

FIA-FINS Storm Update #3—November 2, 2012

FIA and FINS have prepared the following storm update for the FIA Board and the members of your respective communities. Information contained here has also been contributed by the Fire Island Command Post (located at the Kismet Fire House, under the leadership of Dom Bertucci and Jay Lippert).

Once again, please be advised that the situation on the Island is evolving and changing on a day-to-day basis, and the information we provide is always subject to change.

General Access to the Island:

1. Town and County officials, as well as those emergency service personnel involved in the clean-up and recovery on the beach, advise that conditions on the Island are still not deemed safe enough for homeowners to return.
2. The mandatory evacuation orders issued by the County and Islip Town are still in effect. At 4:30 today, an Executive Emergency Order was signed by Acting Supervisor Kathleen Walsh extending the mandatory evacuation order for all Town of Brookhaven portions of Fire Island as well.

Ms. Walsh's message included the following caution: *“Residents are urged to stay off Fire Island since there is no fire or emergency service, electric power or water service. There are also downed power lines, trees and other extremely hazardous debris on land and in the water, and some homes, that have sustained significant damage, may be dangerous to enter. Boardwalks, docks and marinas have also sustained damage.”*

3. Access continues to be strictly controlled by County and State and local officials.
 - There are check points on the bridge to ensure that only authorized individuals drive over to the Island.
 - The Suffolk County Police Marine Bureau and the Bay Constables of both Towns have been directed to deter private boats from coming to the Island until further notice.
 - All three ferry companies will not run until they receive the OK to transport passengers.
4. We do understand that with each passing day, there is growing frustration and annoyance that residents are being prevented from coming out to check on the condition of their homes. But to do so would be endangering themselves and others. Please honor the urgent requests of the emergency providers who have been out there for five days straight working long hours to re-establish a safe environment. They need more time to advance their clean-up, so let's

give them a chance do their work without the unnecessary distraction of people wandering around the beach.

For the present, most communities have developed effective communication networks to disseminate details of local conditions with pictures and emailed reports from community leaders. The following excerpt from an e-message sent by the Village of Ocean Beach to homeowners explains the recovery status in the village, and giving the rationale for continued limited access to the Island:

“Conditions in the Village remain dangerous: there are large amounts of debris strewn throughout; parts of the Village remain flooded; water and sewer operations are significantly below pre-storm levels, and our fire department is only just beginning the process of reinstating service.

Several major milestones need to be reached before we can safely accept residents back to Ocean Beach. Some examples:

- reestablishing EMS and fire department services to the Village*
- returning power to the island*
- ensuring operational resilience of the Ocean Beach water and sewer systems*
- ensuring the structural integrity of the Ocean Beach ferry dock*

The administration, local police, department of public works, utilities and volunteer fire department are working across multiple fronts to make this happen as expeditiously as possible.

We ask your patience and understanding as we work through the multiple stages of recovery that lie ahead.”

Tentative plans for limited access:

On the fifth day after the storm, the main objectives established as priorities by the FI Command team remain the same. As noted in the Ocean Beach message, all hands are focusing on the following tasks:

1. Clearing walks and roads for vehicle access.
2. Re-establishing the water systems for fire protection.
3. Assessing the damage to the electric grid in order to allow a safe and orderly return of electric power to the island as soon as possible.
4. Assessing general infrastructure damage in each community.

We are very pleased to report that thanks to the hard work and ‘true grit’ of the volunteers on site in all communities, and the expert coordination of their efforts by the Fire Island command center, dramatic progress is being made on these recovery objectives. If the clean-up effort

continues to progress on schedule over the next few days, plans are being made to set up limited access to the Island as follows:

1. Early next week (weather permitting) work boats may run to transport essential service personnel to the Island. These individuals (plumbers, electricians, and propane service providers) will help in the effort to conduct door-to-door surveys in each community to turn off power and water and secure propane tanks. In order for LIPA to turn power to the whole Island, extreme caution must be exercised to assure that salt-damaged wiring does not cause serious fire hazard.
2. Year-round residents will also be allowed back on the Island on a priority basis to collect personal possessions, medication, clothing and other important items. (Date to determined)
3. A timetable for allowing access for seasonal resident to return briefly to check their homes has not been firmly established. One issue that will affect the timing of this decision is the impact of a nor'easter which may hit the Island on Tuesday/Wednesday of next week.
4. Residents who have contacted their insurance brokers with damage claims have inquired about access for insurance adjusters. The time frame for site visits by adjusters is also under review.

Once again, we assure you that as soon as a definite decision has been made on the above plans, the information will be circulated immediately.

Voting: The Suffolk County Board of Elections sent out a news release on Thursday stating that the agency was working “diligently” to prepare for Tuesday’s general election. “Working in cooperation with the State Board of Elections, the governor’s office and local municipalities, we are currently assessing the situation regarding the accessibility of our polling places,” the press release said. “Once we establish which of our polling places are inoperative, we will make arrangements to relocate those election districts, notify voters and accommodate the electorate to the best of our ability. Our absentee ballot program has been uninterrupted and extended. We are doing everything possible to ensure that our elections will move forward as scheduled.”

According to an update late this afternoon (Friday 11/2), there are five out of 342 polling places across the county that will be changed due to structural damage or debris blocking access. Those locations are in the towns of Brookhaven, Babylon, Islip, Huntington and Smithtown. We believe the Fire Island polling sites are included in those which will be relocated. When we know what arrangements have been made, we will advise.

Ira Charles of Ocean Beach advises that absentee ballots are available at Suffolk County Offices (700 Yaphank Avenue LIE exit.67 and follow signs) on Saturday 9-9pm, Sunday 9-5pm and Monday 9-7 pm. Suffolk County Board of Elections can be contacted at 631-852-4500. When they answer, press #1 then wait for the next message to begin. Press #6 to be transferred to an operator.

At the end of a very long week of managing the aftermath of Sandy, we once again want to convey our appreciation and gratitude for the dedication, expertise and relentless efforts of our local first responders, Park Rangers, Suffolk County Police, and OEM officials from the State, County and Towns who are working so diligently out there to help restore the Island we all love.

Regards,

Suzy Goldhirsch, President, FIA
Chris Soller, Superintendent, FINS