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**Cedar Key braces for tropical storm;  
Voluntary evacuations allowed in western Levy county;  
Dixie County and Levy County schools closed Thursday  
through Monday Gilchrist County schools closed  
Thursday through Monday, plus Tuesday is a teacher  
workday**

*FDOT is prepared*



**Bobby McCabe and Tom Liebert move kayaks on Wednesday afternoon. Liebert, who founded Kayak Cedar Keys <http://www.kayakcedarkeys.com>, said he has a friend with a chicken ranch in Sumner and they will be storing the boat there until after the storm passes through Cedar Key.**

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## **Story and Photos**

**By Jeff M. Hardison © Aug. 31, 2016 @ 4:07 p.m.**

**TRI-COUNTY AREA** -- While students in places that snow sometimes miss school due to a weather event, children in Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties are seeing some unplanned time off due to a storm.

Also, the Levy County Sheriff's Office in partnership with Levy County Emergency Management Department is issuing a voluntary evacuation notice for residents that live in evacuation zones west of U.S. Highway 19.

This is voluntary evacuation -- NOT mandatory.

Levy County will open a shelter of last resort at the old Williston High School Cafeteria located at 427 W. Noble Ave. (U.S. Alt. 27) at 4 p.m. this afternoon (Aug. 31). The shelter is only for residents affected by Tropical Depression Nine and residents on the west side of U.S. 19 from the Suwannee River south to Yankeetown.

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**The Cedar Key #4 Bridge Fishing Pier and Boat Ramp is closed until the storm is finished.**

This is a shelter of last resort and individuals should make a strong effort to find alternative lodging in a safe location before going to the shelter.

Pets are NOT allowed in the shelter.

For area residents who are unable to make alternate arrangements for their pets, they may board them at the Levy County Animal Services building at 12055 N.E. 68th Lane in Bronson until the storm passes.

Pet owners will be required to bring their own crates and food for their pets. PETS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT PROOF OF CURRENT RABIES VACCINATION.

For more information, contact the Levy County Department of Emergency Management at 352-486-5576 or 352-486-5155.

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**The road next to the supermarket in Cedar Key was a bit flooded already on Wednesday afternoon (Aug. 31).**

## **DIXIE AND LEVY SCHOOLS**

Due to inclement weather and the fact that the Emergency Operations Center will be opening a shelter at Old Town Elementary School, Dixie District Schools will be closed tomorrow (Thursday, Sept. 1) and Friday (Sept. 2) for all students and staff.

Old Town Elementary School will be open as a shelter for the Dixie County community, beginning at 8 a.m. tomorrow.

Once a shelter is opened, a full day is required for a thorough cleaning of the facilities. This is the reason for schools closing Friday.

All three counties -- Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties observe Labor Day as a day off from school.

Students in Gilchrist County are off on Tuesday as well (Sept. 6) because it is a teacher workday.

## CEDAR KEY BRACES FOR STORM

**CEDAR KEY** -- Cedar Key Police Chief Virgil Sandlin is serving as the spokesman for the city during this emergency period.



**Cedar Key Police Chief Virgil Sandlin**

On Wednesday afternoon (Aug. 31), Chief Sandlin said island residents have been filling sandbags.

The chief would prefer for people to remain at home, indoors, until after the storm has passed. Before the storm, people were stocking up on water, food and other items they know they may need, he said.

As the streets become flooded, he and his staff will be barricading those roads.

He has a request to make of potential visitors.

"Let the storm go by," he said. "Don't come out while it is flooded unless you have to."

People who come to the island and drive down roads with water in them make wakes that go up into residents' yards, he said. Sightseers who come to see the flooded areas cause more problems, he said.

When the water crosses State Road 24, the Cedar Key Police Department will restrict access to the island to residents or business owners, he said. Chief Sandlin strongly recommends against people driving through salt water.

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**Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks stands near the City Park next to the Gulf of Mexico. The county commissioner is known for keeping her finger on the pulse of the communities she serves.**

On Wednesday afternoon Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks was looking at the island community. She said the tide sticks placed on either side of SR 24 are put there each time a storm like this one is coming in.

Those sticks help emergency personnel know where the road is under the water, as well as how deep it is there.



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There was some early flooding on the end of SR 24 – near a former motel that is being converted into a University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences lab for marine studies.



Some water comes from the Gulf of Mexico onto G Street on Wednesday afternoon (Aug. 31), a relatively common occurrence, which will be exacerbated from storm surge and other water issues that result from tropical storms and hurricanes.



The Faraway Inn is among the wonderful places to stay on Cedar Key. It is pet friendly. Here some water is seen standing after a bit of rain. It is very close to the waterfront.

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**People driving along State Road 24 may notice these tide sticks on either side of the road. Like when they hear some weather disaster TV guy has come to town, this is an indicator of potential road flooding and closures on the island that is the northwesternmost incorporated municipality in Levy County.**