FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hurricane Matthew Brings Few Problems

SEBRING -

While Hurricane Matthew continues to impact north-east Florida, Highlands County was spared from significant damage. The Sheriff’s Office deployed additional personnel to work throughout the storm. Deputies checked mobile home communities and low lying subdivisions throughout the night and morning hours but found little to no damage to report.

There were a few downed power lines and some tree branches that got caught in the lines which caused sparks, however no significant fires resulted from these incidents. One downed line was behind the Winn Dixie in Sebring Square; on Killarney Drive a tree leaning on a power pole caused sparking, but once the tree branch burned off, no other damage was noted. There was also a power line sparking on Koy Dr. but crews found no immediate fire hazard. A tree limb fell on a power line on Lotela Avenue in Avon Park, causing a small fire which was quickly extinguished. There was also a branch on power lines causing sparking at the Social Security Administration building, however, it was just sparks and no fire resulted.

Over 100 firefighters and emergency personnel from Southwest Florida staged in Sebring overnight preparing to assist crews on the Florida east coast if needed. Units were parked at Sebring High School overnight. Highlands County Sheriff Susan Benton made one pod in the Highlands County Jail available for sleeping quarters for these personnel and Homer’s Restaurant provided food for them. Crews left this morning to return home.

Incident Commander Captain Tim Lethbridge said, “All in all we were very fortunate in Highlands County that the storm stayed far enough off the coast to not cause us significant damage. We were prepared, and want to thank everyone who worked to keep our county safe during this event. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have been and continue to be severely impacted by this storm.”

At this time all weather watches and warnings have been lifted for Highlands County and shelters have closed. Garbage pick-up scheduled for Friday will be picked up on Saturday. All county offices and schools remain closed today. The Emergency Operations Center is still partially activated but has been scaled down to Level 2 however the call center remains open. Citizens can call 863-385-1112 to report any non-emergency damage issues. As always, Central Dispatch is available for any law enforcement or health issues at 863-402-7200. Please call 911 for emergencies.