

HURRICANE IRMA EVACUEES USE OF FLORIDA 511

BY FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT)

IN THIS CASE STUDY YOU WILL LEARN:

1. Florida's 511 system is bilingual, providing information in English and Spanish via social media and their website.
2. Live camera feeds allowed hurricane evacuees to see road conditions on their planned routes.
3. The 511 system messages were seen over 200 million times during the week of the hurricane.



BACKGROUND

FL511 is an integral part of Florida's Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Program. It enhances the safety and mobility of people and goods, and also creates economic competitiveness while improving the quality of the environment and communities by serving commuters, tourists, commercial vehicle operators and evacuees.

Florida's 511 program, FL511, has evolved and includes options to obtain information not only by dialing the 511 number, but also through "pushing" information on specific roadways to the traveler. Today, FL511 is bilingual, offering users information in English and Spanish via Twitter and the FL511.com website. This allows Florida's diverse population to better receive travel information. It was instrumental in disseminating information to the public during Hurricane Irma through the various social media networks.

FL511 BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER HURRICANE IRMA

Before the storm, Florida's Governor Rick Scott, local officials, the media and others involved in the response effort urged evacuees to turn to FL511 for real-time information about conditions on roads and congestion. On September 4, 2017, six days before landfall, the governor declared a state of emergency for all 67 Florida counties and some 6.8 million Florida residents were ordered to evacuate. Hurricane Irma officially made landfall in Florida on September 10, 2017 as a Category 4 hurricane.

FL511 became a critical communications link before, during and after this damaging storm. FL511's live camera views allowed travelers to see road conditions miles along their planned route, anywhere in the state.

This helped evacuees plan and make adjustments when they received updates about an incident or congestion. During the storm, FL511 was available on cell phones, smart phones, tablets and computers, providing alerts on closed roads and bridges, flooding and congestion. After the storm, FL511 provided information on when it was safe to return in addition to providing alerts about current road conditions.

FL511 RELIES UPON INTERAGENCY COOPERATION AND PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

In the event of a long-term, full road closure with an official detour route, the District Emergency Operations Center (DEOC) posts information in the Web Emergency Operations Center (WebEOC). The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) contacts the Traffic Management Center or the DEOC to verify if the information is confirmed with the Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) and the Traffic Operations Office.



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Upon confirmation, SEOC requests the FDOT District Traffic Operations Office to confirm the detour provided in the WebEOC. The detour route is then prepared in FDOT's geographic information system. In the aftermath of Hurricane Irma, FDOT instituted a significant enhancement by making detour route preparation and posting to FL511 both automated and simultaneous.

During Irma, FDOT also worked with other navigation providers to inform the public about road closures. Local map editing volunteers monitored FL511, social media and other media outlets to gather information.

Through these coordinated efforts, the public received updated information on road closures and detour routes. On September 9, 2017, the day before landfall, 28,441 people were utilizing the system, exceeding the expected capacity of 25,000 concurrent users.

LESSONS LEARNED

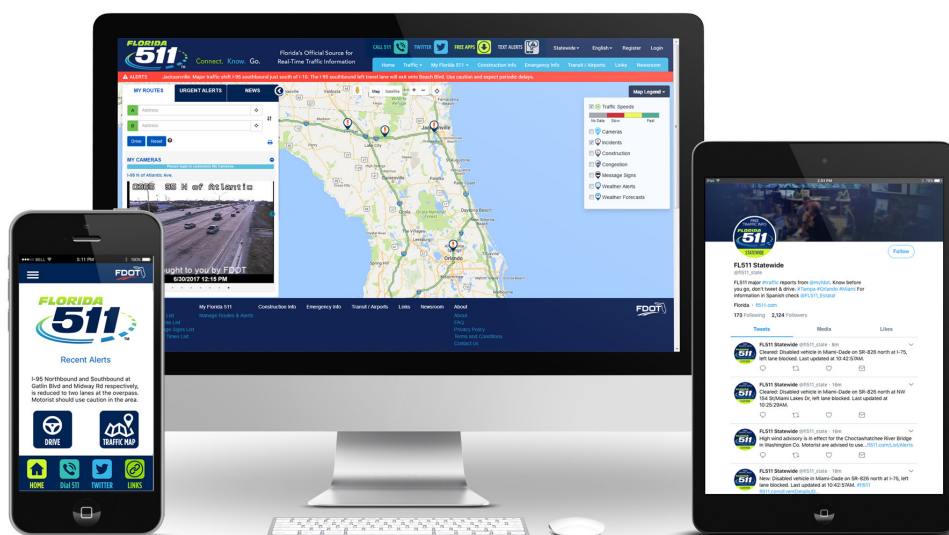
FDOT learns from and applies lessons from every major event that utilizes FL511. As previously mentioned, the road closure and detour route process were streamlined. Another lesson learned was increasing the capacity to the FL511 system. FL511 was only designed for 25,000 concurrent users. The system's capacity has now been increased to accommodate additional concurrent users.

CONCLUSION

FL511 became the main go-to source for the most current evacuation information for motorists.



THE FL511 MESSAGE WAS HEARD AND SEEN 215.5 MILLION TIMES DURING THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 7-13, 2017.



News media coverage, in the seven-day period:

SOCIAL MEDIA: 584 tweets were seen 2.9 million times.

PRINT AND ONLINE: 161 news articles were seen 194 million times.

BROADCAST: 63 mentions on 25 TV stations were seen 18.1 million times.

Platform use, over a 16-day period—September 3-18, 2017:

WEBSITE: Visited 2,023,281 times or 3,019% above average.

I-PHONE APP: Used 268,921 times or 2,160% above average.

ANDROID APP: Used 157,268 times or 1,589% above average.

OTHER PLATFORMS: Phone calls, email alerts, SMS text messages and Twitter engagement all experienced increased use.

FURTHER INFORMATION

NOCoE Knowledge Center: <https://transportationops.org/knowledge-center>