

June 29, 2020

Residents of the Venetian Golf and River Club

*As we enter the Hurricane season, we usually have a community wide meeting as to the role of our own Hurricane Readiness Team or HRT. However, with the circumstances brought on by Covid-19, we have elected to put out our information in written form. We are confident that you will receive additional information from both the CDD and POA regarding hurricane preparation.*

***Even if you are “up north”, I would read this document to know what is taking place in your community.***

### **Quick Background**

The HRT was formed in 2016 in consultation with the Venice Fire Department. Since 2016, there have been some revisions to the plan. The HRT is managed and funded by the VGRC Community Association and we acknowledge members for their financial support. You can find the entire HRT plan at <https://www.vgrcca.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Hurricane-Readiness-Team-2019-1.pdf>

### **The Call Out**

The call out of the HRT takes place when employees who work at the VGRC ( Golf Club, River Club, POA, CDD) leave the premises due to the high probability that a hurricane will hit this area. Usually the benchmark for employees leaving is the wind speed consistently reaches approximately 45 mph during a hurricane watch. Those departing the premise include our privacy guards who staff the front entrance. When they leave, the actual gate arms for both entrance and exit are removed plus services the privacy staff performs are disbanded.

Once the hurricane passes, the HRT is called out via a text message alert. Currently we have over 50 volunteers for the HRT. All HRT team members on duty will be wearing a colored vest.

The driving force for organizing the HRT was to provide assistance to the community during the time period when all employees vacate the VGRC and the time when they return. When employees return, the HRT does a hand off back to the appropriate group.

### **Lessons Learned**

Based on the Venetian’s only previous experience with a Hurricane (Irma-2017) our homes for the most part were able to withstand the category 1 Hurricane. Some residents had their lanai screens ripped and a few trees toppled or landed on roofs. There was no flooding. There were challenges of putting up shutters prior to the hurricane hitting this area. The HRT was activated for Irma and their time on the ground was limited as Irma had relatively minimal impact on the Venetian and in fact, this entire area. All stores including gas stations and supermarkets were closed for only a short period of time.

There were those residents who decided to vacate the VGRC and head to safer grounds. To leave is certainly a difficult decision a resident will have to make if there is a hurricane charted

on radar. It is highly recommended by safety officials to depart, at minimum, 4 days before the potential strike. Needless to say, and according to those residents who left, roads were jammed, gas was difficult to find especially returning to the Venetian and hotel space was at a premium. You may select a nearby hurricane shelter but with COVID-19, housing citizens at the shelter this hurricane season may be a challenge in itself. As of this writing, the Golf Course Clubhouse, Welcome Center and the River Club will be closed. Usually the force of a hurricane lasts about 24 hours or so, with an abundance of rain and wind. The Venice Police and Fire Departments do not respond during the height of a hurricane, but still call 911 if there is a need to do so. They will put you on a priority list plus have medical personnel on duty to talk you through any type of medical emergency.

### **Power Outages**

During Irma, there was only a short period of time, about 24 hours, when the Venetian experienced a power outage. After power was restored, a few days later, only a very small segment of the community (on part of Martellago and Asti Ct.) experienced a power outage and this time, for about a week. Florida Power and Light (FPL) indicated that we are “zoned” as a community, therefore, a specific zone could lose power while the rest of the community is not affected. It would be smart to think through what your household would do if you had no electricity. FPL has its own system that tells them the actual spot where power has gone down. When that happens, they place that area on a priority list based on a number of factors. It is recommended that you go to <https://www.fpl.com/my-account/web-outage.html?cid=HCTL03#wors/mainTab/phoneTab> to have a better understanding of the role of FPL during a hurricane. Based on Irma, it is very difficult to determine when electricity will be restored even when going to FPL’s web site. To FPL’s credit, they bring in an army of trucks and workers from other states or parts of Florida to get power restored as quickly as possible.

### **HRT’s Security Team**

The Security Team staff the front gate after the hurricane passes since our privacy guards, as stated previously, vacate the premises in order to be with their families. Two HRT members with colored vest will staff the guardhouse area under the portico. **The lane which residents usually take will be blocked since there will be no gate arms in place. All vehicles will be directed to go through the lane which is the one closet to the guardhouse.** When you go through this lane, just tell the HRT volunteer you are a resident and where you live. **PLEASE BE PATIENT AND PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT A FELLOW RESIDENT IS GIVING HIS/HER TIME IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A FORM OF SECURITY AT THE GATE.** There is no need to contact the security team by phone letting them know a friend will be arriving, as the guardhouse will be locked. The HRT Security Team will leave their post when the privacy guards return.

### **HRT’s General Operation Team**

The other team is HRT’s General Operations. They will be on the scene after the hurricane has passed and when it is safe to be outside. Their first role is to take a quick assessment of the community. The HRT has zoned off our community and HRT roving teams make a quick run to an assigned zone for the purpose of completing an assessment sheet. The assessment form

once completed are quickly turned into the Command Center in order to give an overall picture of the community and where problems exist and where and what type of resources need to be assigned. For example, there may trees down blocking a road. The HRT has members with chain saws that would be used to clear the road. Street signs may be blown away. The HRT has orange spray paint to mark a street with a downed sign. A tree may be uprooted causing a break in a water line resulting in water gushing out. The Venice Fire Department and Police Department are scheduled to make a pass through after any hurricane and know that the Command Center will provide them quickly with an update on the conditions in our community.

### **The HRT...What it Doesn't Do**

Great discussion was given when developing the HRT plan about providing medical services. It was decided not to create an HRT medical triage. HRT team members have been directed to provide "common sense" medical procedures thinking through what one would do in any medical emergency. Secondly, the HRT does not go door to door checking on residents. We have found that neighbors do that best....they know who is here and who has left. However, if a HRT member sees a home that has been totally devastated, they certainly would address the situation accordingly.

### **Special Needs**

With Irma, a *Special Needs Team* was created by the HRT, checking on any resident who requires perhaps more assistance. For example, a resident who has a mobility issue may sign up for the *Special Needs* checkup. A resident who lives alone and who does not plan to move in with a neighbor during a hurricane may certainly sign up for a checkup by the *Special Needs* team. A form requesting a *Special Needs* contact will appear in the July edition of *Parcels*.

### **Communications**

Communication is vital in any emergency situation. As with Irma, the HRT was successful in sending out a series of emails to residents. We plan to do the same this time. The subject line will include the word "Update." Snowbirds will receive first-hand information about the condition of their community and during Irma voiced their appreciation for the frequent HRT emails. Snowbirds might also link up with a *neighbor buddy*, who plans to remain on property, and can provide information about the physical status of one's home. If you are on property and need to communicate with the HRT, we will most likely be stationed at the Welcome Center. The HRT will also provide relevant updates on the VGRCCA's electronic messaging board at [www.vgrcca.us/wallofsomething](http://www.vgrcca.us/wallofsomething)

### **Meetings for Community Members**

When we started tracking Irma as it was closing in on this area, a community meeting was held. We would like to have a community meeting of this nature for this hurricane season but certainly we have some challenges brought on by Covid 19. Therefore, we are looking at various meeting options including multiple socially distanced meetings at the River Club, an outdoor socially distanced meeting using a bullhorn or microphone, video messaging or Zoom meetings. An email will be sent out to the community as to the where and when if we have a pre-hurricane meeting.

### **Anxiety Confronts All**

There is no doubt about it, with any hurricane there is a certain level of personal anxiety. It's normal. Given our age (no offense intended) we have throughout our lives equipped ourselves with various means to deal with those situations that spawn personal anxiety. Therefore, we hope you think and possibly talk through, now, how you are going to deal with the reality of a hurricane.

### **Worst Case Scenario**

The HRT is here ready to serve the community, but realize we are just a group of resident volunteers. With that being said, all HRT members have been informed that their safety is paramount. Thus, if we had a Category 4 or 5 hurricane, members of the HRT may also consider evacuating. If that happens, and let's hope it doesn't, there would be uncertainty as whether the HRT could be activated.

### **Some Final Tidbits**

- Hurricanes have a little unpredictability about them. At the last moment, they may pick up steam or change direction.
- This document describes the plan for the Venetian's HRT. There is one other important plan. Yours!!! We hope if you are on property anytime from now to November 30th, you will develop a household plan to deal with a possible hurricane. The ABC 7 document listed below can help you with your plan.
- Historically, September and early October are the months when hurricanes strike Florida.
- It is recommended to take a look at hurricane information prepared by the City of Venice at <https://www.venicegov.com/government/fire/weather-and-disaster-information/hurricane-information>. You will note a list of shelters, a flood map and other key resources.
- As stated in the June edition of *Parcels*, unless we have the so called "100 year flood", the chance of our community flooding is minimal.
- Another valuable and probably one of the best localized guide is provided by ABC 7 at <https://www.scribd.com/document/463761625/ABC7-2020-Hurricane-Guide>

### **What You Can Do**

Quite noticeably when most communities experience some kind of disaster, people come together and help. There is no reason to think that wouldn't happen at the Venetian. The HRT will play a primary role with that effort. You as a resident will also have a role to play even when going through the front gates engaging with a HRT volunteer who will ask who you are. Once employees return and the CDD and POA take over operations, there will be a need, if we have damage on property, for residents to learn what is expected of them and how they can help with the clean-up process. Every organization of our community....CDD, VGRCCA/HRT, POA, River Club, Golf Club.....has a hurricane preparation plan and all of these groups should be well prepared if a hurricane strikes. It goes without saying that all of us hope and pray that we have a season in Venice without a hurricane. But if we do, residents should feel confident that this community is well prepared.

**In Summary**

This is just one part of a total effort by the key groups at the VGRC. Surely you will hear from representatives from the CDD and POA. It might be a good idea for those living in an HOA to ask your officers as to any plan for post hurricane clean up. As a community, our level of preparation is one of the best. We are also realistic in terms of the HRT's capacity in handling the wrath and destruction of a hurricane at a Level 4 and 5. Let's hope this summer we dodge any hurricane that may hit the sunshine state.

If you have any questions or comments, please hit "reply" to this email.

Be safe!

Roger Efron, Co-Ordinator, HRT