

At Menorah Manor, Planning Paid Off During Hurricane Irma

Reprinted from the Tampa Bay times 9/20/17

ST. PETERSBURG — Doris Rosenblatt and her husband, Frank, have lived in Florida all of their lives, so they know about hurricanes.

Back in 1985, they evacuated from their Madeira Beach condo to Davis Islands and then to a sturdy, family-owned warehouse to take shelter from Hurricane Elena. When Irma threatened this year, they were unfazed.

The Rosenblatts — she is 90, and he is 94 — now live at Menorah Manor, a nursing home and assisted living facility in St. Petersburg.

Doris Rosenblatt was impressed by the facility's preparations. "As soon as they knew it was coming, they made plans," she said.

CEO Rob Goldstein said planning for such a crisis is actually ongoing.

"Knowing that the storm was out in the Caribbean, we started putting our disaster plan in place," he said. "We had several concerns. First and foremost, how do we take care of our residents?"

That meant making sure there was enough food, medical supplies and medications for about 180 residents. Each building — the nursing center and the assisted living residence — has its own generator, Goldstein said. Both kicked in on Sunday.

"It was completely seamless," said Judy Ludin, the chief communications officer. "You would never know that you were on a generator. It was really life as usual."

Electricity was not restored to the nursing center until Tuesday and to the assisted living facility on Thursday.

Keeping air-conditioning and medical equipment running is critical for the frail and elderly. Nine residents of a Hollywood nursing home died in sweltering conditions days after Hurricane Irma knocked out the power to the facility's air conditioning, according to the *Times/Herald*.

"A situation like that should never have happened," Goldstein said. "Management has the responsibility to protect the residents in any situation."

Menorah Manor's disaster planning includes making sure that essential staff are on hand, even dietitians and housekeeping. Employees were able to bring immediate family and pets to work as Irma approached.

Close to 200 family members arrived with air mattresses and sleeping bags, settling in on the ground floor of the four-story nursing center.

Menorah Manor fed them three meals a day and set up temporary day care during the week that Pinellas County schools were closed. Employees without power at home were able to remain there after

the storm, Ludin said. Others who chose to return to homes without electricity were offered hot meals and ice to take with them, she said.

Beverly Wimberly, a clinical nurse manager, brought two of her three sons, Antwan Fuller, 22, and Anthony Fuller, 16, to work. Her oldest, Antonio Fuller, 28, decided to remain behind to protect their home.

It was important for her to be at work, Wimberly said, to make sure the residents were taken care of. "I came on Saturday, and I stayed until after my shift on Monday."

Goldstein and his wife, Susan, and their dog, Encore, bunked in his office. Medical director Dr. David LeVine also took shelter at the facility with his wife, Janice, and two of their daughters. When the storm started to move in, Janice LeVine played the piano and led a sing-a-long.

The preparations paid off.

Goldstein said they had a two-week supply of food and water. And Menorah Manor officials had considered worst-case scenarios well before the storm got close, Ludin said. For instance, what if the facilities flooded and people had to be moved to a higher floor?

"Everybody knew what we had to do," Ludin said.

Menorah Manor was even able to help other facilities.

The 180-bed Solaris HealthCare Bayonet Point asked to borrow Menorah Manor's 16-passenger bus to evacuate its residents. And on Wednesday, after Irma, Goldstein got a request from LeadingAge Florida, a group of not-for-profit elder care organizations and business associates, asking Menorah Manor to assist two independent living facilities in Tampa and Plant City.

They had been without power and needed food, water and cleaning supplies.

Contact Waveney Ann Moore at wmoore@tampabay.com or (727) 892-2283. Follow @wmooretimes.

Menora Manor: By the numbers

Stocking up on two weeks' worth of non-perishable food:

Drinking water — 2,800 gallons

Potable water — 7,800 gallons

Tuna fish — 4,800 ounces

Peanut butter — 3,840 ounces

Crackers — 5,000 packets

Cereal bars — 1,400

Enough powered milk to make 3,600 ounces