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FACTs

This fact sheet is provided as a reference to encourage a greater understanding of the various issues related to managing water in South Florida.

Managing Water During the Rainy Season

In central and south Florida, the wet season is June through October when 70 percent of the year's rain falls. The region receives an average of 52 inches throughout the year. Flooding may happen when large amounts of rain occur over a short period of time or from a single, heavy storm, tropical system or hurricane. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) operates the regional system of canals, levees and water control structures to lessen the impact of floods. The system connects to local drainage districts and smaller neighborhood systems to manage flood water during and after heavy rains.

How the Interconnected System Works:

- Weather conditions and water levels are monitored around the clock, 365 days a year by the SFWMD. In advance of forecasted heavy rains, water managers open gates at water control structures to lower canal and lake levels where possible and move excess water into available storage areas.
- During and after a storm, neighborhood ditches, swales and conduits carry excess water to local drainage systems that can cover several hundred miles to serve several communities. This network of canals, structures, storage areas and pump stations is operated by water control districts, cities or counties and connects to the primary canal system.
- One of the largest water control systems in the world, the primary system is operated by the SFWMD and along with other system components consist of more than 2,600 miles of canals and levees, 1,300 spillways, weirs, culverts and other water control structures and 66 pump stations. Excess water from heavy rains is directed through waterways using pump stations and other structures to storage areas or coastal discharge points to relieve flooding.

What to Expect:

- After a heavy rain, water in streets, swales, yards and low-lying areas is expected and normal. These areas store and convey water to function as critical components of neighborhood drainage facilities.
- Water may take longer to subside as the ground becomes saturated. As it soaks into the ground, the water is recharging aquifers.

What You Can Do:

To ensure peak performance of drainage systems, property managers and residents should conduct the following inspections:

- Grates, pipe openings and connections to culverts should be free of sediment, trash and debris.
- Swales and grassy water storage areas should be within proper specifications for height, length and depth and free of exotic plants.
- Ditches and canals should have all trash, sediment and dead vegetation removed so flow of water is not obstructed.

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