

Memo

To: Board of Selectmen
From: William G. Keegan, Jr., Town Administrator
CC: Assistant Town Administrator
Date: November 2, 2012
Re: Town Administrator's Report

Tonight's report will focus primarily on the actions the Town took in response to Hurricane Sandy. There are a lot of items that I would like to highlight.

1. Hurricane Sandy impacted the entire Eastern Seaboard and parts of the Caribbean during a seven day span and caused major destruction and disruption in her path. The storm is responsible for the death of as many as 50 people but fortunately for Dedham, none of those deaths occurred in this community. Preparations for Hurricane Sandy began on Thursday, October 25th in Dedham as reports continued to indicate that the storm would impact our area on Sunday October 28th through October 30th.
2. Initial preparations were made by the Public Works Department where steps were taken to secure pumps, tree removal equipment and contractors as some precautionary first steps. The staff at DPW were briefed on the possible impacts that could be felt in Dedham. The Town's Emergency Management Team met on Friday, October 26 and we listened to a state-wide telephone conference call with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). This information indicated that the impact to the State could be significant if the storm remained on its present track. The impact in Dedham remained uncertain over the weekend but as Sunday approached it became clear that the storm was so large that the Town would likely be impacted on late Sunday night and for most of the day on Monday (October 29). The DPW, Police, Fire, and Dispatch Personnel were then notified and preparations were made for the on-slaught of the storm.
3. On Friday we took preliminary steps to prepare for the opening of a shelter at the Middle School. Fortunately, the impacts did not require us to open the shelter. Fallon Ambulance attended our meeting on Friday to advise the

Town of its deployment plan during the storm. Finally we planned an additional meeting for Sunday evening to discuss our final preparations including the opening of the Emergency Operations Center here at Town Hall.

4. At 4:30 P.M. on Sunday our Team assembled in Lower Conference Room and included the following personnel: Acting Fire Chief Spillane, Police Chief D'entremont, Assistant Town Administrator Baker, Facilities Director Alani, Dispatch Supervisor Ellis, Public Works Director Flanagan, Health Director Cardinale, Civil Defense Director Zollo, Building Commissioner Cimeno, Parks and Recreation Director Stanley and Town Administrator Keegan. Chairman of the Board of Selectmen DelloIacono and Selectman Jim MacDonald attended as well. The purpose of the meeting was to provide everyone with the latest briefing on the storm and to make final preparations for the impact. Everyone had their own responsibilities and we finalized our steps for communicating damage as it occurred throughout the community. Bob Stanley offered to keep information on the web site up to date with the latest information as it occurred in Dedham. A communication channel was established with NSTAR and liaisons were assigned to Dedham so that we were able to coordinate line repairs with the utility. Information sharing was important for all of us and we thought that we were prepared for the worse; in the event that it occurred. At 6:00 P.M. on Sunday, the Town Administrator issued a Code Red Alert to all Dedham Residents and we posted the message on the Town's web site. The alert provided residents with important contact information for before, during and after the storm.
5. On Monday, at 5:30 A.M. the Emergency Operations Center was opened at Town Hall and a fax line, radio communications and telephone communications were established with our E-911 Center. By 8:00 A.M. the EOC was fully staffed and we were actively monitoring the storms impacts on the television networks as well as through the NSTAR Community Portal which would constantly update us with the amount of power outages in the community. Throughout the storm we received faxes from Dispatch indicating where trees had fallen, areas that had flooded and where power lines had been impacted. During the storm the maximum number of power outages peaked at 460 residents and businesses but later that number would peak again on Tuesday night at over 900 customers. As of the writing of this report that number has diminished to 20-23 (Thursday Night) with hopes that all power will be restored within the next 12-24 hours.
6. The Emergency Operations Center remained open throughout the storm and eventually closed at 9:00 P.M. on Sunday Night, a 15 and a half hour duration. Many of the people manned this Center for the entire time while others would go and conduct field inspections and assist with clearing roads or with traffic duties as needed. The Town had two Auxiliary Police Officers on duty in the Center to assist the Police Department as needed during the height of the storm.

7. Following the storm, we have continued to monitor power outages and we have worked directly with NSTAR to help restore power to our residents and businesses as soon as possible.
8. I am pleased to report that the response from our residents regarding our efforts has been very positive and our team felt that the changes that we made following Tropical Storm Irene provided Dedham's residents with a more coordinated and improved response to the impacts of the storm. On Wednesday, November 7th our team plans to meet for a debriefing session to talk about what we did and what we can do next to improve. These storm events are part of an ever evolving process of improvement for emergency response. We wish never have to utilize these resources but if we do, we like to know that they are effective.
9. Finally, I want to thank of all of our Town Employees, volunteers and Board members for the great job that they did during the storm. While we recognize that in many cases, this part of the job that they do every day but performing under extraordinary conditions is when we these jobs are most difficult. From my observations and the observations of many others, our combined teams at the Fire, Police, Dispatch, DPW, and the EOC did a great service to Dedham and its residents. For that, I am truly grateful.