



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Flood Control is a Shared Responsibility

*June is usually the wettest month of the year, and recent rainfall serves as a reminder to take steps to minimize the risk of flooding*



*A picture of Freddy the Friendly Alligator appears on signs next to canals operated by the SFWMD.*

### Did you know?

- ✓ Maintenance and upkeep of community drainage facilities are typically the responsibility of homeowners associations.
- ✓ Standing water in streets and yards is a planned feature of neighborhood drainage facilities.
- ✓ If your area is serviced by a local drainage district, it is noted on your county property tax bill.

**West Palm Beach, FL** — The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) operates the primary canal system, yet the task of flood control in South Florida is a shared responsibility to ensure that the complex, multi-tiered system operates as designed.

Flood control throughout the region is achieved through an interconnected drainage system. During heavy rainfall, neighborhood ditches, swales and conduits carry excess stormwater to secondary canals. In turn, secondary canals — operated by local water control districts, cities or counties — connect and carry excess water to the District's primary regional canal system.

“The District’s primary canal system is monitored and operated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year,” said Tommy Strowd, SFWMD Assistant Executive Director of Operations, Maintenance and Construction. “But during heavy rainfall, there are many parts of the integrated system that have to work to make sure the water is conveyed to District canals as quickly as possible.”

Residents, property managers and homeowners associations are encouraged to do their part to keep the water flowing by:

- Keeping ditches, swales, drainage grates and retention lakes clear of debris, trash and other discarded material
- Knowing whether a nearby canal is a primary regional canal maintained by the District or a secondary canal maintained by a local municipality or drainage district
- Reporting the location and condition of any clogged or damaged facilities to the proper authority
- Making sure trees or other vegetation do not encroach on canal maintenance right-of-way
- Making sure there are periodic checks of the components of the drainage system to ensure peak performance

South Florida’s low, flat terrain, combined with a wet climate, make it prone to flooding. The potential for flooding persists every year in South Florida, where bursts of heavy rainfall over a short period of time are inevitable. This is often associated with a tropical storm or hurricane during the wet season, although isolated intense storms can appear any time throughout the year.

When the flood control system is operating as designed, water is directed to streets and swales instead of homes and buildings. After a heavy rain, standing water in streets, swales, yards and low-lying areas is expected and normal.

Many factors contribute to the ability of water managers to move water during and after a storm:

- Surface and groundwater levels affect the ability of drainage systems to receive or store new rainfall.
- The location and capacity of structures, such as culverts, gates, weirs, pumps, levees and even street gates, are all key elements of the drainage system.
- Water bodies such as ponds, lakes and lagoons also play a role in water management.
- Tides, winds and the phase of the moon can affect discharges to the ocean.

### **Maintenance: Keeping the Flow Going**

The District has an extensive program of structural maintenance and upgrades that is critical to ensuring the regional flood control system operates at optimal capacity. The extensive regional flood control system includes nearly 2,000 miles of canals and

2,800 miles of levees and berms. District crews also regularly inspect the 645 water control structures and 69 pump stations.

Essential maintenance work includes:

- Hardening and overhauling pump stations
- Overhauling gated spillways
- Replacing project culverts
- Dredging canals
- Stabilizing canal banks
- Enhancing Stormwater Treatment Areas

For more information, visit the following resources:

- [Rainy Season Readiness](#)
- [Managing Flood Water Before and After the Storm](#)
- Follow the District's Twitter feed: [@SFWMD](#)

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### **About the South Florida Water Management District**

*The South Florida Water Management District is a regional, governmental agency that oversees the water resources in the southern half of the state – 16 counties from Orlando to the Keys. It is the oldest and largest of the state's five water management districts. The agency mission is to manage and protect water resources of the region by balancing and improving water quality, flood control, natural systems and water supply. A key initiative is cleanup and restoration of the Everglades.*