

FIA-FINS Storm Update #4—November 5, 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 approved by the Town of Islip and 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.

Recovery Update

1. The key objectives established for this phase of the recovery remain the same:
 - Clearing access on walks and roads for emergency and repair vehicles.
 - Re-establishing the water systems for fire protection.
 - 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.
 - Assessing general infrastructure damage in each community.
2. The Fire Island Command Post reports that during the last two days there has been dramatic progress toward achieving these goals. There are however, still many concerns:
 - Dependable water supply for fire protection is not yet established Island-wide.
 - Debris and downed trees along the access routes are hampering vehicle travel.
 - LIPA personnel are energizing some of their power stations, but they will not energize the communities until all houses have been checked for fire hazard.
 - Return of electric power is a high priority because the Island wells are currently running on generators. Water pressure for fire protection increases dramatically if we get power to the wells.
3. Five four-man teams of tree cutters have arrived (with their own cots and tents) to help clear trees and brush. They have been dispatched to areas which are deemed most urgent.
4. All hands are concerned about the upcoming nor'easter which is currently projected to arrive on Wednesday. The teams on the Island will be watching and assessing possible wind and flood conditions.

Access to the Island:

1. Returning all Fire Islanders back to their safe and secured communities remains the number one priority of all those currently managing the recovery and restoration efforts on the Island. We are keenly aware that with each passing day, there is mounting frustration that residents are being prevented from getting out to check on the condition of their homes.
2. However, the mandatory evacuation orders issued by Suffolk County and Islip and Brookhaven Towns are still in effect. Town and County officials, as well as those emergency service personnel involved in the clean-up on the beach, advise that while conditions on the Island have improved dramatically over the past few days, they are still not safe enough for homeowners to return.
3. In addition to the hazardous conditions which still exist, there is concern over the potential impact of a strong nor'easter which is currently predicted to arrive on Wednesday
4. 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.

Tentative plans for increasing access:

As we have reported in previous updates, plans have been made to 'stage' access to the Island as follows:

1. Today (Monday), authorized essential service personnel were permitted to return to the beach for the day. These individuals (carters, plumbers, electricians, and propane service providers) are contributing to the effort to haul away storm debris, and helping to conduct door-to-door surveys in each community to turn off power and water and secure propane tanks. As explained above, LIPA will not turn power on to the whole Island if there is a potential that salt-damaged wiring will cause serious fire hazard.
2. These essential service personnel will also be returning to the Island tomorrow for the day (Tuesday). If storm conditions do develop on Wednesday, daily access for essential service providers will be postponed until perhaps Friday.

3. Although plans had been discussed to allow authorized contractors to also have access to the Island tomorrow (Tuesday), a decision was made this afternoon to postpone the contractor return until after the storm.
4. Year-round residents will come back on the Island to collect personal possessions, medication, clothing and other important items when transportation by boat is available. Current conditions in marinas on the mainland and the Island are not yet optimal for safe and reliable passenger service. The ferry companies are working to get their facilities up and running for safe transport by water as soon as possible.
5. Establishing a timetable to allow the earliest possible access for seasonal residents to return briefly to check their homes is a key priority, but is still under consideration. One issue that will affect the timing of this decision is the impact of this week's storm.
6. The time frame for site visits by insurance adjusters is also under review.

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

In closing, we once again express our appreciation, gratitude and respect for the professionalism, dedication, expertise and determination 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