

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to 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: Welcome to The
Break Room. Thanks for tuning

in. It's hurricane season and
we all know not to pay too much

attention to those afternoon
storms here in Northeast

Florida, but we do need to keep
an eye on the weather that's

coming across the Gulf and up
from the tropics. I've invited

invited St Johns
County Emergency Management

Deputy Director Kelly Wilson to
join us this week. Kelly,

welcome back. KELLY: Oh, thank you for
having me. It's a pleasure to

be here and talk about
hurricane season with everyone.

MELISSA: Do you ever get tired of it?

KELLY: No, I, you know what? We were

doing interviews and the,
one of the people asked me,

what is your favorite part
about this job, and I said it is

outreach. It's talking to
people and talking to the

community is my absolute favorite
part of this job. MELISSA: It's so

important. KELLY: It is. MELISSA: And you're a
great resource for us. We love

having you here, and I've been
through and been at some of

your outreach workshops. You do
a great job. I would say, I

think it's fair to say, if
anybody wants to have you come

and speak to their
organization? KELLY: Absolutely. We go

and we do them. We do public
outreach to talk about

hurricane preparedness. We talk
to everybody from the rotary to

the Knights of the Columbus to
school kids to.... All age

groups, all groups, everybody.

We are happy to come and talk

to your group. MELISSA: Who should they
call if they want to set up

something? And I really want to,
I really do want to encourage

folks, listen to this phone
number. You can also just go on

the website SJCEmergencyManagement.com. Kelly, give us

the phone number though, in case
anybody can quick write it

down. KELLY: Yup. So, the phone number
is 904-824-5550 and give us a

call and say when you would
like it and we'll find whoever

schedule works the best and
we'll get out there talk to

you. MELISSA: You guys have really
important things that you talk

about and that's what we're

here to talk about today. It's

more than just batteries and
water. I think we've all

grown. And maybe people
don't think that's what it is.

I know when I was growing up,
when we were growing up, it was

well, just shelter and place.
Get your batteries and your

water and hope for the best. But
there's so much more to talk

about now. Give us the low down
of the high points of what

you think are most important
for our folks to know about

preparations. KELLY: So the most
important, if you're if you're

going to do the one thing
today, go find out if you're in

an evacuation zone. Go find out
and it's great. You can go to

our website. You'll see a tool
called the My Evacuation Zone.

All you have to do is enter
your St Johns County address

and it will tell you, you
either are or are not. And if

you are, there are zones A
through F, and if you're in a

zone, what you're going to
want to do is listen for that

when there's a storm
approaching to see if we

evacuate you. But today is the
day to find out... do I live in a

zone? If you do, today is the
day to figure out what am I

going to do? Where am I going
to go? So, you're not panicking

at the last moment going, oh my
gosh, I have to evacuate. Where

am I going to go? What am I
going to do? MELISSA: And when you say

evacuate, I want to talk about
this, because I always have this

vision of, oh my gosh, I have
to evacuate. I gotta get to

Atlanta. Yeah. No. Just get to the

other side of 95.

KELLY: That's right. We need we don't

need you to go all the way to
Orlando or all the way to

Atlanta. We simply need you to
go inland. We need you to get

outside of evacuation zones.

We have a great hurricane

brochure. And actually if you go
to our website, you will see

the evacuation map. You'll see
the middle part of that map

doesn't have any colors on it.
It's a big white patch. Find a

friend, family member. Go to
one of those folks' houses in

that area, because you are
outside that evacuation zone,

because for any of our new
folks who don't understand

exactly why do we evacuate you,
it's not for the wind. We

evacuate you because of the
storm surge and the water that

comes with the hurricane. MELISSA: Right
and going into that center,

central clear zone is higher
ground. KELLY: It's higher ground.

You've moved outside of that

that dangerous storm surge

zone. MELISSA: And again remind us, the
evacuation zone, is it's my

zone. KELLY: Yeah it's on our website.
And it's it says My

Evacuation Zone. You'll see a
logo and that's what it says

with a little hurricane. And you
click it and simply enter your

St Johns County address.
It's great. It's easy. It'll

show you the map and it'll show
you what zone you're in. MELISSA: And

then phone a friend and say,
you're my designated friend. When they say evacuate,
save me the, save me a bed. I'm

coming to your house. KELLY: Or
you know, if you don't, let's

say you're new and you don't
have, you're like, I don't have

any family members. I don't
have friends in those areas. We

will open evacuation shelters.
When we order the

evacuation, we always open
shelters at the same time. So,

you just look and you will see
which shelters we open. You can

see the list of shelters on our
website. But we don't

necessarily open all of them.
So, just beyond when we

order the evacuation, listen
and it will say which of those

shelters we have open. And for
those of you with pets, we also

have pet-friendly shelters.
Because we certainly don't want

you leaving your pets behind if

you evacuate. MELISSA: And medical?

Special needs? KELLY: So we also have special medical needs shelters.

Those folks we ask to register.

Again, you can do it online you,

can call us, and we can mail you a form. These are for folks who

require electricity day to day.

It's not for people who live in

a nursing home or live in an assisted living. These are folks

that live at home, many times are on form of oxygen.

And we ask those folks to go ahead and preregister and we

will put you in a, there is a specific shelter with our

partners at the Florida

Department of Health manage. So

we can manage those folks.

They're a little more medically

fragile. MELISSA: Okay. I want to
talk about your website, too.

Another great resource. The
City has an alert system. It's

called StAugAlerts. Talk a
little bit about Alert St.

Johns because I get them.

And it's it's helpful. It's

useful and I don't find myself
wondering, you know, what's going

on with the weather, when it's
extreme and when it's

necessary. Tell us about Alert

St Johns. KELLY: So Alert St

Johns, which again, you can just
go to AlertStJohns.com or you can go to our
website and click the link from

there that says Alert St

Johns. This is how we will

notify you of any sort of
public safety or emergencies.

It can be used for
evacuation notices. It can be

used for missing people and we
also sometimes use it for boil

water notices because of
utility issues. We can use it

for any of those things. And an
additional feature of this

system is that you can sign up
for weather alerts, like you

want severe thunderstorm
warnings. You can sign up for

those. And you've probably
been getting quite a few lately

if you signed up for those.

And when you sign up for

those, it will automatically
push it, and you get to choose

how you would like it. You
can set it to send you a text,

send you an email, or make a
phone call, or you can pick all

three and it will do them one
after another. A lot of

folks like the text option of
it because it just text it

right to your phone and that's
it. MELISSA: And we actually have phone

message options for those who
still have landline phones.

Because there's plenty
of them. KELLY: Absolutely. Yeah. We'll give you a

call and it, listen to my voice,
because it'll probably be my

voice that comes across the
phone telling you to hold for a

very important message. MELISSA: Yup. I think it's a 3700 extension.

When I see that coming across.
So I either get the text and then

the phone call, or get the phone
call and then the text.

KELLY: And we got with all of our cell
carriers, so that we are hopeful

that it comes up. Some, it will
up as alert St Johns, so

people do not believe it is. We
have, we have taken it so it

doesn't come up as spam. MELISSA: We've
unspamed.. KELLY: We've unspammed that phone number.

MELISSA: Okay. Well, if you're just now
tuning in, you're listening to

The Break Room. I have Kelly
Wilson with me in studio this

week. She is the St Johns
County Emergency Management

Deputy Director talking about
Hurricane Season. Everything,

all the information we've been
talking about is on the website,

SJC Emergency Management.com.

I want to switch gears a little

bit and talk a little about
mitigation. And our

programs that we have that I'll
I'll brag a little and say the

City's been doing it and we're
so thrilled to have you guys

now joining the same program
with the same consultant,

Quality Engineering. Let's just
go ahead and jump into that FMA

Flood Mitigation Workshops and
talk about mitigation. Again,

new people, you mentioned it. We

have a lot of new residents.

What is mitigation? Why is
it so important. KELLY: Mitigation

is the, we have four phases of
emergency management, and I like

to tell people mitigation is
the one phase of emergency

management that stops the cycle
of damage and recovery. We

mitigate you against future
disasters and it maybe things

like the program we're going to
talk about elevating your home.

We will never be able to stop
the ocean from rising with a

hurricane, storm surge. You
know, folks in Fort Lauderdale

got 25 inches of rain in a
12-hour span. MELISSA: And that

wasn't a hurricane. KELLY: Yeah and
that wasn't a hurricane. That

was just a freak rainstorm. We,
there's nothing we can do about

this to stop those things. But
what we can do is mitigate your

homes, mitigate structures,
mitigate infrastructure. So, we

can change it, so it doesn't
flood. So, what would this

program will do, is it is a
federal program. It's the Flood

Mitigation Assistance Grant, and
I like to remind people this is

the long game. This takes
a long time. This may take

years to, but what we do, is
those homes that have flooded

time and time again. We elevate
them. So, the next time they

won't flood. And there's one
more and five more and ten more

people who get to go back home
and live their lives back in

their home that didn't flood
that they don't have to tear

the things out of. So, if
you're interested in this

program, one of the things is,
one of the requirements is you

have flood insurance. You gotta
have flood insurance, and you

can become eligible. So, I'm
going to read through, and I

believe this is also, we, there's
a press release the City has

put out and we have it on our
website and we put on Facebook

and all the social media

channels. But there's going to

be meetings to answer all your
questions with our partners at

Quality Engineering and the
meetings will be Monday, July

the 31. It will be at
the Ponta Vedra Civic

Association at 2 o'clock.
That's at 2724

South Ponte Vedra Boulevard. Then,
there's there's two on August

the 1. The first one's at
3 o'clock at the Southeast

Branch Library which is at
6670 US-1 South.

The second one on Tuesday,
August 1st is at 6 PM and it's

at the Wind Mitigation Building,
which is 3111 Agriculture

Center Drive. And if you ever
went to a FEMA Disaster

Recovery Center or got a
COVID test. That is the

same building we use for all of
those things. MELISSA: That's out there by the

outlet malls. KELLY: Yep. It's out
there at 16 and 95 by the

Outlet Malls. So then we have
on Wednesday August the 2.

We have two more meetings at 3
o'clock. These are at the same

place. They're at the City of
St Augustine, the Alcazar

Room, which is at City Hall at
75 King Street.

There's one at 3 o'clock
and one at 6 o'clock. So,

hopefully, everybody will be
able to make one of those

meetings. We set them at all
different times on different

days and hopefully folks that
are interested in mitigating

their homes against future
flooding will show up and we

can answer questions and let's
let's make our community more

resilient. MELISSA: Well, and it helps
your insurance. KELLY: Yeah,

absolutely. Helps your insurance.

Yeah. And I mean, while we're

talking about insurance, I
strongly recommend everybody

buy some flood insurance. You know, because we just

don't know.. One day, we could it
could be our turn to get 20

inches of rain in a single day.

And it's, and flood

insurance isn't just for your
household goods. I think

sometimes there's a... KELLY: So yeah,
so flood insurance, you have

contents and you have
structure. And I will

tell you that someone from the
Small Business Administration

loan program, they explained it
to me better than any ever has.

So, you have the option to
do contents or structure with

flood insurance. And the
difference is this, your

contents are anything, if you
took your house like it was a

toy and picked it up and took
the roof off and shook it.

Everything that shakes loose,

those are your contents. The

rest of it is your structure.

So, the structure includes like

your kitchen cabinets and your

carpet and your tile floor.

Those are actually part of your

structure. So, yeah. So,

all the stuff that is you pick

it up, take the roof off and

shake it. The stuff that shook

out, those are your contents.

It's your couch and your TV and

your bedroom, your

bed, dresser, dishes. MELISSA: Your car.

KELLY: No. Your car does not flood

insurance. MELISSA: Really? KELLY: No. That's

car insurance. It's

totally separate. And

that's another important.

That's livable space only.

That's what they're interested

in livable space. So,

unfortunately, if your garage

flooded where your washing

machine is. MELISSA: Doesn't count.

KELLY: They're not, that's not livable

space. MELISSA: Yup. Well, and so before

we wrap up, I do want to let

folks know, if you can't make any

of those workshops. And

again, the information is on

the County website. It's on the

City's website. They're all

close by. You've got the

library, Wind Mitigation,

Downtown St Augustine,

Ponte Vedra. So, we try to spread

out those meetings and. But

Quality Engineering, their

contact information is on the website. Call them directly.

They are fantastic and responsive. We have been

working with them for two years. We are really excited

that they were your vendor of choice, as well. They're

fantastic. They will answer all your questions. The best part is when

they come to town to do these workshops, they will set up

one-on-one interviews and come to your house. And walk

through your home, or at least on the outside and give you

that advice of what you need or don't need. So, it's like

you said, it's and you're

right, this is a long-haul

program. But worthwhile.

KELLY: It's absolutely worthwhile

because as we've seen,

especially the folks who've

been here since 2016, Matthew would be the

most recent. That they're

not stopping. We're getting

those nor'easters that are

causing flooding. We're getting

tropical storms that are

causing flooding. So, this is

the thing that the

homeowners can do to stop

repeating that cycle of damage

and recovery. MELISSA: And with that,

we're out of time. KELLY: Oh, so

quick. It, we just blew right

through here. Just like

a hurricane. I will also remind

folks, we've had these storms
and hurricanes, and you

mentioned it. We've never had a
direct hit. KELLY: We have not. MELISSA: So,

not to. KELLY: Not since Dora. Not.. MELISSA:
Right. But in our current history. So, when people think, oh

my gosh, those were so
devastating. I don't mean that.

And then I would just want
people to remember we have had

it bad but it could be worse. So
we want you to do what you can

to prepare and be ready and
mitigate. KELLY: Yup. Today is the day

to get prepared. Do not wait
for a storm to approach our

area. MELISSA: And with that, thanks for
stopping by The Break Room.

KELLY: Thank you for having me. MELISSA: If you missed part of this broadcast

and want to go back and listen from the beginning, we got lots

of great information. You can find us at CityStAugRadio.com. That's the website where all of this is listed. And

you can also find us on your favorite podcasting app. Again,

those platforms are noted at CityStAugRadio.com. We

want to keep you informed about what's happening in and around

the City. Be sure to check us out on Facebook, Twitter, and

Instagram and be sure to look for St Johns County

Emergency Management as well.

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.