

Lee County, Florida: Hurricane

Background

"[Hurricane] Charley was the second major hurricane of the 2004 Atlantic hurricane season and the most powerful storm to strike Southwest Florida since 1960. The Category Four hurricane made landfall on Lee County's North Captiva Island, with maximum winds near 150 miles per hour. North Captiva Island was severed into two parts when the right eye-wall of Charley passed over the island."ⁱ Charley is currently ranked as one of the top ten costliest hurricanes in U.S. history, responsible for an estimated \$15 billion in property damage.ⁱⁱ

Long-Term Recovery Committeeⁱⁱⁱ

Soon after the 2004 Charley, Frances, and Jeanne hurricanes, the Lee County Long-Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) was formed with the assistance of the World Church Organization and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The LTRC is coordinated by the Lee County Department of Human Services (DHS) and consists primarily of representatives from Lee County social service agencies and faith-based organizations. DHS manages government funding while the local United Way serves as the fiscal agent for LTRC funds received that need to be handled by a 501(c)(3) organization. Following the closure of a specific disaster, the LTRC does not disband, but maintains a standing structure and communication in preparation for future disaster recovery.

Structure and Organization

- ◆ The Executive Committee is composed of the fourteen founding organizations of the LTRC, including the Lee County Department of Human Services (Chair), United Way (Co-Chair), The Salvation Army (TSA), American Red Cross (ARC), Lee County EOC, First United Methodist Church, Goodwill Industries, Church World Service, Area Agency on Aging (AAA), Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), Project Hope, Workforce Development Board, FEMA, State Emergency Response Team (SERT), and Harry Chapin Food Bank. The Executive Committee sets policy and priorities and resolves unmet needs cases.
- ◆ The LTRC Coordinator assigns staff to local disaster recovery centers; supports a coordinated response of all agencies; schedules meetings of the LTRC; identifies funding sources for case managers; coordinates training of case managers; works with a GIS Coordinator to target areas that have the most needs; deploys volunteer assessment teams; receives information from ARC, SERT, FEMA, TSA, and AAA for long-term case management and data entry; and works closely with SERT and FEMA for temporary housing.
- ◆ The GIS Coordinator creates maps to identify areas most in need after a disaster; identifies STRAP numbers (parcel identifier) and homeowners in devastated areas; and assists with identification of available land and trailer sites.

Lee County LTRC Fast Facts

- ◆ *Mission Statement.* To expedite the recovery of disaster survivors effectively utilizing available Federal, State, and Local resources and advocate for the community needs in recovery.
- ◆ *Partners.* Representatives from private, non-governmental, government, business, non-profit agencies, community based, and faith-based organizations.
- ◆ *Active:* Formed in 2004; maintains an ongoing structure and communication, and operationalizes as needed.

- ◆ The Housing Department replaces or repairs housing as needed and transitions applicants from temporary to permanent housing.

- ◆ Case Managers interview survivors; develop a plan for recovery; present unmet needs cases to the LTRC; and work with survivors to transition from temporary to permanent housing.

Activities

- ◆ Following the hurricanes in 2004, the LTRC coordinated with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee to conduct door-to-door needs assessments in neighborhoods that were identified as still not completely recovered. The CRWRC also set up several stations throughout the County where residents could submit requests for assistance. The CRWRC trained additional local volunteers in the community to assist with assessments once the original team departed.

- ◆ Volunteers were provided accommodations in three houses that were acquired by DHS for the supportive housing program to be rehabilitated and sold to low-income residents with disabilities. The CRWRC sent skilled volunteer labor to complete the rehabilitation on the housing, readying them for sale once they were no longer needed for volunteer housing. Habitat for Humanity and the Salvation Army provided furniture, appliances, linens, dishes, and other items for the volunteers.

- ◆ The LTRC used CRWRC software to track survivors that were assisted. The LTRC transitioned cases from the American Red

Cross, SERT, and FEMA, and entered them into their database, which allowed them to see what assistance was given to each client, and what unmet needs still existed.

- ◆ The LTRC also operationalized following Hurricane Katrina to assist displaced individuals arriving in the county, coordinating with the American Red Cross to connect the 280 families with local resources, job placement, and housing.

See Lee County's "Long-Term Disaster Recovery Guidelines" for more in-depth information on the LTRC and sample forms (e.g. LTRC Intake Form p.60; Disaster Recovery Case Management Organization p.68, Long-Term Recovery Committee Initial Assessment p.71, Long-Term Recovery Committee Homeowner's Assessment p.81, Unmet Needs Worksheet p. 85)

ⁱ Carolyn A. Dehring and Martin Halek, "Do Coastal Building Codes Make Stronger Houses?," Regulation 37, no. 2 (Summer2014): 43.

ⁱⁱ Richard J. Pasch, Daniel P. Brown, and Eric S. Blake, "Tropical Cyclone Report: Hurricane Charley," National Hurricane Center (18 October 2004; Revised 15 September 2011).

ⁱⁱⁱ Lee County Department of Human Services LTRC, "Long-Term Disaster Recovery Guidelines," (2007), http://www.faca.org/upload/pdf_forms/Lee_County_LTRC_Guidelines_2007.pdf