



# Leon County

## Board of County Commissioners

301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida  
(850) 606-5300 [www.leoncountyfl.gov](http://www.leoncountyfl.gov)

### YOUR TURN

## Leon County is #HurricaneStrong!

*Vincent S. Long, Leon County Administrator*

This month, researchers at Colorado State University predicted the 2018 hurricane season would be above-average with a forecasted 14 tropical storms. After back-to-back hurricanes in Leon County, we know that it only takes one major hurricane to make an active season for all of us, especially because our County is particularly vulnerable to weather-based disasters.

And as we know from Hermine and Irma, every emergency exposes different vulnerabilities, tests a community's partnerships differently, and reveals opportunities for improvement in different ways.

I am proud to report that as a learning organization, our County focuses on listening to the citizens we serve following disaster and extracting every lesson possible. You can see this in the hundreds of findings and recommendations in our after-action reports following Hermine and Irma. At Leon County, we are committed to continuous improvement and making our strong response to the last disaster even stronger for the next.

This commitment to learning and building resilience has led to Leon County being named the nation's first #HurricaneStrong community by the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). #HurricaneStrong recognizes our entire community and all the efforts of our neighborhoods, partners, and citizens to be a model of resilience for the entire nation.

Originally launched in 2016 as the National Hurricane Resilience Initiative, #HurricaneStrong has become the preeminent national model for preparedness and disaster planning, focusing on personal safety, financial security, family preparedness, damage prevention and community service. For years, both FLASH and FEMA sought a community that embodied what it means to be #HurricaneStrong: resilient, responsive, and dedicated to learning and improving.

And while we are proud to be #HurricaneStrong, it's not a one-and-done label; rather, it's a commitment to always growing stronger and better in the face of disaster. With this opportunity we will continue to reflect on the hard work we have done and the new opportunities we can leverage.

One such success that caught the eye of our national partners was how the County's flood mitigation efforts save citizens nearly \$100,000 annually in flood insurance premiums. FLASH also acknowledged our strong disaster policies and the lasting relationships the County has built with Leon County Schools, Florida State University, Florida A&M University, the American Red Cross, the City of Tallahassee, and our neighborhood leaders. And we also improved communication with our citizens before, during, and after the storm with our newly relaunched Citizens Connect mobile app and our strengthened partnerships with local radio stations.

So while our County will continue to face challenges surrounding disaster, we are committed to learning, improving, and leveraging our partnerships. And as a result of our partnership with FLASH and FEMA, Leon County has a new opportunity to help our local businesses develop or refine their disaster plans: the Ready Business workshop on April 26. To learn more, visit [LeonCountyFL.gov/Ready](http://LeonCountyFL.gov/Ready) .

As the last two hurricanes have taught us, we do our best work responding to disaster when our community works together. So be prepared for the 2018 season by making a disaster plan, gathering your supplies, and staying informed!

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Vince Long became County Administrator on July 1, 2011, and has worked for Leon County since 1995. He can be reached at (850) 606-5300 or [LongV@LeonCountyFL.gov](mailto:LongV@LeonCountyFL.gov).

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