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## **Municipal Websites Play Key Role in 2014 Hurricane Preparedness**

Vision Internet Content Management Tools Create Online Safety Net



**SANTA MONICA, Calif. (June 4, 2014)** As we move into the 2014 hurricane season, local government and public safety officials in coastal states are urging residents to be prepared. Two Florida cities, one on the Atlantic and the other on the Gulf coast, this week shared how their websites, designed by online government innovators at <u>Vision Internet</u>, have become their No. 1 tool to communicate with residents.

"The City's role is critical in helping citizens prepare for hurricane season," said Palm Bay Public Information Officer Yvonne Martinez. "We try to educate citizens about what they need to do to prepare and constantly remind them to have a plan. The more informed they are, the better prepared they will be when it comes time to recover from a natural disaster. Our City's website (<a href="mailto:palmbayflorida.org">palmbayflorida.org</a>) is the official clearinghouse and one-stop portal for everything the public needs to know."

In recent weeks, the City promoted its annual Hurricane Expo with a banner splash on its homepage, and linked to this year's Resolve 2B Ready campaign with an eye-catching graphic for National Hurricane Preparedness Week. Martinez said connecting with the public before an emergency significantly reduces stress during and after a crisis. For added protection, Palm Bay utilizes visionLive M, which includes Vision Internet's secure off-site hosting, unlimited technical support and automatic software updates, ensuring the City's ability to keep its site up-to-date, regardless of the extent of an emergency.

"The visionLive platform gives us a lot of options to creatively deliver this important information," said Palm Bay Web Administrator Stacy LaVanture. "Whether it's in a video

format or an email through the eNotification portal, we have creative ways to use the tools available within this platform that ultimately make it easier for the public to stay informed."

On Florida's West Coast, the City of North Port (<u>cityofnorthport.com</u>) dedicates a section of its website to "Family Disaster Preparedness," which covers an array of possible emergencies. From the site, citizens can link to live local broadcasts from the National Weather Service, download a hurricane guide in English or Spanish, review disaster planning for pets, and click on an icon to locate ice, blankets and food distribution points and find out which shelters are open.

"The website is our No. 1 tool for disseminating information, especially during an emergency," said City of North Port Community Outreach Manager Erin Bryce. "Vision Internet's design and content management system allow us to change the face of our site, which is invaluable in emergency situations. In my arsenal of website tools, I have several online banners predesigned and ready to go in case of a hurricane, tropical storm, flooding, traffic disaster or wildfire. With visionCMS™, it only takes a couple of clicks to add the homepage emergency banner. The eNotification system also sends any news update we publish directly to our subscribers."

Bryce also noted that residents aren't the only ones who use the municipal website in a state of emergency. "Municipal websites have a broader audience than just local residents dealing with a disaster," she said. "People in other states and other countries have family members here and will use the website to stay informed on what's happening when hurricanes and other disasters threaten our area. The City of North Port recognizes the power and importance of keeping people informed, so we make sure our website is constantly updated with storm-related information. We use our website to educate people before, during and after a storm. The more residents are informed and prepared, the faster they can recover and get back to a normal life."

Palm Bay's Martinez agrees. "In times of crisis, information from an authoritative source provides calm and control in the midst of chaos. Uninformed citizens can end up becoming part of the problem, potentially draining emergency resources if they end up needing rescue because they were unaware of potential hazards," she said.

For more information about Vision Internet's transformative government website technology, call 888-263-8847 or visit <a href="http://www.visioninternet.com/inforequest">http://www.visioninternet.com/inforequest</a>.

## About Vision Internet

Headquartered in Santa Monica, Calif., Vision Internet is a national leader in government website development with more than 500 government, non-profit and education clients in U.S. and Canadian communities with populations that range from less than 1,000 residents to more than 5 million. The company creates cost-effective solutions that increase government efficiency, transparency and interactive communications with citizens. Over the past 17 years, the company has earned hundreds of prestigious awards for its unique websites, including numerous 3CMA Savvy Awards. In 2013, Vision Internet launched visionCMS™, a powerful, easy to use content management system developed with feedback from hundreds of municipal clients. For more information visit www.visioninternet.com.