



MEMORANDUM

FROM: James Clinch, City Manager

DEPT: City Manager's Office

TO: Mayor & City Council

DATE: April 3, 2026

SUBJECT: Progress Report & Update from Hurricanes Helene & Milton

The City of Venice presented its Hurricane Helene and Milton After-Action Report (AAR) to the City Council on April 8, 2025. This report thoroughly reviewed the City's response to the hurricanes during the 2024 season. It outlined what worked well, highlighted best practices, and identified areas for improvement, all based on actual experiences and lessons learned. The AAR was developed with input from City staff, Department Directors, municipal agencies, and community partners, ensuring a broad perspective on both successes and opportunities for growth.

The primary goal of this progress report and After-Action update is to inform City Council of the status of the 43 recommendations made in the AAR. Over the past year, the City has made considerable progress in putting these recommendations into action through its Emergency Management program, Capital Improvement Program (CIP), and annual operating budget. This report also includes an update on how the Citizens Advisory Board recommendations have been incorporated and considered when implementing the AAR recommendations. While emergency preparation never stops, this report demonstrates the significant progress made over the past year.

AAR Recommendations - Progress Update

Emergency Management

1. Further develop and grow the City's County, State, and Federal intergovernmental relationships during blue-sky conditions.
 - **Completed.** Continued development and strengthening of the City's partnership through training and communications at the County, State, and Federal levels during blue-sky conditions.
2. Develop preloaded resource request templates for different storm scenarios, with pre-assigned points of contact.
 - **Completed.** The City Logistics Officer has prepared, along with department directors serving as the primary points of contact.
3. Establish a reunification rally point for coordinating rescued individuals.
 - **Completed.** With coordination with the County to support a countywide reunification protocol and internally with the Police Department to establish designated rally point locations throughout the City.
4. Develop Executive Order templates for curfews, closures, and regulatory waivers.
 - **Completed.** City Attorney prepared in 2025.
5. Improve public outreach on storm impacts, evacuation compliance, and post-storm operations.
 - **Completed.** This messaging was highlighted during the 2025 Hurricane Expo and is a focal point of the 2026 City Hurricane Expo on 05/29/2026.
6. Strengthen asset return procedures for state-deployed logistical resources.
 - **Completed.** Coordinated communication between the City Logistics Officer and the City's Liaison stationed in the County EOC, ensuring the efficient tracking, management, and return of all state-deployed logistical resources.
7. Train more drone pilots and expand drone use for situational awareness.
 - **Completed.** City now has 7 approved drone pilots.
8. Ensure all staff are trained in their specific EOC roles (TFIT, damage assessment, debris, etc.)
 - **Completed.** Both internally and through dual training opportunities with County counterparts, ensuring all staff are proficient in their specific EOC roles, including TFIT, damage assessment, and debris management.
 - **Completed.** City EOC training is scheduled for 05/21/2026.

9. Assess need for additional Emergency Management (EM) and Public Information Officer (PIO) staff support.

- **Completed.** October 2025, added a Deputy Public Information Officer position to provide necessary communication support during emergencies.

10. Designate a city volunteer coordinator to manage a pre-storm database of volunteer partners, including their contact information, resource availability, and assistance capacity, ensuring efficient coordination for post-storm operations.

- **Completed.** City is collaborating internally and externally with different organizations to strengthen disaster-response community organizations and volunteer groups.

11. Finish Fire Station 2 construction, including EOC storage and support for Police Station EOC.

- **In-Progress.** Fire Station 2 Groundbreaking commenced on 8/27/2025 with final completion anticipated March 2027.

12. Incorporate “lessons learned” for the public into the City’s 2025 Hurricane Guide and City Hurricane Expo.

- **Completed.** Hurricane Expo held in 2025 and scheduled for 05/29/2026 with focus on City After-Action recommendations.

13. Ensure Venice Fire Rescue and Venice Police have sufficient high-water rescue resources available for future events.

- **Completed.** Fire Department purchased additional Jon boats and has proposed a high-water rescue vehicle as part of the FY27 CIP. Grant funding also sought to alleviate expenses.

14. Work with FPL to streamline power restoration for critical infrastructure.

- **Completed.** City is working directly with FPL points of contact to support faster recovery and restoration efforts. FPL will also participate in the 2026 City Hurricane Expo.

15. Maintain active/current contractor and vendor services, and secure and pre-authorize additional contractual services to expedite vendor staffing support to City departments during emergencies.

- **Completed.** Pre-positioned and pre-authorized emergency contracts are in place for pre/during/post storm operations to ensure rapid deployment of personnel and resources to City departments for an expedited recovery.

Airport

16. Develop engineered solutions to strengthen T-hangar doors at Venice Airport.

- **Completed.** Designed, purchased, and installed strap/tie-down systems on all sliding hangar doors in July 2025.
- **In-Progress.** FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant application submitted for cane bolt installation, pending FEMA decision.
- **In-Progress.** Phases I & II hangar repairs underway: door replacements, roof repairs, and building repairs expected to be completed in May 2026.

Building

17. Enhance blue-sky FEMA training for damage assessment, permitting, tracking, and creating template forms and letters for Building Department response.

- **Completed.** Implemented as part of lessons learned and ongoing training.

18. Increase public education and engagement regarding regulatory rules for floodplain management and recovery building permitting.

- **Completed.** The Building Department has conducted extensive outreach to improve public understanding of floodplain regulations and recovery permitting. Meetings held with hundreds of property owners, coastal homeowners and condominium associations in Venice to ensure compliance with post-storm requirements.

19. Continued training opportunities for City damage assessment teams in coordination with Sarasota County.

- **Completed.** The City of Venice completed joint training with Sarasota County in August 2025 to update damage assessment guidance, reinforce interagency coordination, and ensure consistent post-storm assessment standards.
- **Completed.** City EOC training scheduled for 05/21/2026.

20. Continue to uphold and enforce the City's building codes and development standards to require improvements and ensure compliance with the NFIP.

- **Completed.** Building Department continues to conduct inspections, enforce violations, and provide ongoing staff training, educating builders and property owners, and maintaining records to monitor compliance and guide improvements.

21. Secure pre-storm contractual services to expedite vendor staffing support during emergencies.

- **Completed.** The City currently has three vendors under contract to provide staffing and support services during emergency events. The interlocal agreement has been recently updated to bolster coordination across the region. We also maintain established mutual aid contacts through the Building Officials

Association of Florida (BOAF), ensuring access to additional qualified personnel when needed.

Engineering

22. Create a standard operating procedure for sand management to include securing an outside emergency contractor before the storm.

- **Completed** On 4/25/2025 City staff secured a pre-authorized contract for a local emergency contractor to be on call to open the beach stormwater outfalls as soon as possible after an emergency event. The City will issue a Task Order and then a Notice to Proceed as the storm approaches, and the contractor will be ready to respond.

23. Continue to uphold and enforce the City's floodplain management and enhance stormwater infrastructure and resiliency.

- **Completed.** On 4/1/2025, the City's Community Rating System (CRS) rating was increased from 6 to 5, providing residents with a 25% discount on federal flood insurance. With 68 Class 5 communities in Florida and 211 nationwide, this represents the highest CRS level the city has achieved since participating in the program in 1991.
- **Completed.** The Tarpon Center Flood Mitigation project was completed July 2025 to enhance resiliency and flood control of Tarpon Center Drive/The Esplanade N. intersection during extreme storm events.
- **Completed.** Flamingo Ditch feasibility study presented in 10/28/2025 and finalized in March 2026.
- **In-Progress.** Flamingo Ditch Flood Mitigation Project proposed in the CIP 2027.

Finance

24. Designate department contacts to provide Finance with immediate cost estimates post-storm.

- **Completed.**

25. Consider improvements to the FEMA 214 Forms. Form a staff committee to review FEMA form processes and make recommendations on improvements to the process and training.

- **In-Progress.** The Finance Department is currently reviewing FEMA 214 form options, including the City's current form, the County's Smartsheet version, and the new State of Florida FROC forms. Following this review, the Finance Department will establish a staff committee to evaluate the forms and provide recommendations for process improvements and training.

26. Enhance blue-sky training for FEMA form completion and tracking to strengthen FEMA compliance procedures and maximize financial recovery.

- **Completed.** Held from 9/8/2025 – 9/15/2025, totaling 26 City of Venice Staff members.

27. Additional staff support for grant tracking, application, and monitoring to ensure the City takes full advantage of all funding opportunities

- **Completed.** Finance conducted a request for purchase, soliciting a Financial & Grant Administration for Hazard Assistance Grants, Public Assistance, and Other State and Federal Grant Opportunities.
- **Completed.** Created the Stormwater Grants Coordinator position and filled it in February 2026.

Human Resources

28. Review and update policies for City staff emergency pay, sheltering during and post-storm, and pre-approved autoreplies for emails.

- **In-Progress.** Updating policies based on FROC requirements to guide staff operations during and after storm events.

29. Clearly communicate daily City facility status pre/post-storm.

- **Completed.** Effective communication from City leadership and through Human Resources will ensure timely and clear communication of daily City facility status to all employees before and after storm events.

Information Technology (IT)

30. Improve emergency communication through One-Call-Now, additional hand-held radios, and FirstNet conversion, and purchase additional Star-Link units for network recovery.

- **Completed.** One-Call Now is in place and used in early 2026 to communicate with City Leadership during the worldwide Microsoft service outage.
- **Completed.** All EOC staff, first responders, including Utilities Field Operations staff, are now on AT&T FirstNet
- **Completed.** Requested additional Starlink units through the Florida Division of Emergency Management.
- **Completed.** City purchased 5 Starlink-Mini's for ad-hoc emergency deployment and a separate Starlink mobile unit for the Fire Command Vehicle.
- **Completed.** CIP established for FY27 for backup/failover hosting site with Sarasota County for City systems data/server redundancy.

31. Continue reinforcing electrical and communication networks.

- **Completed.** Working with FPL to ensure enhanced reliability and resilience during storm events.

32. Encourage continued investment in emergency management technology.

- **Completed.** Ongoing through annual CIP, strategic planning, and budgeting processes.

Planning & Zoning

- 33.** Allow increased housing type options for replacement in mobile home zoning districts.
- **Completed.** Staff interpretation of the current code to allow for multiple replacement options in manufactured home communities, such as manufactured homes, modular homes, tiny homes, and container homes. These options are currently available to these communities.

Public Works

- 34.** Secure pre-storm contracts for vendor staffing support and debris management.
- **Completed.** The City of Venice has secured a three-year contract for monitoring and debris management services to support storm recovery operations and is currently in the second year of this agreement.
- 35.** Expand public education on debris collection timelines and FEMA regulations.
- **Completed.** Information referenced in the 2025 & 2026 Hurricane Guides.
- 36.** Encourage HOAs and condominium boards to carry appropriate insurance coverage and establish debris management plans.
- **Completed.** City encourages HOAs to annually review their insurance coverage and plans, including debris management. Included in the 2025 & 2026 Hurricane Guides.
- 37.** Update and improve SOPs for debris management.
- **Completed.**
- 38.** Advocate standard statewide debris collection rates to avoid competition among communities.
- **Completed.** Participated in regional discussions and annual FLC Legislative Action Days, providing feedback based on local experience. Continue to advocate through professional associations and municipal networks.
- 39.** Prioritize and catalog fuel tank locations with verified sizes, fuel types, and logistics. Assign a single source to track deliveries, fuel levels, generator run times, and post-storm resupply.
- **Completed.**
- 40.** Complete Fleet Maintenance facility and explore a mobile fleet service embedded at the EOC.
- **Completed.** The city relocated fleet maintenance operations to a hardened facility on 01/16/2026 and has ensured mobile fleet services are provided during emergency situations.

41. Update sandbag station SOP for enhanced traffic flow and operation.

- **Completed.** The designs and operational procedures for both on-island and off-island sandbag stations are documented in the City’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).
- **Completed.** Improved volunteer network to assist with operations.

Utilities

42. Create SOPs for minimizing stormwater inundation, utility generator prioritization, and potable water service continuity for Sarasota Memorial Hospital-Venice and other critical facilities.

- **Completed.** December 2025. Developed utility generator deployment SOP with specific locations, needs, and tracking for state resource assistance. Matrix has been completed.
- **Completed.** December 2025. Updated wastewater SOP to minimize stormwater inundation into the wastewater system. Plan is consistent with Utilities Severe Weather Plan.
- **Completed.** January 2026. A water distribution system trial was performed to verify the ability to isolate and maintain potable water service to the city's EOC and SMH facilities.
- **Completed.** Booster pump station active for service on 11/21/2025.

43. Complete Water Treatment Plant (WTP) Master Plan and feasibility study to evaluate options for hardening or relocating the WTP.

- **In Progress.** City staff is working with consultant on a feasibility study to review options to reduce Water Plant vulnerability, to be completed in late 2026.

Conclusions

These recommendations have provided a clear path to strengthening the City’s storm preparedness, response, and recovery. By prioritizing and implementing these changes, the City of Venice has enhanced its emergency and disaster operations, ensuring a more efficient and coordinated response for future storm events.

It is important to recognize the dedication and efforts of City department staff in driving these improvements over the past year. Through their hard work, staff have not only addressed immediate vulnerabilities but have also laid the foundation for ongoing preparedness. Their proactive approach and collaboration have better positioned the City to face future storms, minimize impacts, and safeguard the well-being of our community.

Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation Alignment

The following items represent AAR recommendations implemented by the City over the past year that are also in alignment with recommendations made by the Citizen Advisory Board After-Action Report (AAR). Although not every recommendation from the Citizen Advisory Board (CAB) has been fully addressed, the CAB AAR significantly contributed to improving emergency management planning. As indicated below, many of the CAB's suggestions have already been put into practice as intended.

1. Communication

- **Completed.** In October 2025, the City added a Deputy Public Information Officer position to provide increased and consistent public communication support during emergencies.
- **Completed.** One-Call Now is in place and used in early 2026 to communicate with City Leadership.
- **Completed.** All EOC staff, first responders, and Utilities Field Operations staff are now on AT&T FirstNet.
- **Completed.** City offers Starlink-powered Wi-Fi access points after a storm. “Hurricane Guide” (p.9)
- **Completed.** 2025 & 2026 City Hurricane Guide, “Stay Informed”, Pre/During/After. Examples: Include Alert Sarasota County, City Website, Local T.V. News & Radio, NOAA Weather Radio, Car Radio.
- **Completed.** The 2025 City Hurricane Expo was held, and the 2026 Expo is scheduled for 5/29/2026. Focus is on storm impacts, evacuation compliance & post preparedness.

2. Sandbag Distribution

- **Completed.** Performed pre-storm (BlueSky) sandbag operations in 2025 to allow enhanced sandbag distribution outside of emergency activation.
- **Completed.** Updated sandbag station SOP for enhanced traffic flow and operation. Designs and operational procedures for both on-island and off-island sandbag stations are documented in the City’s Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP).
- **Completed.** Enhanced volunteer network now in place to assist with sandbag operations.

3. Evacuation

- **Completed.** Messaging on evacuation compliance is a focal point of the 2026 City Hurricane Expo on 05/29/2026. Executive Order templates for curfews, closures, and regulatory waivers completed through the City Attorney in 2025.
- **Completed.** City Hurricane Guide, “Know Your Level”. Difference between Evacuation Levels and Flood Zones. (p.13 & 14)
- **Completed.** See websites for flood zones & flood insurance. (p.14)
- **Completed.** Evacuation Centers, Transportation & Medically Dependent Information. City Hurricane Guides. (p. 17)

4. Debris Removal

- **Completed.** Secured a three-year contract for monitoring and debris management services; currently in the second year of this agreement. Expanded public education on debris collection timelines and FEMA regulations referenced in the 2025 Hurricane Guide. (p. 7)

5. Drainage

- **Completed.** On 4/1/2025, the City’s Community Rating System (CRS) rating was enhanced from 6 to 5, providing a 25% discount on federal flood insurance. Completed the Tarpon Center Flood Mitigation project in July 2025. The Flamingo Ditch feasibility study was presented in October 2025 and completed early 2026, with the project included in the city's FY27 capital improvement planning.

6. Barrier to Repairs and Rebuilding

- **Completed.** Joint training with Sarasota County in August 2025 to update damage assessment guidance and ensure consistent post-storm assessment standards. The Building Department conducted extensive public outreach, meeting directly with hundreds of property owners and condo associations regarding floodplain management and recovery building permitting.

7. Meeting Special Needs

- **Completed.** Coordination with the County to support a countywide reunification protocol and internally with the Police & Fire Department to establish designated rally point locations throughout the City.

8. Volunteers

- **Completed.** Designated a city volunteer coordinator to manage a pre-storm database of volunteer partners, ensuring efficient coordination for post-storm operations. Working directly with the Venice-Nokomis Rotary Club.

9. Hurricane Resource Location

- **Completed.** Evacuation centers, transportation, and Medically Dependent information are provided in the Hurricane Guide. (p. 17)
- **Completed.** Facilities and locations designated for points of distribution and comfort stations, as staffing allows.

10. Tourism

- **Completed.** Continue to strengthen relationships and incorporate organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce into operations.
- **Completed.** See Communications items for additional public outreach implementation, which includes visitors.

Conclusions

Staff appreciates the well-researched and informed recommendations that came out of the CAB After-Action Report process. These completed actions provide a clear path to strengthening storm preparedness, response, and recovery. By prioritizing and implementing these changes, the City has enhanced emergency and disaster operations, ensuring a more efficient and coordinated response for residents and visitors alike. Through refined policies, improved resource management, and reinforced infrastructure, Venice has significantly increased its operational resilience for the 2026 season and beyond.