

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned into another  
edition of The Break Room. A

weekly conversation about how  
the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the  
work everyday. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's  
Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a  
closer look at the different

city departments and provides  
updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now  
your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Hello and thanks for tuning in  
to The Break Room. I'm Melissa

Wissel, Communications  
Director for the City of St

Augustine. Hurricane season  
started on June 1st and it's

been quiet so far. As a matter  
of fact, as I understand it,

this is the first time since  
1997 that we've had no named

storms in the month of August.  
But with so many new residents

in the city and the county, I  
wanted to invite St

Augustine Fire Chief Carlos  
Aviles back to the studio for a

refresher course on being  
prepared for a hurricane. Chief,

welcome back. CARLOS: Thank you so much  
for having me. MELISSA: Don't quote me

on that statistic but I did  
hear it this morning at the EOC

from the weather service guy.  
CARLOS: Okay. I'm not sure. I'm sure

that you know. Probably pretty

accurate. It has been a below

average season. MELISSA: Yes, it has been so far. So far. Knocking on what

CARLOS: Correct. MELISSA: Okay. In an emergency situation, in this case, we're

talking hurricanes. You as the Fire Chief take over in the

city locally as our emergency manager. You kind of become the

guy in charge. John Regan, our City Manager kind of defers to

you and you oversee what's going on. Tell us a little bit

about your role in a hurricane, just to get us started today.

CARLOS: Yeah. So, you know, it's just another hat that I wear kind of

coordinating, or emergency response, as we as we prepare

for hurricane season. So, yeah,  
the org chart looks a little

bit different under those  
declared emergencies.

John Regan remains the CEO at  
the top of the chain and then I

get elevated to basically COO  
and take over operations and

working with various  
departments in the city to

coordinate preparation, response,  
recovery efforts. MELISSA: Right, all of

that. And we we locals, or those  
of us who've been here for

years, we've been through,  
we've talked about this. We had

Matthew Irma, Dorian, Michael  
Hit over in the Panhandle. We

had down in the in Puerto Rico.  
We, we've seen our fair share,

but we've had a lot of new  
residents. CARLOS: We do. MELISSA: Lots of

people that are coming from the  
North. We, I was thinking about

this. When we talk locally in  
St Augustine about hurricane

preparedness. I think a lot of  
people, not from here, would

think oh batteries, water,  
canned food, be ready to hunker

down. We actually talk more  
about evacuate, get to higher

ground. Because in the  
city, we're really low. CARLOS: We're

very very low lying and the the  
greatest threat that we face is

is from water. And that's  
often times when we make

evacuation decisions, it's all

primarily based upon water

rising and an inability for you

to to move in and out of an

area safely. And so, the the

need to be prepared for those

events. For us locally,

unfortunately, doesn't only

apply to hurricane season. You

know, we have unfortunately seen

flooding events as a result of

strong nor'easters, or king

tides, when we get into the

months of September and

October. MELISSA: And that's going to

happen again this year. So stay

tuned. Listen we do try to post

reminding folks in

advance when those high tides

are going to come in, like you

you talked about the King  
Tides. We also, folks need to

know how to get out of here. We  
have evacuation zones. Where do

we find that information? We  
find that information on the

St Johns County Emergency  
Operations Center website, the

county EOC website. They have a  
tool, a zone locator. You type

in your address, and then the  
system lets you know what

evacuation zone you are in, if  
any. MELISSA: Right and the website is

SJCEmergencyManagement.com.

So, if you're looking and

searching. The other thing we  
have on that website, I want to

point out to new residents as  
well as residents that have

been here for a while, is we  
have a great alerting tool

called AlertStJohns. CARLOS: Yes,  
so you can go on and register

for that system, it would push out  
emergency notifications. And you

know, now we always preach that  
the best time to prepare is under

blue sky conditions, which would  
be now. So whether you have been

here in town for a long time or  
you're new a new resident to

the area, it is important that  
you do know that information.

And it does change from time to  
time. So this year specifically,

we did see evacuation zone  
changes based on data and

flooding results from previous



storms that we have seen over

the past four or five years. And  
so I can tell you now with

complete certainty, that if you  
happen to live inside of the

city limits, anywhere in the  
city limits of St Augustine,

you are in evacuation zone A.

MELISSA: You gotta get out. CARLOS: You, yes. If

you if you hear of a mandatory  
evacuation for A and you know

that you live within the city  
limits, then then you know that,

that does apply to you. MELISSA: An  
evacuation, this is another one

that I learned. When someone  
says to me, we need to evacuate.

I'm like oh my gosh, we gotta  
get to Atlanta. We gotta go to

Tallahassee. No. CARLOS: No. The other side of the interstate. MELISSA: No. Get on the other side of ninety-five.

CARLOS: Yeah, basically, right? If you can, if you can move inland out

of one of those zones, you know, you're fine. And again,

primarily, that those evacuations are are a result of

of impending. MELISSA: Water. CARLOS: Water, correct. MELISSA: Right. If you're just

now tuning in, you're listening to The Break Room. I'm Melissa

Wissel, Communications Director. And I am talking with

Fire Chief Carlos Aviles, in studio talking about some

hurricane reminders and preparedness. The city also

has an alert system, little bit different. I want to make sure

that folks know the difference.

So, you can text StAugAlerts to 888777. And that's going to give you a phone

notification of something that is life threatening, imminent

danger, if you sign up for that. But the difference with

the St Johns, Alert St Johns, is that you can actually

choose how you get notified.

CARLOS: Correct. Yep. It could be by

email, phone call, it'd be a robocall, or you could just

simply a text. MELISSA: And that's not also just for hurricanes. I, I'm

signed up for St Johns, excuse me. Alert St Johns

and I get thunderstorm warnings are coming, or a boil water

notice is happening, so. CARLOS: Any

kind of information that we

feel needs to get out to the  
public, you know, instantly but

but very targeted, so that's a  
nice system. MELISSA: We also want to

make sure that folks are  
following us on social media,

both the City and the Fire  
Department. The Fire Department

is on Instagram and Facebook.  
You're not really going to find

any emergency notices on any of  
our Instagram platforms. We

want to keep those as feel good  
pictures, things that we're

doing. But for those emergency  
notifications, we talked before

about when we are going to see  
those high tides, the City

tries to do its best to post  
those reminders, so that if you

do live in those low-lying  
areas, you remember that the

weather's coming, and that's on  
Facebook both @CityStAug

and @CityStAugFire. And  
of course, remind folks of that

when we wrap up. Before we sign  
off though, we are here the

beginning of September and we  
have September 11th coming up.

Which is a tough day,  
but you guys do a beautiful

job. Tell us what we're  
going to have this year. CARLOS: So, we

hold an annual Ceremony of  
Remembrance every year at 8:30

at the fire station at 101  
Malaga Street. Every year it

seems to have grown and we're  
very grateful for that. The

fire department really took  
that on years ago and I think

that's where the ceremony has  
has found its home. So we get a

really great contingency of, you  
know, retired FDNY and NYPD

officers that happen to live  
here in the area that come. But

it's a great opportunity for  
the community to get together.

Share in a moment of  
remembrance. You know, this

year we'll have the family  
member of a victim that

perished during 9/11 deliver her  
remarks, Erin Durkin. So she's

also the wife of Jerry Durkin

who spoke two years ago and is

a retired New York City  
Firefighter. So I think it's,

I'm hoping, I can't wait to hear  
her remarks... That the idea this

year is that we kind of shift  
and and give a year to the

victims. And to let  
them or the family members sort

of tell their story, as well. So  
very excited about it. MELISSA: It'll be

very a very touching message  
I'm sure. I can't imagine, as

as you and I talked about it.  
It's one thing to know that

your family member is fighting  
to respond, it's also another

thing, you know, to lose someone.  
So, it's it's a tough call,. But

and thank you for that, because  
you're always very sensitive to

the to those things. So to bring  
it in to the family members, as

well. CARLOS: Yeah I think it's really...

I mean, I'm super excited about

it. I think giving them the  
opportunity to have a voice and

hopefully the goal moving  
forward is to establish this

network where we can find these  
other family members and

connect with them in a way  
where we can provide them the

opportunity if they want to  
share that story, to be able to

do that. And I I think that's  
the way that we we we keep... MELISSA:

Truly never forget. True.

That's kind of the the phrase



that comes out of that. It  
really allows those family

members to continue to have  
their family members living on.

CARLOS: Correct. MELISSA: That, you know, their  
memory isn't forgotten and they

aren't forgotten. We, I think  
we're good at that. CARLOS: Yes. MELISSA: So

anything else you want to add?

CARLOS: So, I will take just a couple

moments of of personal  
privilege if I could.

MELISSA: Absolutely. CARLOS: I know that this  
won't air today. Today is

September first. So, today is  
actually my sixth year

anniversary serving as Fire  
Chief. And, you know, time has

gone by so unbelievably fast.

And it was really a trial by

flood for me. You know Matthew  
hit I think three weeks after I

had been in office. And so, in  
fact my very first day as the

Fire Chief was spent at the EOC  
for Hurricane Hermine which

hit in the Big Bend area. But,  
you know, I've had the privilege

of serving the City of St  
Augustine as Fire Chief, you

know, now for six years. And so,  
just as a point of personal

privilege, that there are a few  
folks that you know I wouldn't

be where I'm at without their  
unbelievable help and support.

And you are certainly one of  
those people, Melissa. MELISSA: Thank you. CARLOS: So I

mean I would be honored to  
start with you. I mean, you were

right there with me, right seat  
left seat, through everything,

and through all of these storms.  
Linda Stoughten, Kelly Wilson, out

at the EOC. I have just  
unbelievable amounts of, you

know, gratitude to them for the  
work that they do. Our City

Manager John Regan and Meredith  
Bridenstein for the faith and

trust that they've put in me.  
Chris Pacetti, my right

hand at the Fire Department, and  
everybody at the St

Augustine Fire Department. I  
think the work that they do day

in and day out is just  
absolutely amazing. I love

watching them do. MELISSA: You have a  
you have a great team down

there. CARLOS: I do. Chief Prevatt  
and retired Chief Carl Shank

from St Johns County Fire  
Rescue and Sheriff Hardwick. I

mean, have all played a massive  
role, not just in my success, but

in the community success and  
ability to recover from these

disasters and we're very  
blessed and to have such a

talented and dedicated group of  
folks here. MELISSA: Thank

you. I am happy to  
serve with you. I I remember

that day in the EOC. I actually  
think I have a picture of you

and Chris sitting at the

ESF station. And

Hermine and thinking you're like,  
well, that's a heck of a first

day. I think you and I  
also to indulge our audience,

you and I stood in front of the engine  
and did our very first ever video. CARLOS: We did. Yup. MELISSA: It  
was, I mean, by today's standards

it would be horrible. But it was,  
that was huge. CARLOS: Right. MELISSA: And

then that that also kicked off  
the friendly competition with

you and the Police Department. CARLOS: No, it's awesome. I mean,

we're, like I said, we're very  
blessed. It's been an amazing

ride. I I love what I do. It's  
the best job ever. Looking

forward to doing it for a long  
time to come, so, but, yeah.

No, I feel truly blessed. MELISSA: Well,  
we thank you for your

service. You are an incredible  
leader for our, for our

community. I'm always so  
impressed when I come down to

the Fire Department. There's  
just such a camaraderie.

Everyone loves being there.  
I don't think you see that

everywhere, and you make a  
difference to this

community. So, without me  
getting all choked up and verklempt.. CARLOS: I

appreciate that. Thank you. MELISSA:  
Well if you're, if you missed

any part of this episode we've  
been talking about hurricanes.

We've been talking about the  
9/11 ceremony. Lots of good

stuff. You can tune back in.

You can find us on favorite

podcast. We're on Spotify,

Apple, Spreaker. Find any of

those podcast platforms listed

on our website at [CityStAugRadio.com](http://CityStAugRadio.com). Of course, all

year round and especially

during hurricane season, we

want to keep you informed about

what's happening. Follow the

Fire Department on Facebook and

Instagram @CityStAugFire. You can follow the City

@CityStAug. Until next

time. Thanks for tuning in.

ANNOUNCER: You've been listening to The

Break Room, a weekly program

addressing projects and

programs offered by the City of

St Augustine. Join us each

week as the City's

Communications Director,  
Melissa Wissel, has in-depth

conversations with the people  
who make our town work to meet

the needs of our community. The  
Break Room is produced by

Communication Specialist for  
the City of St Augustine,

Cindy Walker. See you at this  
time next week for another

edition of The Break Room.