



FRID NEWS

For Immediate Release

FRID's Statement on Hurricane Irma, Manatee County, and Access to Emergency Information for Florida's Deaf Community

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ORLANDO, September 28, 2017--- During the uncertainty that often comes with a natural disaster, access to up-to-date and accurate information is absolutely critical.

This is especially true for the Deaf community, who are often receiving this pertinent information through an interpreter. At these times, it is crucial for the interpreters to be highly trained and qualified, which is why the Board of FRID was distressed by what unfolded in Manatee County. The decision by county officials to broadcast an “interpreter”, who signed nonsense and conveyed only pieces of the information, was an outrage. Manatee County residents were desperate for updates and evacuation information, and what Deaf and hard of hearing residents received was a muddled, confusing, and inaccurate conveyance of information. This type of situation should never happen again.

Manatee County was not alone in failing to provide access to pertinent and life-saving information to its Deaf and hard of hearing residents. Countless other counties provided no interpreters at all, which meant very limited access to information for Deaf and hard of hearing residents, who rely on information being received in American Sign Language. This included Orange County, where several FRID Board members reside.

FRID has a history of working with local and state governments to provide education and information on this very subject. Beginning in late 2012, FRID started working with the Division of Emergency Management, the Department of Health, Public Information Officers, and other Emergency Management personnel around the state to discuss interpreting provision and provide training. As part of the training, officials were taught the logistics of having interpreters in public briefings, what information interpreters would need to be successful, and that the interpreter needed to remain visible in the frame at all times. FRID has been a resource to local and state governments, and we are offering to once again provide guidance on this important issue. In comparison to the counties that failed to meet expectations, several counties provided highly qualified interpreters for all their briefings, including Miami-Dade, Broward, Pinellas, and Pasco, among others, and FRID would like to recognize their efforts. FRID would especially like to applaud the Governor's Office and the Division of Emergency Management for providing exceptional access for Deaf and hard of hearing Floridians while Governor Scott traveled the state to give emergency briefings.

In the wake of Hurricane Irma and the unfortunate decisions in Manatee County, it is obvious that there is still work to be done. On behalf of the communities we serve, FRID calls on local and state governments to review and update their policies and practices on the provision of interpreting services. We are calling for reform, and we are offering to help local and state governments achieve it. FRID, alongside the Florida Association of the Deaf, can be a resource on how to ensure that Deaf and hard of hearing Floridians receive access to information during emergency situations.

If you are interested in being a part of our efforts, please join our organization and help us with educating stakeholders around the state.

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Florida Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (FRID)

FRID is a registered 501c3 non-profit organization, which is leading a statewide effort to initiate, sponsor, promote, and execute policies and activities that will further the profession of interpreting and the provision of qualified interpreters for Deaf and hard of hearing Floridians.

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