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**CRYSTAL LAKE MIDDLE STUDENTS CONDUCT HURRICANE EXERCISE
AT BROWARD COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER**

PLANTATION, FLORIDA -- As HurrEvac computer images show Category 3 Hurricane Michael getting closer to South Florida's coastline, Mayor Ephrain Lopez-Aguayo orders his fellow Crystal Lake Middle School students to put out a fire in an evacuation center and relocate 1,000 residents to other evac centers in the area. "There are lives at stake, so let's get this done," he demands.

Lopez-Aguayo and Emergency Management Director Melissa Jiminez were shouldering the responsibility of supervising Emergency Support Functions (ESFs in emergency management parlance) being handled by their classmates – Fire-Fighting, Transportation, Law Enforcement, Urban Search and Rescue, Health and Medical, Food and Water and Mass Care, to name a few – to ensure that the dispossessed people were properly relocated to other shelters and safe from the approaching storm.

In the meantime, student meteorologists were briefing student reporters in order to keep the general public apprised of Michael's whereabouts and strength.

As soon as the fire in the evacuation center was resolved, a gasoline truck overturned on a major evacuation route, leaving thousands of motorists stranded. Gas from the truck was spilling all over the road and motorists were overheated and thirsty with tempers flaring. Again, Mayor Lopez-Aguayo had to depend on his ESFs to resolve this perilous situation.

"We need to remove the truck, contain the spill and get bottled water out to these people as soon as possible," he demanded. "Get Hazardous Materials, Resource Management and Mass Care on it. We need to move fast."



After Michael's passage, things got even worse.

The students faced equally challenging emergencies such as several hundred senior citizens stranded on an island due to an Intracoastal bridge being slammed into by an ocean tanker. "We've sent boats, helicopters and anything we can," said Lopez-Aguayo. "The ship is also spreading fuel all over the water and a few of the elderly need immediate evacuation."

In the meantime, a hospital was overcrowded with storm victims, medical resources are virtually exhausted and basic water and food provisions was also used up. The hospital was on auxiliary power, making it difficult to perform basic surgical procedures. Also, parts of their city were virtually underwater from rain and storm surge, with people and their pets perilously stranded on roof tops and dangling from trees.

Fifty students spent Wednesday morning (10/27/10) at the Broward County Emergency Operations Center in Plantation, Florida, participating in a special hurricane preparedness exercise sponsored by [StormZone](#), a South Florida-based non-profit program where they planned for and recovered from category 3 Hurricane Michael.

StormZone, sponsored by the American Red Cross, CBS4 and Hurricane Warning, is a free online hurricane science education and preparedness program offered to public and private schools. The program specifically helps students understand the importance of advance preparation when confronted with a natural disaster such as a hurricane. Since 2007, StormZone has been taught in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach County schools throughout hurricane season which ends November 30th.

Miguel Ascarrunz, Operations Manager for the Broward County Emergency Management Division, welcomed the students prior to the exercise,



describing the Emergency Operations Center as a central coordination point for supporting the response to countywide emergencies and disasters. "The StormZone Program provides a realistic disaster scenario for students to role play leadership positions and learn how government manages disasters in a truly collaborative partnership with other emergency management stakeholders," he stated.

At the conclusion of the exercise, student Mayor Lopez-Aguayo conducted a press conference assisted by student Public Information Officer Caleb Rodriguez to inform student reporters on preparedness measures that were taken before the storm and recovery efforts after its passage. The first question asked was, "were any lives lost?" "No" said a relieved Lopez-Aguayo.

"Through this interactive exercise, students learn about emergency management, make the decisions necessary to respond to a disaster in their community and develop a recovery plan," said Bay Proby, StormZone Director. "This classroom experience also lets students learn about the importance of individual responsibility, organizational collaboration and project management skills when confronted with a hurricane."

For more information about StormZone, visit www.stormzone.us.

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