

MAYOR'S ADDRESS TO THE CITY
October 22, 2018

On Wednesday October 10th Ashford was hit by Category 4 Hurricane Michael. This was the worst storm most of us has ever experienced. On Thursday morning October 11th our city looked like a war zone. We had many, many trees down, trees on road, trees on houses and cars, trees on power and utility lines, power lines and power poles down. Many, many houses were damaged by the storm winds and falling trees. Approximately 75% of our streets were blocked by trees and other debris. The entire town and surrounding area was without power. Chief Posey, Chief Vann, Richard Odom, Our Volunteer firemen and our police officers worked into the night to monitor the situation and ensure the safety of our citizens. By the end of the day on Thursday most of the streets were passable. The majority being cleared by the utility workers, fire and police departments and many volunteers. Our wells and water was up and running. We had one hiccup on Friday morning when we lost a generator at the well on Old Ashford Road. Thanks to EMA we were able to secure a generator and the well was up and running within a few hours. Although we had major damage, we were blessed that there was no serious injuries and no loss of life.

I want to thank all of you for your response during this storm. It was wonderful to see our citizens come together to help each other. As I went through the neighborhoods I saw neighbors helping each other, people helping those they didn't know but that needed help. I was so proud of my hometown to as our community came together and worked together during this disaster. Thanks to each one of you.

There are many, many people who worked very hard and gave up their time to help not just our community but surrounding areas. There are no words to express my gratitude for these organizations, churches and private citizens. I do not like to mention names because you always leave someone out so just know that I thank you.

I do have a list of those who I want to thank personally. These are people who do not want recognition. They help out of love for their community and a sense of duty to others. They are truly following God's Commission to each of us.

Thanks to the Red Cross and Salvation Army who distributed hot meals, tarps, shovels, rakes, gloves and many other essential needs. Pastor Todd Thorpe and Watermark Church, Alabama Baptist Disaster Relief team and other area churches who cut trees, cleared yards, washed clothes and provided meals to those in need and to our utility workers and the many linemen who were here.

I want to thank our homefolk and neighbors who went the extra mile.

1. Kim Vann and the Chamber of Commerce. I can't say enough about them. Kim was everywhere. She started Thursday morning helping clear streets and never stopped. Everytime I call EMA and requested something, Kim was coming into town with it or was on her way with it.

2. John Lucas--He used his own equipment to help clear his neighborhood. He has also helped our city employees with clearing areas.

3. Tracy Dismukes and Alabama Power; On Thursday morning Tracy was one of the first people I called. She kept me informed on the progress being made. Thanks to the many linemen who came from all over our state and worked tirelessly to restore our power.

4: ALFA Insurance and agents Brad Rice and Gene Mills who helped with the Salavation Army to serve hot meals. They allowed their parking lot to be used as a pickup station for meals and other supplies.

5. Melissa Elmore and State Farm who distributed Chick-Fi-la on Friday morning.

6. Tom Shirley for allowing us to dump debris on a vacant lot he owns.

7. Brown's Proscpe LLC Kevin and Anna Slay who was here on Monday to serve hot meals to those in need.

8. I also need to thank EMA Director Chris Judah who helped with things we needed and answered all my questions.

9. I can't say enough about the calls and help I received from our elected County officials. Rep. Paul Lee was on the phone to me Thursday, Walked around town Friday to see the damage first hand. I met with him last Monday as we tried to get answers for Chm Culver and others. I met with our County Commissioner Doug Siquefield several times as well as many calls to and from me. State Senator Harri Anne Smith was a lifeline to me and many others in our community. She was there to offer me words of comford and support as well as answers to the many questions. Her first words to me were "are you ok?" and What can I do to help Ashford?

Finally I want to say how much I appreciate our city employees. Thanks to each of you for your dedication to your job and our city. You are the best.

1. Utility Superintendent Richard Odom; William Strength; Charles Conrad; Leroy Smith; Bill Cook; Andrew Jones; Steven Deese; and Chris Cartwright. These guys are the best.

2. Fire Chief Jimmy Posey and our volunteer firemen. I depend on Chief Posey and he

is always up to the challenge. He has done a marvelous job for our City.

3. Chief Quinton Vann and Officers Beau Liles; Tim Miller; Malvin Anderson and Larry Flowers. Secretary Sonia Swain

4. Ashford Rescue Squad and Tommy Watson.

5. Lewis Edmondson and the Recreation Dept. Parent Board. These guys cooked and served lunch and dinner on Saturday October 13th.

6. Councilmember Gary Gibson for cooking and serving meals on Thursday October 11th.

7. Paul Adams and Charles Hauss of Aquoim for making sure our pumps and wells were operating. Making sure our lift stations were on line.

8. To council members Gary Gibson, Ronnie Whitehead, Alan Anderson, Denise Herndon and James Smith for their support during this time and for the work each of them did in their communities.

9. To our office staff: Casy Lindenmuth, Kelli Wood and Beverly Johnson for their help during this time. Especially Kelli who got stuck with the responsibility of helping me give out Red Cross supplies.

I have named just a few who have stepped up to help. There are many, many more who have gone the extra mile. I am so proud of my hometown who in this time of crisis came together to help each other. You have proven that Ashford is a strong, caring community.

This is for your information: EMA and FEMA teams are in town to assess the damage. Individual Assessment teams will be here tomorrow. They will be going through neighborhoods assessing damage, taking pictures and talking to residents individually. Each of you can help by taking pictures, making lists of losses and writing down how this storm has affected you life and the lives of your family. You can give them to team members or you can e-mail them to EMAHELP@houstoncounty.org.

We have a long road to recovery. We are picking up all the debris that we can but the City of Ashford does not have the equipment to pick up and clear large trees. Houston County Road and Bridge Department will be assisting us with the cleanup. It may take weeks until we get this debris cleared. Please have patience and work with us. Please cut trees and limbs in 4 foot sections and move to the front of your yard. Please put limbs in separate piles. Do not put other items such as building materials, shingles, wood, siding and household garbage with limbs. Please do not put them in the street

as we need to keep our streets passable. We will not charge for pickup of storm debris. If you have questions please call City Hall. Thank you again for your help and patience.