

GALVESTON HOUSING AUTHORITY (GHA) NATURAL DISASTER RESPONSE POLICY

Updated March 2011

PURPOSE: To ensure the efficient evacuation of GHA residents during an emergency and the protection of critical GHA property and information.

GENERAL: The GHA is located in a region of the country that sometimes experiences extreme weather conditions - the most devastating being the hurricane. It is essential that the GHA orchestrate an effective evacuation procedure for those residents who have indicated in writing that they have no one to assist them during a hurricane or a mandatory evacuation called by the mayor. It is also important that GHA protect critical property and information so that operations can resume upon return from an evacuation. **All GHA employees are responsible to participate in the effort.**

RESPONSIBILITIES

City of Galveston: As the likelihood of a major storm landing on Galveston Island increases, **the Mayor will authorize the level and extent of the evacuation, voluntary through mandatory.**

The Galveston Emergency Management Office will notify GHA to evacuate **two hours** prior to a called mandatory evacuation by the Mayor or a recommended hurricane evacuation. The City is responsible for providing notification of the requirement to evacuate and for making public service announcements over the radio and television.

Salvation Army and the Red Cross: The Salvation Army and Red Cross are responsible for creating and maintaining shelters throughout the state, some of these being hospitals for those evacuees requiring medical services.

GHA: **In the event that a mandatory evacuation is called, all employee leaves will be canceled.** GHA has an agreement with Coach USA to provide buses to transport the residents of GHA, who have indicated in writing that they need transportation off of the island in the event of a natural disaster. GHA has an agreement with the Emergency Management Office in Bryan/College Station, Texas to provide emergency shelter for the evacuees. In the unlikely event that Coach USA buses are unable to access the island, GHA residents will evacuate with the City of Galveston to shelters in Austin or San Antonio, Texas, rather than Bryan/College Station.

Gulf Breeze and Holland House: Housing developments will have a pick up location in the front of the building by the office for individuals to board buses to the shelters. **The Oaks Duplexes will have a pickup location in the front driveway.**

The Executive Director (ED) will notify the Maintenance Department to begin implementation of the Preventive Maintenance Plan within the housing developments and the Island Community Center (ICC, GHA's administrative offices). Upon notification that there will be an evacuation of Galveston, the GHA Notification Teams will respond to their designated housing developments to notify specified individuals of the time and location of departure points where buses will be boarded for evacuation.

PLEASE NOTE: If a mandatory evacuation of the city is called once GHA completes the evacuation process of each facility, the buildings will be closed and prepared for severe weather. If a mandatory evacuation is called, all residents will be required to evacuate the property either with GHA, the city or by their own means.

On May 18, 2009, State of Texas issued a revised declaration concerning MANDATORY EVACUATIONS for the State of Texas. Section 81('R) HB 1831, Senate Committee Report – Bill Analysis:

Sec.418.185. MANDATORY EVACUATION. (a) Provides that this section does not apply to a person who is authorized to be in an evacuated area, including a person who returns to the area under a phased reentry plan or reentry credentialing process under Section 418.050.

(b) Authorizes a county judge or mayor of a municipality who orders the evacuation of an area stricken or threatened by a disaster by order to compel persons who remain in the evacuated area to leave and authorize the use of reasonable force to remove persons from the area.

(c) Authorizes the governor and a county judge or mayor of a municipality who orders the evacuation of an area stricken or threatened by a disaster by a concurrent order to compel persons who remain in the evacuated area to leave.

(d) Provides that a person is civilly liable to a governmental entity, or a nonprofit agency cooperating with a governmental entity, that conducts a rescue on a person's behalf for the cost of the rescue effort if the person knowingly ignored a MANDATORY EVACUATION order under this section and engaged in an activity or course of action that a reasonable person would not have engaged in, or failed to take a course of action a reasonable person would have taken; the person's actions under this subsection placed the person or another person in danger; and a governmental rescue effort was undertaken on the person's behalf.

(e) Provides that an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision who issues or is working to carry out a MANDATORY EVACUATION order under this section is immune from civil liability for any act or omission within the course and scope of the person's authority under the order.

Employees who serve on notification teams for The Oaks, Gulf Breeze and Holland House will report to those locations, all other employees will report to their respective departments. Directors will ensure that all employees first assist in their respective departments to secure confidential and proprietary records, complete computer backups, if necessary, and take measures to protect all GHA property. Once an area is secured, the Director will instruct the employees to assist in other departments as needed.

- In the event that a mandatory evacuation is called, all employee vacation leaves will be canceled;
- All employees are to report to work unless informed otherwise by an official source
 - (i.e., radio/television broadcast of GHA’s immediate closure or by their supervisor, or posted on GHA’s web site www.ghatx.org);
 - Emergency officials will interrupt broadcasts to provide special weather updates, warning messages, and evacuation information.
 - Tune to Radio Stations KTRH 740 AM; KPRC, 950 AM or KLOL 101.1 FM
- Employees are expected to plan in advance for their own evacuation so that they can participate in the emergency evacuation of GHA residents and assist in securing GHA records, equipment and property. (GHA will evacuate residents two hours prior to the call for mandatory emergency evacuation. This will allow employees time to evacuate the area); and
- **Failure to report to work or refusal to assist with the GHA evacuation process without a sound and verifiable excuse will result in immediate termination.**

NOTE: Residents who previously registered for evacuation assistance will board first. Others desiring assistance will be accommodated by order of arrival. Anyone desiring evacuation assistance after the GHA buses are filled will be evacuated from the ICC with the City of Galveston.

ICC BUILDING

- ICC Manager or Director of Finance, will provide ICC building occupants with written notification of the emergency evacuation (Attachment C);
- Coordinate with curators and the Maintenance Director on vacating and securing the building.

NOTIFICATION TEAMS

- Notification teams are assigned to housing developments, housing staff will participate in the notification process at their respective locations. Team members will report to the housing manager for assignments;
- Teams will go to each unit and provide the resident with notice of emergency evacuation order, boarding locations, departure times and a list of suggested evacuation items;
- Upon completion of notification team members will report to their Director for further instructions.

POLICY FOR STAY IN PLACE

This policy covers a “stay in place” order generally issued during a tropical storm or low category hurricane; this does not apply to a mandatory evacuation situation

When a “stay in place” or a voluntary evacuation is called by the Mayor of Galveston, all GHA residents will be notified in writing. Residents will be encouraged if at all possible to evacuate on their own or with family. For those who decide to stay, a list of recommended supplies will be distributed.

At Gulf Breeze and Holland House, two staff members and one maintenance staff member will remain on-site 24 hours for the duration of the storm. These individuals will be provided with cots, food and water.

It is recommended that residents and staff at Holland House remain on the 2nd or 3rd floors. After an all clear is given and it is deemed safe, additional staff will be contacted to begin reinstatement efforts, if necessary.