Marina Owners—Action to Take after a Hurricane

Hurricanes may cause extensive damage, such as flooded roads, downed powerlines and washed-out beach or river areas. Checking the condition of your facility is a main concern, but there may be impediments that prevent your accessing it. As you and your employees return to the facility and begin preliminary damage assessment, be aware of the following potential problems:

- Beware of snakes when going into grassy areas or other locations. Advise employees to wear boots and to look carefully at an area before placing their hands or feet in it.
- Be aware of downed electrical wires, which always should be considered “hot.” Avoid downed electrical wires, and notify the power company or electrical maintenance authorities. Although your buildings or docks may be without power, generators may be operating; if so, the electrical lines will be charged.
- Check natural gas leaks by smell only. NO matches or candles.
- Check facility fueling docks and tanks for leaking gasoline or diesel fuel.
- Check building, shop and dock electrical wiring completely before you turn on the main power switch.
- Check and, if necessary, repair electrical equipment that has been submerged in water before it is started.
- Report broken sewer or water mains owned and maintained by the facility immediately to the utility company or maintenance authority responsible for the repair.
- Inspect and if necessary repair or replace wet electrical appliances such as hot plates, toasters, calculators, typewriters, etc. before you attempt to operate them.

Prepare a written assessment of damages as soon as possible. Estimate damages to docks, piers and other marina facilities: cranes, mast hoists, boat sheds, toilets, showers, lockers, offices, fuel dock and office, electrical transformers, electrical service and telephones.
Report theft or vandalism to the police or other law enforcement authority so that appropriate actions can be taken. Obtain the incident number and, if possible, a copy of the report to back up an insurance claim or report of property loss to the IRS.

Properly document and file all insurance claims before you begin your repairs. An appraiser may be assigned by your insurance company to assist the claims adjuster in determining the extent of damage. Insurance companies establish storm claim offices to handle the numerous claims that occur after a hurricane strikes. In catastrophic conditions, extra people are assigned to handle claims in the area where the disaster has occurred.

Notify third-party vessel owners, captains, caretakers and others with vessel interests without delay. Respond to inquiries about vessel status as best as possible, especially if no damage has occurred to the property.

Vessel owners may want to return to marinas or yard facilities right away. Let them know the situation at your facility and the availability of berthing spaces. If damage to your facility prevents you from being able to provide a berthing space for the vessels, let the owners know when you expect to be able to provide a berth.

If your facility is relatively undamaged, make efforts to become operational so you may provide service for those who need it.

You may need to control access to and the security of your facility. Plan how to handle:

- Members and non-members in the case of yacht clubs
- Tenants and non-tenants in the case of marinas or other facilities
- Radio, television and press representatives
- Outside salvage contractors, repairers, estimators, surveyors, adjustors and appraisers.

Many other precautions can be taken before, during and after a hurricane strikes. The procedures mentioned may not cover all actions that should be taken, but use the information provided as a guideline and checklist for developing a hurricane plan. Specific measures or precautions unique to your operations can be fit into your facility’s checklist. Only by being prepared in advance will you be able to reduce loss and damage caused by a hurricane.