



**A Message From
Lois Wexler
Broward County Commissioner
District 5**

It's never too early to start preparing for the upcoming Hurricane Season which begins June 1, 2006. Last year so many of us thought we were ready, but never really planned for extended power outages and associated difficulties. While Broward County continues recovery efforts, we're also planning ahead in order to mitigate problems which can be attributed to weather.

Hurricane Wilma blew through Broward County, leaving us in the dark with widespread power outages and considerable damage to homes, businesses and government facilities. The eye of the storm had barely passed overhead when County staff, assisted by representatives from federal, state and municipal governments, began the clean-up and restoration process.

There are 1,132 traffic lights in Broward County; all but two were damaged by Wilma's 180-minute, 120 mile-per-hour rampage across the County. More than 40,000 traffic signs—ranging from stop signs to street signs—were damaged or destroyed. Staff from the County's Traffic Engineering Division worked 50 hour weeks in order to have at least one working light at each intersection in the County before their self-imposed goal of Thanksgiving. Their hard work and extra hours paid off as they met their goal on November 18!

Broward County employees staffed the Emergency Operations Center 24 hours a day for two weeks. The Human Services Department coordinated services for the more than 2,500 residents living in Red Cross shelters and located temporary housing for more than 500 residents whose homes were no longer livable. The Broward County Hurricane Hotline operated on a 24/7 basis, fielding more than 200,000 calls for information and assistance.

Most government facilities are well on their way back to normalcy, but there are others that sustained considerable damage. Many of the County's beautiful parks are still partially or fully closed. Be assured that we, along with our federal, state and municipal partners, are working diligently to restore Broward County to its pristine pre-Wilma condition. Volunteers are helping too and deserve much credit. Recently, the Markham

Park bike trail re-opened thanks to the work of 76 volunteers who worked more than 1500 hours to restore the bike path!

Broward County is in good hands when it comes to emergency operations. Our Emergency Management Agency Director, Tony Carper, was recently elected president of the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association. It's a professional association whose membership is comprised of emergency management officials throughout the state. FEPA is dedicated to enhancing public safety by improving the state's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, disasters and threats to domestic security.

Hurricane season can be a stressful time here in South Florida. Be assured that County staff is already hard at work taking the necessary safety precautions. You'll be receiving future publications to assist you in preparing for the 2006 hurricane season. In addition, there is information on our website at www.broward.org. Should you have any questions or concerns, please call me at (954) 357-7005 or you can reach me via e-mail at lwexler@broward.org