

City of Charleston Hurricane Hugo Records, 1989-2004

Descriptive Summary

Title and Dates

Hurricane Hugo Records, 1989-2004 (bulk: 1989-1997)

Creator

Howard R. Chapman, P.E., City of Charleston Hurricane Recovery Coordinator, 1989

Jamie Sue Bennett, City of Charleston Director of Disaster Recovery, 1990-1994

Quantity

10 cubic ft.

Forms of Material

Correspondence, reports, manuals, contracts, ordinances, resolutions, newspaper articles, photographs, videocassettes, slides, DVDs, plats, maps

Processed by

Rebecca Schultz, 2019

Location

07-A-001 to 07-A-010

Abstract

The City of Charleston Hurricane Hugo Records, 1989-2004, consist of documents created in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo's impact on the South Carolina Lowcountry. The collection contains correspondence, reports, manuals, legislative records, contracts, plats, maps, photographs, slides, and audiovisual material. These records document municipal recovery efforts to one of the worst natural disasters to affect the City of Charleston in modern history.

Background

Hurricane Hugo made landfall off the coast of Charleston on September 22, 1989, as a Category 4 storm on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale. With top winds of 140 miles per hour and a storm surge of nearly twenty feet, Hugo slammed into the South Carolina coast with an intensity that rivaled few storms before it. Although lacking experience with a disaster of this magnitude, City officials quickly organized to address the immediate necessity of emergency repairs and roadway clearing. They had no way of knowing at that time the massive amounts of labor, money, and time that would ultimately go into restoring Charleston to its pre-hurricane state.

In the storm's direct aftermath, Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., appointed Howard R. Chapman, Director of Traffic and Transportation, to act as the City's Hurricane Recovery Coordinator. Mayor Riley also established a Hurricane Recovery Task Force composed of key members of the public with the added support of City staff. The Task Force focused on five main recovery factors: business and industry, housing,

infrastructure and public facilities, insurance and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding, and social services.

The reality of the massive recovery effort required to restore City parks, monuments, and facilities along with the need for City offices to resume normal duties, eventually necessitated the establishment of an official Disaster Recovery Office. After a nationwide search, Mayor Riley appointed Emergency Management Specialist, Jamie “Sue” Bennett as the Director of Disaster Recovery. Sue Bennett’s experience with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency made her the ideal candidate for guiding the City through the arduous task of documenting disaster-related damage in order to gain desperately needed federal assistance. In October 1990, she took the helms of what ultimately became a years-long effort to restore the City of Charleston to its former glory.

Scope and Content Note

The strenuous demands involved with the recovery from Hurricane Hugo, along with the overwhelming amount of documentation necessary to gain federal financial assistance, hindered the creation of a unified, coherent collection of Hurricane Hugo records. The sudden decision to close the Disaster Recovery office in 1994, likewise, prevented any systematic effort to organize the office’s records in a meaningful manner. The staff of Records Management created the existing collection retrospectively. Please note that the collection’s current organization is rudimentary and may contain some overlap of records or misfiling.

The collection falls into eight series: Initial Response, Policy, Miscellaneous, Correspondence, Property, Debris Removal, Disaster Survey Reports and FEMA Documentation, FEMA Appeal, and Audit.

The Initial Response series contains documents created in the immediate aftermath of the storm along with minutes, reports, and studies, which focus on the emergency response period of recovery. The Policy series includes records pertaining to both internal City policies and FEMA or South Carolina State Public Assistance Program (SPAP) policies. The Miscellaneous series contains documents related to repair of non-municipal property, hazard mitigation, and Hugo Fund donations. This series also contains photographs, slides, and multimedia. Please note that while many photographs are located under the Miscellaneous Files series, photographs are also located throughout the entire collection. The Correspondence series is subdivided into FEMA, general, master, miscellaneous, and reading files. The Property series contains files related to rehabilitation of City offices, parks, and recreational facilities. The Debris Removal series relates to the removal of debris from City streets and properties. The Disaster Survey Report and FEMA Documentation series contains Disaster Survey Reports and related documentation submitted to FEMA. The FEMA Appeal series details efforts to gain additional funding from FEMA. The Audit series pertains to an audit and review of the City’s use of federal funds and donations.

Related Material

Researchers interested in this collection may also wish to consult the Plans and Studies Collection, 1895-2009, for additional reports related to Hurricane Hugo. Also, see the Traffic and Transportation Records for additional Hugo-related photographs.

Acronyms

DSR – Disaster Survey Report

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency

SPAP – South Carolina State Public Assistance Program

Series List

- Series I: Initial Response Files, 1989-1996
 Subseries I: Immediate Aftermath and Initial Recovery Efforts
 Subseries II: Committee and Team Meetings
 Subseries III: Reports and Studies
Series II: Policy Files, 1989-1996
Series III: Miscellaneous Files, 1989-1995
 Subseries I: Documents
 Subseries II: Photographs and Multimedia
Series IV: Correspondence, 1989-1998
 Subseries I: FEMA Correspondence
 Subseries II: General Correspondence
 Subseries III: Master Correspondence
 Subseries IV: Miscellaneous Correspondence
 Subseries V: Read Files
Series V: Property Files, 1989-1994
Series VI: Debris Removal, 1989-1996
Series VI: Disaster Survey Reports (DSRs) and FEMA Documentation, 1989-1996
Series VII: FEMA Appeal, 1990-1997
Series VIII: Audit Files, 1989-2004

Folder List

Box Folder

Box	Folder	Description
		<i>Initial Response Files, 1989-1996</i>
1	1-10	Initial Response and Recovery Efforts, 1989-1991
	11-14	Committee and Team Meetings, 1989-1991
	15-22	Reports and Studies, 1989-1996
		<i>Policy Files, 1989-1996</i>
	23-27	Policy Files, 1989-1996
2	1-8	Policy Files, 1989-1996
		<i>Miscellaneous Files, 1989-1995</i>
	9-27	Miscellaneous Documents, 1989-1995
10	12-14	Videocassettes, DVDs, and Slides, ca. 1989
2	28-33	Photographs, ca. 1989
		<i>Correspondence, 1989-1998</i>
3	1-9	FEMA Correspondence, 1989-1994
	10-13	General Correspondence, 1989-1998
	14-15	Master Correspondence, 1990-1991
4	1-3	Master Correspondence, 1990-1991
	4	Correspondence with Elected Officials, 1989-1991
	5-16	Reading File Correspondence, 1990-1994
5	1-2	Reading File Correspondence, 1990-1994
		<i>Property Files, 1989-1994</i>
	3-32	Property Files, 1989-1994

Box	Folder	
6	1-13	Property Files, 1989-1994 <i>Debris Removal, 1989-1996</i>
	14-20	Debris Removal, 1989-1996
7	1-12	Debris Removal, 1989-1996 <i>Disaster Survey Reports (DSRs) and FEMA Documentation, 1989-1996</i>
	13-19	DSRs, 1989-1996
8	1-20	DSRs, 1989-1996
9	1-11	DSRs, 1989-1996
	12-13	FEMA Appeal, ca. 1990-1997
10	1-7	FEMA Appeal, ca. 1990-1997 <i>Audit Files, 1989-2004</i>
	8-11	Audit Files, 1989-2004