

# ATTACHMENT 1

to the

*The Gangplank Marina*

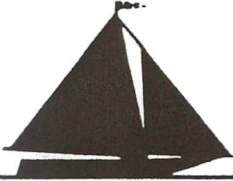
Severe Weather Preparedness Plan

(rev. September 2008)

Letter to Secretary

Darrell L. Darnell,

DCEMA

*The Gangplank*  *Marina*  
On the Potomac

July 3, 2007

Acting Secretary Darrell L. Darnell  
District of Columbia  
Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency  
2720 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE  
Washington, D.C. 20032

Dear Secretary Darnell;

I am writing to request that the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency consider, as a contingency within its hurricane preparedness planning for the District of Columbia, the necessity of a mandatory evacuation of all individuals living aboard their vessels at the Gangplank Marina when a hurricane warning<sup>1</sup> is issued for the District of Columbia by the National Weather Service.

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<sup>1</sup> A hurricane warning is defined as a that hurricane is expected within twenty four hours. *See, e.g.*, June 1, 2007 Press Release, Atlantic Hurricane Season Runs June 1 to November 30 available on line at <http://newsroom.dc.gov/show.aspx/agency/dcema/section/2/release/11218>. A hurricane is defined as tropical cyclone that rotates counter-clockwise with sustained winds of 74 miles per hour. *See* Hurricanes and Severe Storms, INAMAR, June 2006 at 3 available on line at <http://www.INAMARmarine.com>. INAMAR is the trade association representing recreational marine insurers throughout the United States. INAMAR likewise conducts risk assessment inspections of marinas, including the Gangplank, upon which its members rely in extending coverage. An adverse determination by INAMAR will effectively preclude a marina's ability to secure insurance.

The reasons why the Marina believes DCEMA should contemplate such a contingency are several fold and consist of : 1) the Gangplank Marina has one of the largest live aboard populations in the United States; 2) the perception by these slip holders they can ride out a hurricane on board their vessels; 3) the age of the Marina's docks and piers and; 4) the high occupancy level which places greater stress loads on these structures making catastrophic failure of the Marina's dock system during a hurricane likely. Each of these items is discussed in greater detail below.

As you may be aware the Gangplank Marina has the largest live aboard community on the east coast of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Of the three hundred and nine slips in the Marina, approximately one hundred are designated as live aboard slips. Many of these have spouses, partners and children who likewise live aboard throughout the year. On any given day during hurricane season there may be 200 individuals living in the Marina on the Washington Channel.<sup>3</sup>

The vast majority of these slip holders are from the Metropolitan Washington region and have no real experience or appreciation for the conditions produced by a hurricane. As the metro area in recent history has only experienced the remnants of hurricanes this artificial experience with tropical depressions has fostered the false belief in many who live in the Washington Channel their ability to "ride out" a hurricane onboard their vessels.<sup>4</sup>

Virtually all authoritative sources condemn such practices. *See* INAMAR *supra.* at 9 ("Do not stay aboard any vessel during a hurricane.") *id.*, at 12 ("No personnel should be allowed to stay on any vessel during the hurricane."); Old Point Comfort Marina Severe Weather Preparedness Plan at 15 ("Under NO circumstances will slip holders ride out [a] storm on [their] vessel.") available on line at [www-tradoc.monroe.army.mil/mwr/pdf/sop](http://www-tradoc.monroe.army.mil/mwr/pdf/sop) (emphasis in original). *See also* Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines for Marinas at 45, (June 2002) ("**Under no circumstances**

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<sup>2</sup> *See* Voice of the Hill Vol. 8 No. 5 July 13, 2006 at 4 (available on line at <http://www.voiceofthehill.com/archives/july06-2pdf>). *See also* Soundings, *Living Aboard in the Nation's Capital* October 2006 available on line at [www.soundingspub.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=17C04BCDCC8440589122A4532FF](http://www.soundingspub.com/ME2/dirmod.asp?sid=17C04BCDCC8440589122A4532FF)

<sup>3</sup> Recreational boaters are permitted to spend a maximum of four nights a week on board their vessels.

<sup>4</sup> Most live aboard slipholders have limited experience with heavy weather conditions typically encountered offshore. Approximately half of the vessel's in the Gangplank live aboard community are static (i.e., the vessel remains tied to the dock and never leaves the Marina). The most recent experience with tropical depressions passing over the Marina was the remnants of Hurricane Isabel in 2002. During Isabel Washington, D.C. experienced sustained winds of only 40 miles an hours. The storm surge however raised the water level in the Washington Channel several feet above the bulkhead. Approximately twenty individuals rode the storm out on their vessels. Although no vessels were lost at the Gangplank, Old Town Alexandria Marina had numerous vessels sink and experienced significant damage to their pier system.

**should you ride the hurricane out on your boat.”**) available on line at <http://www.csc.noaa.gov/hes/general.html> (emphasis in original).

Those unfamiliar with hurricane conditions believe that by staying on board they enhance their vessel's odds of remaining afloat. The reality is that conditions will deteriorate to such an extent that little or nothing can be done when the storm is upon the Marina. All authorities agree that meaningful action to prevent loss must be accomplished well prior to the hurricane's arrival. See INAMAR *supra.* at 12 (“No one should attempt to move or re-secure a loose vessel or equipment during the storm period.”) Point Comfort *supra.*, at 14 (**All precautions taken as a result of the hurricane warning should be based on the belief that the storm will hit the facility directly and with its full force.** If the full precautionary measures have not been taken, there is probably little that can be done [ 24 to 0 hours prior to arrival ] to improve preparation.”)(emphasis in original). See also *id.*, at 15 (“**No one will attempt to move or re-secure a loose vessel or equipment during the storm period.**”) (emphasis in original); *ibid* (“**No one will be allowed on the docks during the storm period**”); Hurricane Preparedness Guidelines for Marinas at 50 (“One of the most dangerous mistakes a skipper can make is to stay aboard during a hurricane. There is little, if anything, a skipper can do to save a boat when winds are blowing 100 mph, tides are surging, and visibility is only a few feet.”).

Most significantly, DCEMA should consider a mandatory evacuation as the Marina is now quite old. Portions of the Marina were constructed in 1968. Although divers routinely inspect the submerged structural components and have replaced numerous structures over the years, the reality is that the Marina is now well beyond its intended lifespan. While the Marina remains safe to operate in normal conditions, this same assertion cannot be made with any confidence in hurricane conditions.

To complicate matters the Marina is extremely full and is at or near one hundred percent occupancy. When the docks are full of vessels, as they will be thru September, the loads and forces which will be exerted on these are compounded significantly and catastrophic failure becomes a real possibility.

Of course slipholders that remain on board their vessels to ride out the hurricane assume that the Marina will retain its integrity during the hurricane. This is far from certain.

While the Marina will issue mandatory evacuation orders if necessary it is not clear slipholders will comply with these instructions. As indicated above it is likely numerous live aboard and other slipholders will attempt to stay on board their vessel during the hurricane.

Based on the forgoing the Gangplank Marina requests the Acting Director consider issuing a mandatory evacuation of live aboard slipholders in the Marina should a hurricane warning be issued for the District of Columbia by the National Weather Service

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dave Gohsman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dave Gohsman  
General Manager

cc. Ms. Nina Albert  
Southwest Waterfront Property Manager  
Anacostia Waterfront Corporation