**Utility Tips**

**Water**

Locate the emergency water shut-off valve for the residence and remove any shrubbery or obstructions. Test the water shut-off valve to be sure that it is operational. If the shut-off valve is not operational, have it repaired or replaced.

Turn the emergency water shut­off valve to the off position if you are leaving the house prior to a storm. This will help minimize damage to the interior of the home should a pipe burst inside.

Follow the manufacturer’s recommendations on turning off the water heater and unplug it. Some water heaters may be damaged if the water supply is turned off for an extended period. Locate the sewer clean-out lid and remove any shrubbery or obstructions in case the clean-out needs to be accessed. Due to power outages, water treatment plants will be operating under limited conditions. Water pressures will be reduced.

Because of reduced pressures and the limited operations of lift stations, water conservation is essential. If power has been restored to the home, it does not mean that power has been restored to all lift stations or water and wastewater treatment plants. To conserve water:

* Turn off all sprinklers.
* Remember to reset the irrigation timer once power has been restored.
* Abstain from running dishwashers and clothes washers
* Limit the amount of water used dur­ing a shower or the amount to fill the bathtub.
* Limit the amount of toilet flushing.
* Abstain from any other outdoor use of water that is not absolutely necessary.

**Electricity**

A strong storm or hurricane can cause significant damage, resulting in widespread power outages. Restoration efforts must be prioritized, starting with facilities that provide the most critical services:

* Damaged power plants and power lines from the plants, since these must be fixed before service can be restored anywhere.
* Organizations that provide critical infrastructure functions to the community, such as hospitals, police, and fire stations.
* Major power lines that serve large numbers of customers.
* Smaller power lines such as service to a single street.
* Individual homes or businesses still without power.

When a power outage occurs, safety is a very important concern. Here are some basic safety tips:

* Assume all cables and wires are energized and stay away.
* Keep away from flooded and debris-laden areas because they may be hiding downed lines.
* Run your portable generator outside your house or building, and connect appliances or equipment directly to it.
* Turn off appliances that may have been on when the power went out or turn off the main breaker.
* Avoid driving in damaged areas for safety and to avoid interfering with rescue or restoration efforts.
* Help keep telephone lines clear for emergency calls. Only call to report downed power lines, or if a neighbors’ power has been restored and you are without electricity.
* Don’t trim trees or remove debris located near downed power lines. Don’t pile debris under or near electrical lines or equipment.
* Any damage to a home’s electric system must be repaired by a licensed electrician and inspected by a designated agency before power can be restored.
* Check the weather-head (located on the roof where electrical service connects to the pole) and the meter box to make sure they are not damaged.
* If there may be water in the walls or ceiling, stay away from electrical outlets and contact a licensed electrician to repair the damage.
* If it is necessary to live in temporary quarters on the property, a licensed electrician can install a temporary service pole. After the pole is inspected by a designated agency, the electric utility can provide power.