



SOUTH FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

# NEWS RELEASE

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## June is 'Flood Awareness Month' in South Florida *SFWMD highlights what to expect in heavy rain as wet season begins*



*(Click on the image for a gallery of SFWMD field station crews at work.)*

**West Palm Beach, FL** — With a \$13 billion flood control system stretching from Orlando to the Florida Keys, the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) recognizes June as Flood Awareness Month to highlight what residents can expect during the rainy season.

“The District’s core mission is to ensure thousands of miles of canals and hundreds of structures are providing flood protection for more than 8 million residents,” said SFWMD Executive Director Blake Guillory, P.E. “Each June, we remind residents how this extensive regional system interacts with local drainage systems to protect communities across South Florida.”

### **When it Rains... A Three-Tiered Flood Control System**

During the wet season, South Florida sees about 35 inches of rainfall, or two-thirds of the annual total in the region.

- **Tier 1 Drainage:** Swales in yards and outside businesses, along with recreational areas, are designed to temporarily store stormwater that does not soak into the ground. Excess water slowly drains via street and yard drainage grates to community lakes and ponds. These localized systems, maintained by individual homeowners or homeowners associations, are typically where residents see standing water during heavy rainfall.
- **Tier 2 Drainage:** After rainwater flows from yards and neighborhoods, it moves through underground pipes to canals, structures, storage areas and pumping stations that are maintained by cities, counties or local drainage districts.
- **Tier 3 Drainage:** The SFWMD’s primary canals and pumping stations receive excess stormwater from Tier 2 systems, channeling the water to storage areas or to coastal discharge points.

### The SFWMD’s Role

During typical summer rains and in tropical storm events, the District utilizes a public network of 2,100 miles of canals, 600 water control structures, 70 pump stations and related infrastructure to move water away from populated and agricultural areas.

SFWMD engineers and water managers monitor weather conditions and water levels around-the-clock from a high-tech control room at its headquarters in West Palm Beach. Structures are opened as needed to lower water levels in anticipation of heavy rainfall and excess water is routed through the system to storage areas or the coast.

During emergencies, SFWMD water managers may activate an advanced, hurricane-hardened Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Primary functions of EOC include:

- Providing organized response under the National Incident Management System
- Directing preparation/inspection of the flood control system before a storm
- Completing damage assessment and beginning repairs or debris removal from the SFWMD regional flood control system
- Moving flood waters as quickly and as safely as possible
- Coordinating with local governments to help them move water

Local governments, police and fire and public safety departments are responsible for emergency response during a storm.

<b><i>Here’s what you can typically expect in a storm</i></b>
<b>4 to 6 inches of rain in a 24-hour period - Standing water in yards, swales and ditches, but roads should remain passable</b>
<b>7 to 10 inches of rain in a 72-hour period - Roads, as well as swales, ditches and yards flood, but buildings should remain dry</b>
<b>Considered a “Hundred-Year Storm,” intensive rainfall of 10 to 20 inches or more in a 72-hour period, is expected to cause flood damage. Many houses and businesses can expect to flood. <i>*Based on historical rainfall data and current permitting criteria</i></b>

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

The District has an extensive program of structural maintenance and upgrades – carried out primarily during the dry season – that is critical to ensuring the regional flood control system operates at optimal capacity.

During the past six years, the District has put more than \$300 million to work in performing capital improvement work on the regional system. These efforts include overhauling water control structures and refurbishing pump stations.

In addition, each day field station staff complete essential system maintenance, including,

- Completing year-round preventative maintenance of critical pumps, gear boxes and main engines
- Ensuring continuous operation of industrial electrical systems that run critical monitoring equipment, such as water level and water velocity gauges.
- Maintaining a fleet of heavy equipment and vehicles
- Staffing large pump stations during storm events to keep the flood control system operating

## **What You Can Do**

Residents play a part to prepare by:

- Knowing the agency responsible for managing nearby canals
- Keeping ditches, swales, drainage grates and retention lakes clear of debris, trash and other discarded material
- 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

## **For more information:**

- [Rainy Season Readiness](#)
- [Managing Flood Water Before and After the Storm](#)
- [What to Expect When it Rains](#)

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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.*