



## **Senior Living Communities Provide Peace of Mind During Hurricane Season**

**MIAMI**—With the 2009 hurricane season underway, residents' safety and wellbeing continues to be a chief concern for retirement communities across the state. For The Palace Management Group, owner and operator of senior living communities throughout South Florida, this is no exception.

Company president, Helen Shaham, and her team take a proactive approach in ensuring each resident's security and comfort.

“State law requires senior living communities to have emergency plans which are submitted and required annually,” explained Shaham. “We go beyond these precautions. Extensive training is required for staff, including a thorough review of our disaster plan prior to the beginning of each hurricane season. There are also provisions for evacuations—should it become necessary—staffing, transportation, food, water and medications.”

According to research conducted by the Florida State University Traumatology Institute, seniors may experience four levels of hurricane-related distress:

1. Anticipation and preparation: starts from the moment a warning is issued;
2. Disaster impact: lasts as long as there is perceived immediate danger;
3. Immediate post-disaster impact: begins with return to a sense of safety and ends with a sense of normalcy; and
4. Long-term post disaster impact: starts after a sense of normalcy.

Under most circumstances, hurricanes are less likely to severely impact the physical and emotional health and well-being of older adults calling a senior living community home.

Communities such as The Palace help alleviate stress and uncertainty and strive to maintain a sense of normalcy for residents before, during and after the storm.

“In addition to providing generators and installing shutters on all windows, we require all staff to be on duty during a hurricane,” said Spring Strong, executive director for The Palace Suites which offers independent living. “In fact, staff members are encouraged to bring their immediate family to the community to weather the storm together with us. And, as long as everyone is here we have lots of helping hands.”

The Palace management team carefully monitors each hurricane's progress, utilizing the latest weather data resources, and maintains contact with residents' families to provide periodic updates.

A good senior living community will try to minimize the interruption to residents' lives during a hurricane. It's important for normal activities such as social and educational programs to continue, if possible. Studies show that residents at communities that



maintain a sense normalcy during disasters are less likely to exhibit signs of anxiety and stress.

Following a storm, every effort is made to restore equilibrium to the community. Maintenance crews quickly survey the damage and make necessary repairs to ensure resident safety. Because the community handles all clean-up and repairs, residents are able to avoid the numerous scam-artists who prey on hurricane victims.

“The overwhelming stories of older adults unable to leave damaged homes, refill prescriptions or maintain a healthy diet were important lessons of Hurricane Wilma,” said Shaham. “At a senior living community, residents are surrounded by a dedicated team whose priority is their safety and well-being. Seniors never have to weather the storm alone.”

For more information about The Palace Management Group’s senior living communities, please call (305) 271-2220 or visit [www.ThePalace.org](http://www.ThePalace.org).

###