Attitudes of Grand Cayman Hotel Employees to Hurricane Warnings: Initial Survey Results

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The Survey
Hotel employees responded to the survey in the Employee Dining Room (EDR) during their breaks from work. While the researcher was present in the EDR and available for clarification, individuals completed the survey independently and returned it when completed. The survey consisted of demographic and situational questions. Respondents indicated in which circumstances they would evacuate elsewhere on the island and in which circumstances they would flee Grand Cayman for another location. Additional questions ascertained which sources respondents use for hurricane information, factors in their decision-making processes, and previous hurricane experience.

Study Sites
The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman (RCGC) opened in December 2005. The opening was originally planned for late 2004, but the impacts of Hurricane Ivan on the island in September 2004 caused a delay in opening. The resort features 365 guest room and suites, a 9-hole golf course, a spa, a children’s program, and three restaurants. To run the resort, RCGC employs a total of 833 people (Table 1).

The Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort (GCMBR) survived Hurricane Ivan in 2004 though with significant damage (See below images). The resort features 295 guest rooms and suites, a spa, a children’s program, and two restaurants. GCMBR depends on 218 employees to run the resort (Table 2).

Hurricanes and Grand Cayman
Grand Cayman is the largest of the three Cayman Islands at 121.6 km² (76 mi²). As a low-lying limestone island in the Caribbean Sea, it is highly susceptible to passing hurricanes and their associated storm surges. The highest elevation on the island is 18 m (59.4 ft) though the majority of the island is marginally above sea level (Roed 2006).

During Hurricane Ivan in 2004, the storm surge inundated the island with the exception of the extreme northeastern portion. Hurricane Ivan surpassed the previous baseline event, the unnamed hurricane of 1932, to create the new precedent against which all other hurricanes are compared. As a result of Ivan, approximately 95% of the homes were severely damaged or destroyed despite being built to codes comparable to South Florida’s requirements. Following Ivan, the total damage estimate was CI$2.8 billion (US$3.36 billion) or 138% of the Cayman Island’s Gross Domestic Product (ECLAC 2005). Since Ivan, Grand Cayman has avoided direct hits from hurricanes, but the island has received passing glances from Hurricane Dean in 2007 and Hurricanes Gustav and Paloma in 2008 (NHC 2009).

Initial Results
Of 123 respondents, 35 work for GCMBR and 88 work for RCGC. The respondents represent 30 countries and speak 18 different primary languages. At some point, 105 (85%) have been in a tropical cyclone.

Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Caymanian</th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>Hourly</th>
<th>Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: RCGC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Employees</th>
<th>Caymanian</th>
<th>Expatriate</th>
<th>Hourly</th>
<th>Salary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>833</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>740</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: GCMBR

References

Acknowledgements
First and foremost, thank you to the Ladies and Gentlemen of The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman and the Grand Cayman Marriott Beach Resort. A survey is nothing if no one responds. My advisor, Dr. Rich Dixon, has guided and supported me in my research endeavors. Elena Caulde Hutchison provided invaluable assistance in the crafting of my survey. Photos are courtesy of RCGC, GCMBR, and the author unless cited.

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