



AAPA Lighthouse Award Project Highlight Port Tampa Bay Storm Hardened Heavy Weather Building Project



Port Tampa Bay
Storm Hardened Heavy Weather Building (Exterior / Interior)

Project Overview

Storm Hardened Heavy Weather Building Project

Award Category: Excellence in Security Practices

Completion Date: 5/1/2024

Description: This project involved the development of approximately 3 acres of paved parking, storage and climate-controlled interior spaces, with site lighting and utilities, perimeter security, a whole building electric generator, as well as a 12,000 square foot Storm Hardened Heavy Weather Building. The site was used to store Port Tampa Bay FEMA grant funded response equipment and local law enforcement assets and support personnel during Hurricanes Ian, Debby, Helene and Milton to protect the equipment and/or personnel from winds and potential flooding and facilitate a quick response back to the Port after the passage of the storms.

Inspiration

In September 2017 hurricane Irma struck the Florida Keys as a category 4 storm and traveled up the West Coast of Florida decimating the Ft Myers area before moving inland and striking Tampa. Port Tampa Bay Security Officers and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) Deputies sheltered, with response equipment, at a non-port owned government site and returned to the Port immediately after the storm. Port Tampa Bay was spared from significant damage, but the event prompted a rethinking of how the Port could be more resilient in future storms.

Port CEO Paul Anderson directed the Security Department to look for grant money to develop a "Port Owned" Storm Hardened Heavy Weather Building that could better protect personnel and equipment during a hurricane. The final budget was set at \$3.5 Million which included Port

Grant Funds of \$1,000,000 (including match), State of Florida Security Grant Funding of over \$500,000, and site acquisition costing \$800,000 using Port funds.

Challenges

The project would ultimately rely on initial grant funding for the building. The Port applied for, and received, a FEMA Port Security Grant; and allocated additional capital resources for land acquisition. A project development and implementation team consisting of members of the Security, Engineering and Real Estate Departments identified a site based on a strict set of criteria, designed a building, within a tight budget, meeting detailed standards based on Florida building codes for storm hardening, worked on a bid, and oversaw construction. Additional funding was subsequently awarded by the State of Florida from the State Seaport Security Grant program for a generator and security improvements. The building was completed by the start of the 2024 hurricane season.

Lessons Learned

This project focused on building a robust storm hardened facility on the most suitably located property using strict criteria. This no-frills attitude allowed for the maximum impact of funds by eliminating conveniences that could be added in the future. By focusing on the core criteria developed by the project team, the Port avoided "mission creep" which could have led to additional unforeseen costs and delays in construction. The CEO and Team remained determined to complete the project, despite a number of internal and external challenges. The entire site is usable, heavy equipment and other types of equipment, designed to function outdoors, can also be stored during a weather event to avoid flooding at the Port.

Value

In September 2022 the partially developed site was used to store Port owned heavy equipment before the arrival of Hurricane Ian. Between August 5, 2024, and October 9, 2024, Port Tampa Bay was impacted by three (3) separate hurricanes: Debby, Helene and Milton. Each storm closed the Port, Helene created significant flooding and Milton created significant wind damage. In each case, Port Security and Response equipment was protected during the storms. During Hurricane Milton Port Security and Hillsborough County Sheriff's Deputies sheltered at the building and returned to the Port as the storm passed, controlling access points and conducting initial damage assessments. In each case the landside activities at the port were reopened within hours of the storms passing.

Quotes

“Florida is all too familiar with natural disasters like hurricanes, and our seaports understand the importance of providing a secure and resilient environment that protects people and assets during times of disaster. The success of the Heavy Weather Building at Port Tampa Bay is an example of innovation and leadership combining to support a secure environment, thus allowing the port to begin distributing critical commodities like gasoline and jet fuel to help our state get back on its feet. At the Florida Ports Council, we believe Port Tampa Bay’s Heavy Weather Building is an example for seaports across the country to consider for greater port safety and security,” said Mike Rubin, CEO and President, Florida Ports Council

“We maintain a strong and valuable partnership with Port Tampa Bay, which significantly enhances the resilience of the West Central Florida Region against both natural and man-made disasters,” said Sheriff Chad Chronister. **“This collaboration involves sharing infrastructure, such as the port’s 12,000-square-foot storm hardened heavy weather building, and critical resources, a strategy that has proven to be a game changer. This approach serves as a force multiplier, helping to save lives, protect infrastructure during emergencies, and ensure the swift and effective restoration of port operations.”** Sheriff Chad Chronister, Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office

Additional Information

Port Tampa Bay recognized a problem that could have significant impact on our ability to service our tenants and the community after a hurricane or other natural disaster. Over forty-three percent (43%) of all motor fuel (gasoline, diesel, jet fuel & ethanol) arrives in Florida via Tampa Bay port facilities. Without rapid reconstitution of port facilities, the ability of the community to travel in vehicles for necessary services and to fuel generators for electric power is impacted and can lead to panic buying of scarce resources. Port Tampa Bay envisioned, developed and implemented a plan to meet that growing challenge.

Contact

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Resources

N/A