

**RI DEM Division of Parks and Recreation
HURRICANE PLAN
SECURING STATE PARKS AND BEACHES**

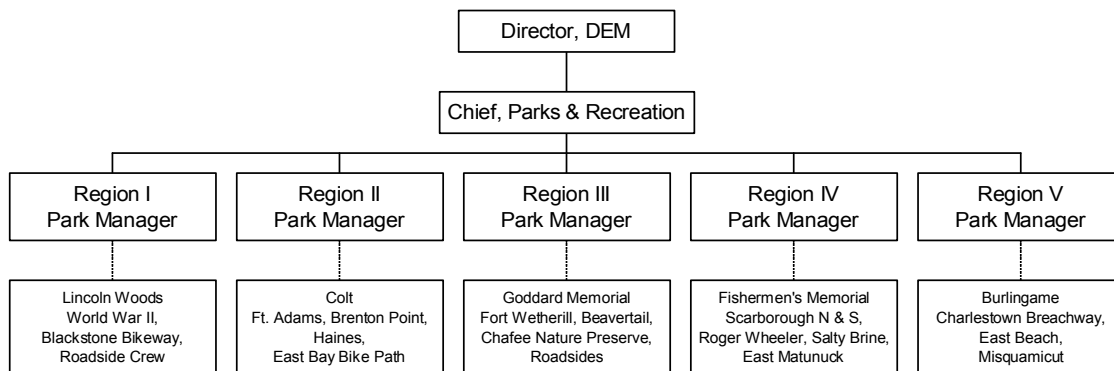
INTRODUCTION

Storms such as hurricanes can yield tidal surges, severe surf, and high winds that endanger the public as well as facilities in State Parks and Beaches. When such conditions are forecast, RI DEM will secure these properties. In consultation with the DEM Director, the Chief of the Division of Parks and Recreation will direct staff to restrict public access appropriately or to close whole facilities.

Such actions are among normal Division duties. In-season (from May 30th to 6:00 PM of each Labor Day) every morning and evening, State Beaches are opened and closed, and there is seasonal staff to help. Ordinary circumstances require that they are prepared to manage crowds and handle accidents, searches or evacuations. Also normally at least once per year, staff secure facilities to withstand months out-of-service in potentially hostile winter weather. Hurricanes in-season change the scheduling rather than the substance of this work. Off-season, facilities are already battened down. In- as well as off-season, fuel cans are locked in storm-sheltered structures on high ground. Since, too, the Division handles nearly all of its own maintenance, staff and equipment are ready not only for storm recovery operations in State Parks and Beaches but also for emergency support of other DEM Divisions.

ORGANIZATION

Response to hurricanes requires knowledge of the specific risks and resources of each property at the time. They vary greatly. For example, risks are much greater in the summer, but so are the resources. The number and kind of visitors ranges widely from day to day. Since, too, hurricane threats often come near the end of the season, preparations for the off-season may have already begun. At that time the vulnerability of each facility and the composition of its staff rapidly change, with great effect on emergency readiness. Furthermore, work teams will be more effective and safe if they are deployed as they are accustomed. Likewise, managers in each region have established distinct procedures for coordinating emergency response with local public safety officers. It is therefore essential that hurricane preparation and response preserve established work relations, with deference to managers who best know risks and resources at their particular site.



See also the organization chart at <<http://www.riparks.com/organizationalchart.htm>>.

PROCEDURE

1. The Chief of the Division of Parks and Recreation will monitor severe weather forecasts and on-site conditions, in consultation with Regional Park Managers.
2. Approximately one week before severe weather is forecast to arrive, the Division Chief will direct Regional Park Managers to begin preparations. As time and resources permit, Division staff will:
 - Inventory response equipment (e.g., chain saws, chippers, radios).
 - Identify additional needs and sources for staff, equipment, or supplies, if the storm arrives as predicted.
 - Ready and stage clean-up vehicles and equipment (e.g., trucks, saws, hand tools, safety gear).
 - As opportunities ordinarily arise, alert staff and visitors to the possibility of a change in the weather and a closure. (E.g., limit renewals of campground permits to the storm's predicted date of arrival, coordinate vacations.)
 - As resources permit, survey and remove hazards (e.g., trim branches that overhang power lines or roads, clear culverts).
 - As appropriate, advance schedule to secure facilities for the off-season.
3. When dangerous storm or seas are confidentially forecast, Regional Park Managers will provide the Chief an estimate of their readiness for a closure. A decision to close must be made sufficiently before the estimated time of the storm's arrival to allow adequate preparations. (Normally, securing a facility will take 1-2 workdays in-season; a half a workday or less off-season.)
4. When appropriate to protect public health and state property, the Director of DEM will authorize the Chief to close State Parks or Beaches.
5. Park Managers will supervise the securing of facilities:
 - Ready and stage clean-up vehicles and equipment (e.g., trucks, saws, hand tools, safety gear; board up windows).
 - Remove, shelter, or anchor equipment that is vulnerable to high winds or seas (e.g., Port-a-johns, swimming ropes, lifeguard stands, ticket booths, boats, trashcans, picnic tables, flags).
 - Shut off non-essential utilities (PA, water, electricity).
6. Park Managers will supervise the closing of the facility.
 - Evacuate visitors.
 - Post signs limiting access.
 - Barricade entrances.
 - As appropriate, notify local police or government officials and coordinate response (e.g., for siting of temporary debris storage and authorization of emergency access).
 - Insofar as possible and safe, patrol roads.
7. After hazardous conditions have passed, Regional Managers will supervise a survey of storm damage and coordinate clean-up operations. When appropriate, in consultation with Regional Managers and the DEM Director, the Division Chief will authorize facilities to re-open.