue responded to assist the Wild Animal Reserve

• The tree could not be safely removed so the Tiger was tranquilized and moved to a secure cage on the other side of the property
Thank you

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