

HELENE/MILTON UPDATE 10/11

(Please see previous updates for additional important information)

Town Hall

We are back this morning and ready to help with any needs or questions. We have gotten the office back to pre-Milton status and are lucky that we have not only power, but internet as well. As a reminder, our wi-fi has a guest network that anyone is welcome to use while service is down throughout the town.

Debris

Back on the top of everyone's list is removing the remaining debris. We were very fortunate that there was so much rain, it weighted the debris and it did not scatter as we feared prior to the storm.

Our debris removal company mobilized yesterday, are certifying trucks today and are on schedule to begin removal tomorrow (Saturday). We will soon be one step closer to at least looking more normal throughout the town.

Please keep the gutters in front of your house clear of debris and if you live near a storm drain and see anything on the grate, please help us out by removing it. Our public works staff is working diligently to keep everything clear to prevent street flooding, but if everyone chips in, it benefits the entire town.

Beach

Please stay off the beach. It is not safe as there is debris buried in the sand and all beach accesses are closed.

Trailers

We are going to suspend the prohibition on trailers (as we have done on the RV's and PODS) for the next 90 days. At that time, the need will be reassessed and extended if warranted.

Flooding

As we were on the north side of the storm, we were fortunate to have no storm surge in the town.

Power

Unlike the majority of Pinellas County, the town has power with the exception of the southern end. It seems to be similar to the outage after Helene whereas the southern portion took longer to restore power.

Water/Sewer

While we do have water (there are no boil warnings for our area at this time, only the southern barrier islands have this restriction), Pinellas County is asking everyone to conserve water usage to prevent overloading our sewer systems during this time of recovery.

If you see a water break at any property, please report it to Town Hall at 391-4848.

Storm Damage Repairs and Permitting From our Randy Spears, our Building Official:

The Building Dept is prepared to expedite storm damage permits. If you have water damage, you can proceed to remove the necessary drywall (only what was damage) insulation and flooring to set fans to dry out the area. Once dried, then you can proceed with a permit. If you need to remove more drywall, cabinets, any electrical it is REQUIRED you have a permit. Please keep in mind that all repairs and materials are subject to the FEMA 50% limitation on improvements and repairs. It is important to note that failure to obtain permits will affect the towns CRS rating & ultimately impact your flood insurance rates. If you received extensive water damage, please contact

Randy Spears at (727) 589-7688 or via email at rspears@safebuilt.com to go over the FEMA restrictions.

Housing Help for Displaced Families

Pinellas County residents displaced by Hurricane Helene have several options for seeking short- and long-term housing.

FEMA Displacement Assistance

FEMA Displacement Assistance helps survivors who can't return to their home following a disaster by giving them up-front money to help with immediate housing needs. The amount of money is based on 14 days of hotel costs based on a rate chosen by the state impacted by the disaster. The assistance is a one-time payment. FEMA may provide up to two weeks of funds for temporary lodging at a hotel, motel, or the home of friends or family, for displaced applicants who apply during the registration period.

Displaced residents can apply for this and other help by calling 1- 800-621-3362, visiting DisasterAssistance.gov, or going in-person to the Disaster Recovery Center, at Largo Public Library, 120 Central Park Drive, Largo. For more info, see FEMA Displacement Assistance Fact Sheet.

FEMA Serious Needs Assistance is also available to pay for emergency supplies like water, food, first aid, breast-feeding supplies, infant formula, diapers, personal hygiene items, or fuel for transportation. You could qualify for both forms of assistance by applying to FEMA by phone or online.

Pinellas Housing Options Website

Pinellas County has posted a list of resources to help displaced people find short- and long-term housing options, including online search tools, real estate company information, short-term rental companies, and apartment listings. Realtors and property managers are responsible for updating their available listings on their websites, but the listings and resources allow residents to more easily locate potential housing options. See Pinellas.gov/hurricane housing.

Local Emergency Shelters

The County continues to provide emergency shelters for people who need a temporary safe place to stay while looking for a longer-term home. Call the County Information Center at (727) 464-4333 for more information on emergency sheltering, including locations that accept pets and have support for people with special medical needs. County staff is actively helping individuals and families who are at shelters find other housing options.

Resources Available

Anyone needing assistance with clean up can contact Volunteer Crisis Cleanup at 844-965-1386 to be paired with volunteers.

If you suspect price gouging, report it to the Florida Attorney General's Office by visiting MyFloridaLegal.com or calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM.

Updates will be posted on disaster.pinellas.gov, sent out via Alert Pinellas and Ready Pinellas, and on Facebook @PinellasGov and X @PinellasGov.

For more important information, please visit Pinellas County's Emergency Management website for a full list of resources at:

<https://pinellas.gov/emergency-information/>