

MAYOR'S NEWLETTER
OCTOBER 2008

Well, wasn't that something? After three dry runs this hurricane season when our Emergency Response Team started preparations for a major storm, a monster hurricane named Ike paid us a visit. I certainly would not wish a major storm on any community as they usually bring damages, destruction and even death. They have always been a part of life along the Gulf Coast and it's a calculated risk to invest in property in known hurricane paths, but, as things go I would want to ride out a hurricane in Jersey Village.

For our city, the bad news is that one house looks to be destroyed, eight houses sustained major damage and about 80 have minor damage. Most wood fences were damaged or destroyed and all the trees that did not fall had some major pruning. Motel 6 lost its roof, subsequently sustaining major damage, and other businesses were closed for various periods of time. Power was out for 100% of the city for a short time, and the city lost a water pump, causing a loss of water pressure for a few hours which resulted in a mandatory boil water notice.

On the upside, however, there were no fatalities and no injuries were reported. Power was restored to the Emergency Command Center and the city's water plant on Saturday with no disruption of emergency services. Rising water did not get into any homes as all runoff water stayed in White Oak Bayou and the newly installed drainage projects worked successfully. Phone lines were mostly restored the same day, and power was restored to most residents as a first priority after hospitals and emergency equipment. There remained about 10% of the city's homes without power for almost a week which was inconvenient. Remember, however, that there are still over 100,000 CenterPoint customers still without power 17 days later.

Almost immediately in Jersey Village, neighbors were in the streets and yards starting with clean-up, and generators and food were shared with friends to help each other. Looting or other criminal problems were non-existent and curfews were not needed. At this writing, the trash is mostly picked up and life is almost back to normal except for those who suffered major damage to their houses. The city has spent approximately \$1 million in non-budgeted expenses for overtime, debris pickup and other expenses. About 80% of that amount will be reimbursed by FEMA. All things considered, the City came through this hurricane about as well as can be expected.

All the good news did not happen by accident, however. The Emergency Response Plan is well written and the team implementing that plan is well-trained and has practiced many times. Our City Manager, Mike Castro, rose to the challenge in the emergency situation and his West Point training was evident as he led his team in a crisis mode. But mostly the City personnel were extraordinary in this event, staying in the Command Center during the storm and working around the clock for several days with no time off to be home with their families and property. Those are the real heroes who minimized your hurricane-related problems; I would suggest that you thank all city employees as you see them.

Jersey Village has taken great steps to prepare in advance of major storms. We have developed a good relationship with CenterPoint to assure that we get prompt attention when needed. The City had a working contract with a debris removal company that was able to start pickup within a week of the storm and provided more equipment than other communities to expedite the removal process. Excess materials were stocked in advance and gasoline supplies were secured so City vehicles would be able to continue operations. The City personnel were prepared, trained and practiced to deal with these problems that nature will bring our direction.

I am very pleased to have chosen Jersey Village to live where the friendliness and community support of friends and neighbors is unsurpassed. I am proud of the dedication of the city staff, including the police and emergency services. We should take a moment to be thankful for things which we take for granted.