

Transcript

00:00:00 **Narrator**

You've tuned in to another edition of the break room, a weekly conversation about how the city of Saint Augustine works from those who do the work every day, hosted by the City of Saint Augustine's communications director Melissa Russell. 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.

00:00:20 **Narrator**

Wissel.

00:00:22 **Melissa Wissel**

Thanks for tuning in and listening to the break room. I'm Melissa Wissel, communications director for the City of Saint Augustine hurricane season started on June 1st. So we're going to kick off hurricane season with our Fire Chief Carlos Aviles. Carlos, welcome back.

00:00:34 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Oh, thank you so much.

00:00:35 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

It's great to be here.

00:00:36 **Melissa Wissel**

I was looking through my notes. I thought it was a while since you've been here, but that can't be true. But let's just talk hurricanes first. You got you've always got a lot.

00:00:43 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

OK.

00:00:44 **Melissa Wissel**

Going.

00:00:44 **Melissa Wissel**

On at the station, I do want to talk a little bit about Spark. The flame. That was a tremendous success. But you're going to have to talk about hurricanes first.

00:00:45 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Right, Yep.

00:00:52 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

OK, so let's talk about hurricanes first. What?

00:00:54 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Do you want to know?

00:00:56 **Melissa Wissel**

Every year, it seems be as they as we come into hurricane season, the weather channels, oh, we're going to have an abnormally high number of hurricanes this year. What does that really mean for us?

00:01:06 **Narrator**

So it just means.

00:01:06 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

That we need to be vigilant, right? That.

00:01:10 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

The models and the science suggests that yes, it's going to be an unusually above average.

00:01:17 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Hurricane season and all that means for us is that we need to be making those preparations now and making sure that we have all of our planning in place, that we've gone through our pre execution checklist and that we have that we're mindful of that. I mean, there could be thirty name storms this year, but it doesn't mean that we need right exactly that we're not going to be impacted by 1.

00:01:33 **Melissa Wissel**

We may not, yeah.

00:01:37 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

So.

00:01:38 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

All that made it just takes one, so you know the time to to plan is today under blue skies and and not under Gray skies.

00:01:40 **Melissa Wissel**

Right.

00:01:45 **Melissa Wissel**

And we have a lot of new residents. That's another thing that we've talked about in the past. Lots of people moving to the area. Saint Johns County give us a little bit, sort of what does it mean in St. John's County?

00:01:57 **Melissa Wissel**

Just down and dirty for the residents. You know, a lot of my recollection when I was a kid was lots of batteries and fill your.

00:02:03 Melissa Wissel

Bathtub with water I mean.

00:02:07 Melissa Wissel

But we have things like storm surge. We have more frequently acting or calls for evacuations we've talked about.

00:02:17 Melissa Wissel

Turning your breaker boxes off and why is that? So give us kind of what your elevator speeches of prep.

00:02:23 Chief Carlos Aviles

So I think our primary concern here is always water. You know, water is the reason we issue evacuation orders and it just means that that the conditions may deteriorate to a point where bridge accesses may not be available or roads may not be passable, which means we can't, you know, get to folks.

00:02:42

Yeah.

00:02:43 Chief Carlos Aviles

And so if we do issue evacuation orders, it's for that. But all disasters start and end locally and that we need to kind of have that mindset as we look at everything.

00:02:55 Chief Carlos Aviles

It feels like a lot in this big, huge planning list. It's really not that much like, do you have enough to kind of get through a couple of days and if you live in a low lying area a do you know that and and B is there somewhere you can go and that doesn't mean it's right.

00:03:05

Right.

00:03:12 Chief Carlos Aviles

Like can you go somewhere where they're not going to flood and ride it out there and that could be somebody.

00:03:18 Melissa Wissel

You know east of or West of 95?

00:03:20 Chief Carlos Aviles

Right. Is, you know, and so that's that's really all that that that means it's not you know we don't need people driving hundreds of miles to to get out of harm's way. We just need them going to a safe place to ride it out for a few hours mostly while floodwaters are up. And then once they've receded and we've done our due diligence to eliminate hazards, we want to get folks back in their homes.

00:03:28 **Melissa Wissel**

Wait, wait.

00:03:41 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

As quickly as possible, but one of the things because you know, you did touch on the fact that we've had so many people move here is that there is this.

00:03:50 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Understanding, I guess within the Community like well, this is an area that doesn't get impacted by hurricanes very often and and that is true as it relates to direct landfall act, that doesn't mean that we are not impacted by the effects of storms even if they are 100 miles off of our coast, we could still see significant storm surge and.

00:04:00 **Melissa Wissel**

Direct landfall, right?

00:04:11 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Have seen that you know, it means plenty of people here that that lived here through Matthew and Irma and then Nicole.

00:04:19 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

We're none of this storms right, you know, none of those storms made landfall remotely close to here. But that that doesn't mean a whole lot to somebody that lived in Davis shores. That has been repetitive, that lost their home three times as a result of rising floodwaters.

00:04:20 **Melissa Wissel**

Dorian. Yeah, yeah.

00:04:25

Right.

00:04:31 **Melissa Wissel**

Lost their home. Yeah, yeah.

00:04:34 **Melissa Wissel**

Right.

00:04:36 **Melissa Wissel**

And so touching back on the evacuation and the water and the tides, we do see rising tides and some localized flooding during what? What you and I might refer to as a regular storm, we might see a nor'easter so.

00:04:50 **Melissa Wissel**

Don't forget, it doesn't have to be a named storm for that flooding, and the and the cautionary information. The cautionary warning is when you get that standing water, you get down trees, you get down to power lines, it's unsafe you we had a guy get electrocuted at last.

00:04:53 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Mm-hmm.

00:05:05 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

It is.

00:05:10 **Melissa Wissel**

The last storm he was downtown in, in water, in the standing water, so those cautions.

00:05:13

Right.

00:05:14 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Yeah. Any number of things. I mean, it could be as simple as.

00:05:20 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

You having an open or exposed cut or you get a cut and you're in water that's contaminated with bacteria, or that may have sewage overflow or you can develop. There's hundreds of documented cases of this.

00:05:32 **Melissa Wissel**

Yes.

00:05:34 **Melissa Wissel**

Staph infection near death? Yeah.

00:05:35 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Where you get staph.

00:05:36 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Infections like to the point where you know people have lost limbs as a result of this, that the infection becomes so bad. So there's a multitude of reasons just to kind of stay out of it. And we certainly don't want to travel in it and we'll do what we need to do to provide service to the public. But no, it's just best to.

00:05:55 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Waited out. You know when you can? The Nor'easters is a really interesting unique thing to this area. Not a whole lot of the state experiences that we have had this really unique set of circumstances that almost kind of have a tendency of repeating themselves over time.

00:06:15 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Especially when we get into September, October, those later season storms where if we have an approaching low pressure system to the South. So a tropical system.

00:06:27 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

And then building high pressure to the north around the Carolinas, which we see during that time of year where as cold fronts begin to sort of build up and and that becomes the the change of the season that we get those northeaster conditions here. And if we are also experiencing.

00:06:35

Right.

00:06:47 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Tropical effects of the storm. Oftentimes those more recent conditions will batter the coast.

00:06:52 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

With really heavy surge, you know 15 to 30 mile an hour winds extraordinarily high tides. And those effects could be, you know, two to three days before the anticipated impacts of any storm arrive or there may not be a name storm that results in in a northeastern.

00:06:56 **Melissa Wissel**

Hi tides. Yeah.

00:07:12 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Condition or flooding conditions in town, so it's just a bit of a unique phenomenon.

00:07:15 **Melissa Wissel**

And we all look around and go. That wasn't a hurricane, but boy, it felt like it.

00:07:18 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Yeah, we we have one a few years ago where it, I mean it felt every bit like a tropical storm.

00:07:25 **Melissa Wissel**

Mm-hmm.

00:07:25

Form.

00:07:26 **Melissa Wissel**

Was that the one where we came up with?

00:07:27 **Melissa Wissel**

Our alert after that we had the.

00:07:28 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Yes, I believe it was. I know that our marine crews were very busy because it wasn't a name storm nobody. You know, he did any kind of warnings or anything. There were Gale warnings. There were coastal wind advisories and all of this other stuff. But that doesn't mean a whole lot to the layperson like to the average resident and so.

00:07:30 **Melissa Wissel**

Alerts.

00:07:48 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

So I think in one night we had a total of seven boats break free of the mooring field and strike the bridge alliance. I think two of them sunk, if I remember correctly.

00:07:58 **Melissa Wissel**

One was tied up to the boat, to the seawall, for a good couple of weeks. Yeah, it's.

00:08:00 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Yes, I mean it was, it looked like a like a a strike had hit us and it and it wasn't it was, it was just simply a nor'easter, you know, and then going back and reviewing.

00:08:05 **Narrator**

Oh.

00:08:11 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

The data afterwards, like oh, like we saw sustained 35 to 45 mile an hour winds which would have categorized this tropical storm force and and saw significant flooding around town as well. And that was an unnamed event that was just a freak phenomenon that happened. And so but anytime you start to see those things.

00:08:27

Right.

00:08:29 **Melissa Wissel**

Yeah.

00:08:32 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Specifically, it later in the season, September, October time frame, because that does coincide with our.

00:08:39 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

With our King Tide season, so those are just astronomically high tides that run about a foot and a half to a foot and three quarter above average, that those conditions by themselves would be enough for us to experience localized flooding.

00:08:53 **Melissa Wissel**

Good to all of that is great if you're just now tuning in. You are listening to the break room with me this week. We have Chief Fire **Chief Carlos Aviles**. We're talking about some hurricane prep, a few things before I switch gears. We've got a few minutes left.

00:09:07 **Melissa Wissel**

We have hurricane guides available at city locations. Can you give us a rundown of where the hurricane guide you can also get them online at sjcemergencymanagement.com? Is a downloadable PDF. The other thing I do want to mention before we talk about the locations.

00:09:08 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Yes.

00:09:26 **Melissa Wissel**

Quickly, as you mentioned, do you know you're in an evacuation zone that is also on the Emergency Management web page? And if you check out Citystaug.com, we have an emergency prep page with all of this information as well.

00:09:38 **Melissa Wissel**

But give us those locations for the hurricane guides.

00:09:41 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

So the hurricane guides were available for inside the city at public buildings at 75 King Street, which is City Hall. They will also be available at 50 Bridge Street at the Finance building. The Police Department has some at 151 King Street and then also at the fire department at 101 Malaga St.

00:10:00 **Melissa Wissel**

Will you have some at the island station? Can we get some out there? That's not really. That's not really a an easy access though.

00:10:02 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

I'll get something out there.

00:10:05 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

It's it's not, but we'll have some out there at 200 S Redbox as well.

00:10:10 **Melissa Wissel**

So let's switch gears here a little bit. I do want to talk about we had Abby on last previously with one of her team members. How did spark the flame go? You were giddy. You were giddy.

00:10:26 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Wise.

00:10:28 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

You know, so it was. It was an incredibly impactful.

00:10:31 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Couple of days and so hopefully folks you know tuned in and got to hear a little bit more about that on the last episode. But I can't say enough. I mean I'm so proud of them and the whole team for all of the work that they did to pull it together.

00:10:46 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

And what we I think we all learned a little bit about ourselves and about the community you know.

00:10:52 **Melissa Wissel**

Quick recap of what the young ladies did, so it's it was a camp for girls.

00:10:56 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Three wise. And so it was centered around the fire department or the fire service. And so we did fire service related activities. But the point of the camp was really more to be an empowerment camp. So we had a a ton of activities that we tried to incorporate elements of team building and communication.

00:11:14 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Union kind of just getting out of our comfort zone. And so that may have been like repelling was a was a great one.

00:11:21 **Melissa Wissel**

Down the side of the parking garage that was so if anybody was driving by the parking garage and they didn't know what.

00:11:22 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Yes. Yeah, you know.

00:11:27 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

That was, you know, so the girls would would stay at a station for about 45 minutes.

00:11:34 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

So let's just assume that the 1st 10 to 15 minutes are really just kind of going through a safety briefing and putting them in gear and instructing them on how to do.

00:11:44 Chief Carlos Aviles

This, you know, it's. I don't think it's easy for a normal person to get a 5 to 10 minute safety brief and then decide. OK, I'm ready to scale A5 story building.

00:11:53 Melissa Wissel

I don't know if I.

00:11:54 Chief Carlos Aviles

Could do it, but to watch a group of 10-11 year old girls do it and the reactions that we got from them for having gone through that exercise was incredible.

00:12:05 Chief Carlos Aviles

And so we had an amazing group of volunteers. They were all female firefighters from all over the state that descended here, and they were the stars. And that's really what we wanted. We wanted our female firefighters from the state to be on display role models for these young ladies to look up to you to say, hey, you look like they've conquered into this industry and.

00:12:19 Melissa Wissel

Role models, yeah.

00:12:25 Chief Carlos Aviles

Not only are they surviving, but they're thriving and they're crushing it. And you know, some of them are chief level officers. Some of them were, one was a training chief for a neighboring department.

00:12:28 Melissa Wissel

Yeah.

00:12:35 Chief Carlos Aviles

And and you know, there were every all the way from that down to I've been on the job for six months, but they came from for the Fort Myers area. Iona McGregor, Fire Department, Polk County, Orange County, St. John's, Jacksonville, Flagler Palm Coast. They just like all over the state.

00:12:41 Chief Carlos Aviles

Right.

00:12:56 Chief Carlos Aviles

And they were they were amazing. We were small agency and and so we would never be able to put something like that on by ourselves but to see.

00:12:58 Melissa Wissel

And inspiring, yeah.

00:13:07 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Truly, what the impact of it was.

00:13:10 **Melissa Wissel**

I can tell you this. I had a camper come and all weekend was she heard that she heard the fire engines cause where I live you hear a lot of the sirens a lot. Oh, there they go. I want to go back. Can we go back? I mean it made an impact which was the goal.

00:13:24 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

It is. It was awesome it and it was as beneficial for the volunteers that were paid.

00:13:30 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

John, as it was for the girls and so at the end of it, I just, I felt like we had stumbled onto something. We didn't realize that we needed as bad. And so just the feedback from the, from the parents, from the girls, from the community and from the fire service in general has been so overwhelmingly positive.

00:13:50 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

That.

00:13:51 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Yes, this I think we're under something. I think this is special.

00:13:52 **Melissa Wissel**

Well, it's it's it. It's a it's a demographic, if you will, that is.

00:14:01 **Melissa Wissel**

Definitely can make a difference in the fire service in the long run, and so for for to empower young girls to say I want to do that when I grow up, whether it's paramedic or firefighter, any of that industry is tremendous and we can look for more great things to come.

00:14:17 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

It is exciting, I'll say. You know, I don't like. I'm kind of careful. It was never meant to be a recruiting event, right? Certainly the the activities revolve around the fire service. That's who we are. We're the vessel by which we can deliver this program.

00:14:29 **Melissa Wissel**

Absolutely sure.

00:14:31 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

But the fire service isn't for everybody. But you know for that, for Izzy. Yeah, right to have scaled that wall. And for her to recognize how she felt about herself.

00:14:33 **Melissa Wissel**

Right, right.

00:14:45 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

It was incredible. And then to take that experience and then immediately turn around and help another girl that was frozen on the wall and didn't think that she could do it and then work her through that problem to where ultimately she completed the task as well, I think.

00:15:00 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

In in a very in one short experience, we validated why we wanted to do this in the.

00:15:06 **Melissa Wissel**

1st place well we're we're very proud of of the camp. We are out of time. So I always appreciate you coming and talking to us about the safety stuff that you want to make sure we know about for hurricane season and also to share the great news of the success.

00:15:21 **Melissa Wissel**

Of sparked the flame.

00:15:23 **Chief Carlos Aviles**

Thank you so much for having me.

00:15:24 **Melissa Wissel**

Thanks for coming, Carlos. We'll see you next time.

00:15:27 **Melissa Wissel**

If you missed part of this broadcast and want to go back and listen from the beginning, check out a listing of where you can find ourpodcast@citysaintaugradio.com. Follow the fire department on Facebook and Instagram at City Saint Aug fire. Thanks for tuning in until next time.

00:15:41 **Narrator**

You've been listening to the break room, a weekly program addressing projects and programs offered by the City of Saint Augustine. Join us each week as the city's communications director, Melissa Russell, has in-depth conversations with the people who make our town work to meet the needs of our community. See you at this time next week for another edition of the break room.

