



Chatham County Board of Commissioners
124 Bull Street, Savannah, GA 31401

**News Release
For Immediate Release**

UPDATE IN THE WAKE OF HURRICANE MATTHEW IN CHATHAM COUNTY

Savannah, GA – (October 8, 2016 at 4:30 pm)

Conditions remain unsafe.

“We’re encouraging everyone to stay sheltered,” said Chatham County Commission Chairman Al Scott. “The safety of our citizens is paramount.”

After making these statement this morning on his way to the Savannah Civic Center, Chairman Scott made personal visits around the county to determine the extent of the damages. After doing so, Scott pledged the all the resources of Chatham County and has formally requested the assistance of state and federal authorities.

As the extent of damage is becoming clear, Hurricane Matthew substantially impact the economic livelihood on Chatham County for years to come. Road closures, power outages and a disruption to normal life continue and will for months to come.

FOR TODAY, DO NOT RETURN TO CHATHAM COUNTY AT THIS TIME. IF YOU ARE IN CHATHAM COUNTY, DO NOT LEAVE YOUR PLACE OF SHELTER. CEMA WILL UPDATE YOU TOMORROW MORNING.

Georgia State Patrol flew helicopters over the entire coastal section for road assessment and that information has been provided to road clearance crews as well as those in charge of infrastructure repair. The images are being used by CEMA and its affiliates for a multitude of purposes.

The Georgia Department of Transportation continues to stress residents should not assume that roads are not safe because of fallen trees, downed power lines, and significant debris still are present. The county's road clearing crews are being hindered by the general public attempting to move throughout the county against the orders of officials. Georgia Power cannot repair down lines until the roads are clear. Attempts to return home or to move about are stopping the progress all citizens seek.

Should you ignore these orders and drive, please treat all traffic control signals without electricity as four way stops. Do not enter an intersection without exercising due care.

All first responders have resumed services throughout the county.

Infrastructure repair being handled by County and CEMA staff continues in full swing. The extent and timing of re-entry will be announced after a safety assessment is complete. While progress has been made, it is not complete at this time. The Georgia Department of Transportation are opening limited portions of Interstate 95 and Interstate 16 that were closed due to flooding and trees across the road. However, the Talmadge, Bull River and Thunderbolt bridges are closed.

Please remember that a nightly curfew remains in effect. That curfew has been extended through Monday at sunrise. This curfew will be enforced by all law enforcement agencies throughout the county. Likewise, Bloomingdale has issued a 24 hour a day, 7 days a week until further notice.

Water services by private providers in Chatham County were not operational but progress has been made. Those providers are working to fix the systems.

All Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools and Administrative Offices remain closed for students and staff through Tuesday. As re-entry phases are implemented, only critical and essential workforce are to report as directed by his or her supervisor.

Residents can assess the roads closed in the community by visiting the Chatham County Government Website at www.chathamcounty.org/road-closures.

As the evacuation showed, planning and execution are key: County residents were able to flee the storm without traffic jams or injury. We are asking everyone to cooperate with emergency managers to ensure a safe and timely return.

Phase 1 of re-entry is fully under way. Citizens can assist in this effort by remaining in their shelters. Recovery assistance from various agencies around the state and nation are en route to Chatham County. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has confirmed that prior to the storm it staged equipment and supplies to provide support.

Remember, your health is important to us. Don't walk into standing or flowing flood water, which can carry health hazards. Electrocuting is also a real fear as power lines are downed throughout the county. There will be additional information released on these precautions tonight.

Finally, CEMA is aware of the needs of the population that remained in Chatham County. Baby formula, non-perishable foods, water, household items and cleaning supplies are all in demand for some residents who did not evacuate. Likewise, numerous people and companies from inside and outside the county, have attempted to donate and volunteer.

Since the 10 a.m. press conference, staff has been fully dedicated to opening a shelter here in Chatham County. It is expected that an announcement about that shelter will occur later tonight.

"The winds and rain from Hurricane Matthew subsides less than 8 hours ago. Since that time, CEMA has fully shifted to recovery and re-entry mode and I am pleased with the progress made in this short time. I am hopefully that state and federal authorities will answer our calls for assistance as this is the worst storm to hit Chatham County in more than 100 years." said Lee Smith, County Manager.

Residents who evacuated will be notified on how to return when conditions are safe. For information on returning to Chatham County, go to <http://www.chathamemergency.org/evacuation-information/cema-establishes-evacuation-re.php>

If you believe a relative might have evacuated, check <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief/contact-and-locate-loved-ones>

As always, for the most up-to-date information, check www.chathamemergency.org, www.chathamcounty.org, www.savannahga.gov

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