

# NEWS SPLASH

A bi-annual publication of  
Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority

## MESSAGE

### from the General Manager

We are now three months into our recovery from Hurricane Mathew. BJWSA has a robust hurricane emergency preparedness plan and our team prepares every year for a possible hit by exercising the plan. We closely monitored the storm's progress and initiated our pre-storm checklist efforts on Monday, October 3. We stayed in contact with the local emergency officials and expedited all storm preparations once an evacuation was announced on Tuesday, October 4. We activated our stay behind crews and gave them time to take care of their family's evacuation prior to reporting to work on Wednesday, October 5.

BJWSA's Stay Behind Crew consisted of 72 key employees who were stationed at four BJWSA locations (two north and two south of the Broad) Friday morning in advance of the storm. The crews came prepared to stay on duty until the storm passed and BJWSA's critical infrastructure had been returned to service. Our Admin Building at Chelsea served as our Emergency Operation Center (EOC) and we used the Incident Command System to manage all pre and post storm activities and coordinate our efforts with the Beaufort/Jasper County's EOC. Using information from the NOAA Hurricane Website to track the storm and to monitor the predicted storm surge, we decided to protect the main water system integrity by shutting the water off to several Sea Islands late Friday afternoon and our crews sheltered in place as the storm passed. Saturday's dawn showed the effects of Matthew's 80+ MPH sustained winds and 11+ inches of rainfall (a 24-hr record for Beaufort). All treatment plants were operating on generator power and early reports from the county EOC indicated that the majority of the 2 county area was without power and many trees and power lines were down. After a Safety Briefing for the crews, we dispatched our pre-arranged Damage Assessment Teams across the two-county area to determine the integrity of our water and wastewater systems. We were able to verify that the water pressures were fine everywhere except on St Helena Island and we issued a Boil Water Advisory for that area. We also started the process of restoring water service to the islands we isolated pre-storm and issued Boil Water Advisories as we brought them online. Numerous sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs) were occurring because 90% of the 445 sewer pumps stations were without power. Recovery efforts began and working closely with SCE&G and Palmetto Co-Op, we systematically began restoring power to the sewer stations. This coupled with crews shuffling generators and by-pass pumps between stations allowed us to get all SSOs under control in 48 hours. We were able to restore normal water pressure on St Helena on Sunday and all Advisories on the BJWSA water system were lifted by Tuesday, October 11. It took two plus days for our crews to visit and assess every BJWSA facility.

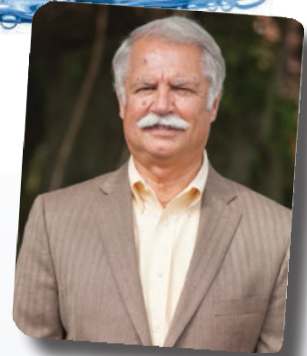
As the week progressed and recovery efforts intensified, we received valuable assistance and resources from other SC water and sewer utilities through the South Carolina Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (SCWARN). Our Stay Behind Crews were relieved of duty Tuesday evening and were able to return home. By Wednesday, October 12, power had been restored to 85+% of the sewer stations and operations were returning to normal. Our crews along with the crews from the other SC utilities began assisting other utilities in the area (Harbor Is, Fripp Is and Hilton Head PSDs) with their recovery efforts and worked with them through Friday, October 14.

I could not be more grateful that we were able to recover quickly and that our losses were as few as they were. Our focus now is to recover the cost of the storm's impact on BJWSA through our insurance carrier and FEMA and to better prepare our system for the next storm event. Mainly, I could not be more proud of our stay behind crews and the entire BJWSA team and the effort they gave during this difficult time. In closing, on behalf of the BJWSA Board and employees, I'd like to wish each and every one of you a Safe and Happy 2017!

Warm personal regards,



Ed Saxon  
General Manager



*The Hurricane Team gathers in our training room in advance of Hurricane Mathew.*

# BJWSA Experts answer Questions

## **What were some of the preparations BJWSA made in advance of the storm?**

As fiscal stewards of your dollars we allocate resources responsibly every day to ensure minimal service disruption to your home or business. These allocations include provisions for possible disaster events. We have judiciously constructed resilient structures, purchased equipment such as pumps and generators and set aside funds to enable us to respond, repair and recover quickly from a disaster event. During Hurricane Matthew, BJWSA leadership first focused on employee safety and well-being. Other preparations included contacting our critical suppliers and contractors, mutual aid partners, critical customers and emergency and regulatory agencies to implement pre-storm procedures. We pre-staged equipment, people and generators around our water systems. We also posted messages to our website and social media channels about what people should do with their water service connection in advance of the storm.

## **Where can I find the shut-off valve for my home?**

All homes built after 1990 should have a main shut off located at the home installed by the builder. Older homes will have a meter similar to the one shown in the photo. Homeowners should identify which type they have or have one installed.



## **Why did BJWSA turn off water to some of the barrier islands before the hurricane?**

We decided out of an abundance of caution to turn off the water to certain islands to protect the water system from potential waterline breaks. The waterlines to some of the islands were installed along a causeway. Flood models predicted some of the islands would be flooded from the hurricane. If a causeway had washed out because of the storm, the waterline would have washed out as well and compromised the larger water system.

## **Did BJWSA experience damage to its water and wastewater systems which required emergency response and repair?**

Yes and No - Our potable water distribution system had a few water main breaks due to erosion from the storm surge and fallen/uprooted trees. A few water pumping stations experienced flooding and wind damage. These forces of nature caused a few of our service areas to have lower than normal but still adequate system pressure. Our staff and contractors responded quickly to make repairs and restore full pressure. During the whole hurricane event all water and wastewater treatment plants were operating normally and had power due to our system of large generators and fuel tanks.

## **Please explain Boil Water Advisories -- what situations cause BJWSA to issue them? Where can I find information about how to treat my water in case of a Boil Water Advisory?**

If BJWSA suspects the water might not be safe to drink, we issue a Boil Water Advisory. If a test result show definitively that the water is not safe to drink then we issue a Boil Water Notice. BJWSA issued Boil Water Advisories after Hurricane Matthew for the islands that were isolated and for St Helena where power outages made us uncertain that system pressure was adequate. Once we tested the water after the hurricane and confirmed it was safe to drink, we lifted the Boil Water Advisory. For more about Boil Water Advisories and Notices visit BJWSA's website or SCDHEC's website.

## **Did BJWSA experience any supply concerns as a result of the storm?**

No – all water and wastewater treatment plants were operating normally and on generator power, fuel became a major concern during our response. I'm referring to diesel & propane needed to power generators which run our treatment plants and pump stations in the event of power loss. Our territory is very spread out, so getting to all of our sites running on generator power proved to be quite a challenge. We have already begun the process of researching alternate solutions and/or larger storage capacity in the future.

## **Why were we asked to conserve water after the hurricane?**

We asked customers to conserve water for two reasons. First, immediately after the hurricane because of the widespread power outage and waterline breaks, BJWSA had limited pumping capacity and delivering water to the entire system was difficult. Second, many of the sewer pump stations had no power, so wastewater overflowed the station because it could not be pumped to the treatment plant without power. By limiting water use while the power was out, customers were also limiting the amount of wastewater that could overflow onto the ground.

# ns related to Hurricane Matthew

## Will BJWSA be applying for financial reimbursement with FEMA?

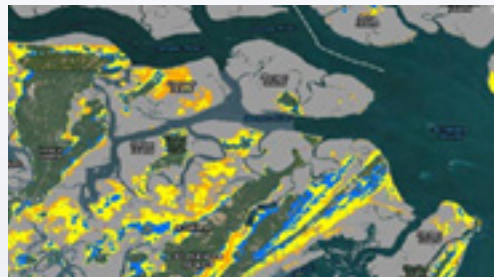
Yes – in addition to working with our insurance provider, BJWSA has applied for a Request for Public Assistance with FEMA for the upwards of approximately \$1,000,000 of costs we incurred as we prepared and recovered from the hurricane. We've completed a Kick-Off Meeting with FEMA and we're working through the reimbursement process. We expect to recoup our eligible expenses under the FEMA Public Assistance Program.

## Did BJWSA experience damage to its assets which required emergency response and repair?

Yes – fortunately BJWSA's 'Stay Behind' staff played a vital role in responding & repairing damaged infrastructure. Additionally, BJWSA maintains Disaster Recovery contracts with several utility contractors in our area. Thanks to cooperation with Beaufort County, we were able to get these companies quick re-entry in the county and they provided us with critical assistance in repairing our utility's assets.

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## What can I do as a customer to prepare for an event like this next time?

- Locate your water shutoff valve near your meter now.
- Shut off the valve when you evacuate, but don't run water in your home afterwards. You may drain and damage your water heater.
- Monitor BJWSA's website and social media for messages and system outage updates.
- Ensure we have the best telephone number for you so you'll receive our recorded notifications about water shutdowns in your area.
- Don't call 911 for water or sewer emergencies. Let BJWSA's trained and knowledgeable staff respond to the emergency.
- During clean-up don't stack tree limbs or other debris on hydrants, meters or sanitary sewer clean out covers.

## Meet the Experts

With a combined 200-plus years of experience, BJWSA's entire Hurricane Team was led by professionals with expertise in every facet of the operation. Four of our 72 resident hurricane authorities answered these questions.



**Will Bettis**

*Purchasing and Risk Manager*



**Tricia Kilgore, PE**

*Director of Treatment Operations*



**Joe DeVito**

*Director of Field Operations*



**Ken Jordan**

*Director of Planning,  
Safety & Security*

## Now that hurricane season is over, are you ready for cold weather?

When temperatures near freezing, leave a pencil-lead-thin stream of water flowing from faucets coming from pipes in unheated areas or against exterior walls to help prevent pipes from freezing. For pipes under sinks, keep the cabinet doors open to allow more home heat to reach the pipes. You can also:

- Shut the water off for your entire house at the master shut-off valve.
- Disconnect and drain outdoor hoses
- Seal off access doors, air vents and cracks to protect exposed pipes.
- Insulate pipes or faucets in unheated areas.

If a pipe breaks and you are unable to isolate any leaks during repairs, BJWSA can turn off water at the meter, but charges will apply for the visit. BJWSA cannot make repairs beyond the meter box. After the leak is repaired, call to report the leak and inquire about a possible billing adjustment.





Our mission is to inspire trust and enhance public health.

WINTER / SPRING 2017

## NEWS SPLASH

Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority  
6 Snake Road; Okatie, SC 29909

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R. Thayer Rivers, Jr.  
Gerald H. Schulze  
Dr. William Singleton

General Manager Ed Saxon

### Need more information?

Contact our communications manager at 843-987-9213 or visit [bjwsa.org](http://bjwsa.org).

### Do we have your latest contact information?

Be part of our 'Be Prepared/Go Green' effort! Share your e-mail address and BEST phone number for outbound notification from BJWSA in case of water or weather emergencies. Get the latest information more quickly, and we'll both save money when we avoid printing and postage costs! Send your information to [info@bjwsa.org](mailto:info@bjwsa.org).

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## New hardship fund will assist those in temporary need

Effective January 1, 2017, BJWSA launched a new hardship fund for customers in crisis – those with extenuating circumstances who could be in danger of disconnection of their water and/or sewer services.

BJWSA is collaborating with the United Way of the Lowcountry in order to facilitate the eligibility and assistance process.

The following general guidelines have been established for the fund:

- Recipient must be a BJWSA customer in Beaufort or Jasper counties.
- Only the primary account holder can apply for assistance, unless there is a Power of Attorney or other legal document stating otherwise.
- Customers must have at least three months of service history with BJWSA.
- The fund can pay up to 90% of covered charges.
- The fund can be used for water and sewer consumption, penalties, delinquent fees, service charge, solid waste and recycling charge.
- Assistance cannot be applied to tampering fees; overdraft, same day service or trip charges.
- There is a three business-day turnaround for pledges.
- Customers who meet the hardship criteria may contact a BJWSA customer service representative at 843-987-9200. (Referrals for this program are made through BJWSA.)

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**LIVE UNITED**™ 

**Free Chlorine Flush:** Our annual fall chlorine flush for the entire system was postponed due to Hurricane Matthew. We expect to conduct this work between late February and late March. Look on our website for details.