

March 19, 2025

Dear Florida Legislator,

Re: Support for HB 341: Identification Cards for Public Works Employees

APWA is an organization dedicated to providing essential public works services to millions of people across the country in rural and urban communities, both small and large. Working in the public interest, APWA's more than 32,000 members plan, design, build, operate and maintain our nation's vast infrastructure. The public works spectrum includes roads and bridges, drinking water, emergency preparedness and response, flood control, wastewater and stormwater, recycling, solid waste removal, parks and recreation, and public fleets and buildings. Quality infrastructure and public works foster commerce, protect public health, and provide the high quality of life we expect as Americans.

Here in Florida, there are over 34,000 Public Works employees. When disasters such as hurricanes hit, many of them across the state are the first to respond and the last to leave. After an event, as soon as conditions permit they:



- Deploy alongside police, fire and EMT workers clearing roadways and parks of debris providing access for rescue workers to help citizens in need.
- Deploy repairing utility infrastructure including power, gas, water, sewer, and stormwater.
- Deploy until all the utilities are restored and debris is removed, roads and shoulders are cleared, and all streets and roads are open for motorists.

Public works employees are, by definition, first responders. **Therefore, our policy goal for the 2025 Legislative Session is obtaining recognition for public works employees as 'First Responders'.** Representative Woodson has introduced HB 341; An act relating to identification cards for public works employees; requiring the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to produce a report on how the state could provide an identification card for public works employees identifying them as first responders; providing requirements for the report; providing an effective date.

We are asking you to support HB 341 so that the men and women of public works can have the recognition they have earned.

HB 341 is also supported by the Florida Association of County Engineers and Road Superintendents (FACERS). FACERS is an affiliate of the Florida Association of Counties as well as the National Association of County Engineers.



On behalf of APWA, thank you for your leadership and commitment to public works and infrastructure investment.

Sincerely,
Mark E. Collins
Mark E. Collins, President,
APWA Florida Chapter



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The **City of Gainesville's Public Works Department** played a vital role in battling a massive structure fire by providing a trackhoe and skilled operator. Guided by the District Chief over a joint radio channel, the operator strategically opened sections of the building, allowing firefighters to target the flames more effectively. Equipped with an enclosed cab and SCBA training, the operator worked safely alongside Gainesville Fire Rescue to help contain the blaze.



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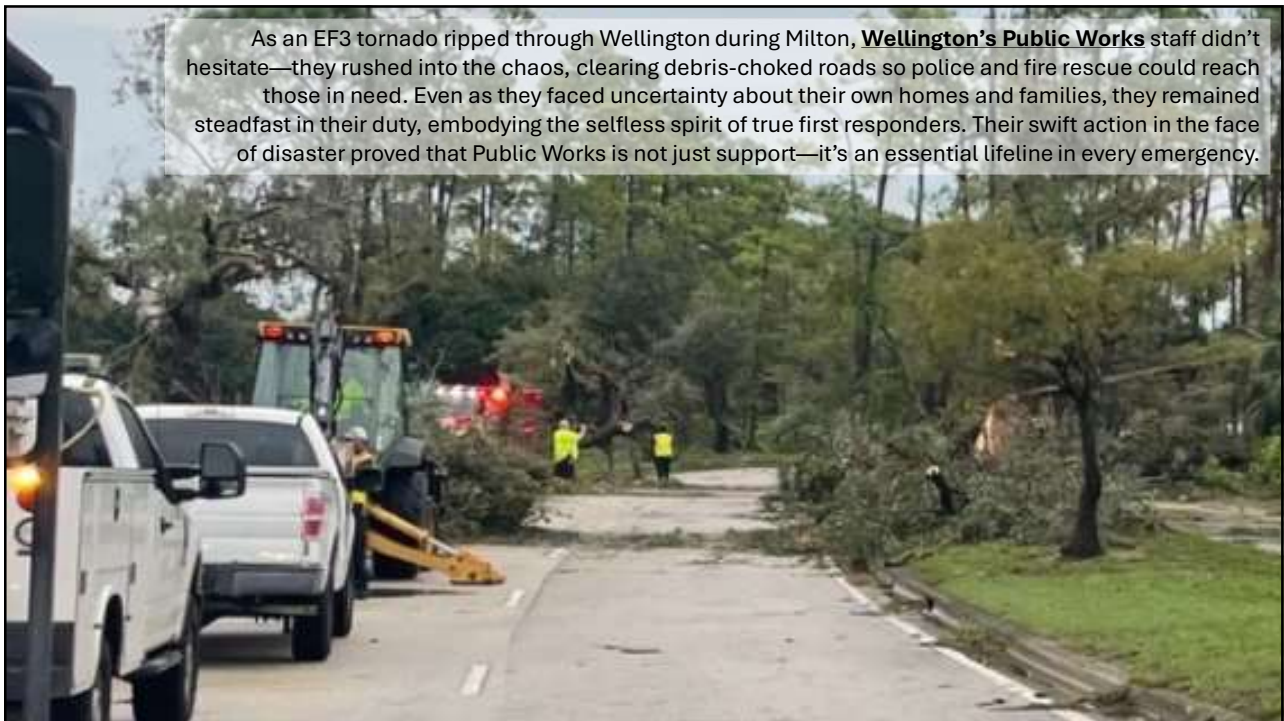


In a race against time, the **City of Hollywood's Public Works** department was called in as first responders, bringing the heavy machinery needed to strategically lift a collapsed roof caused by a fire. Their swift action enabled the fire department to reach every part of the devastated home and rescue the trapped occupants.

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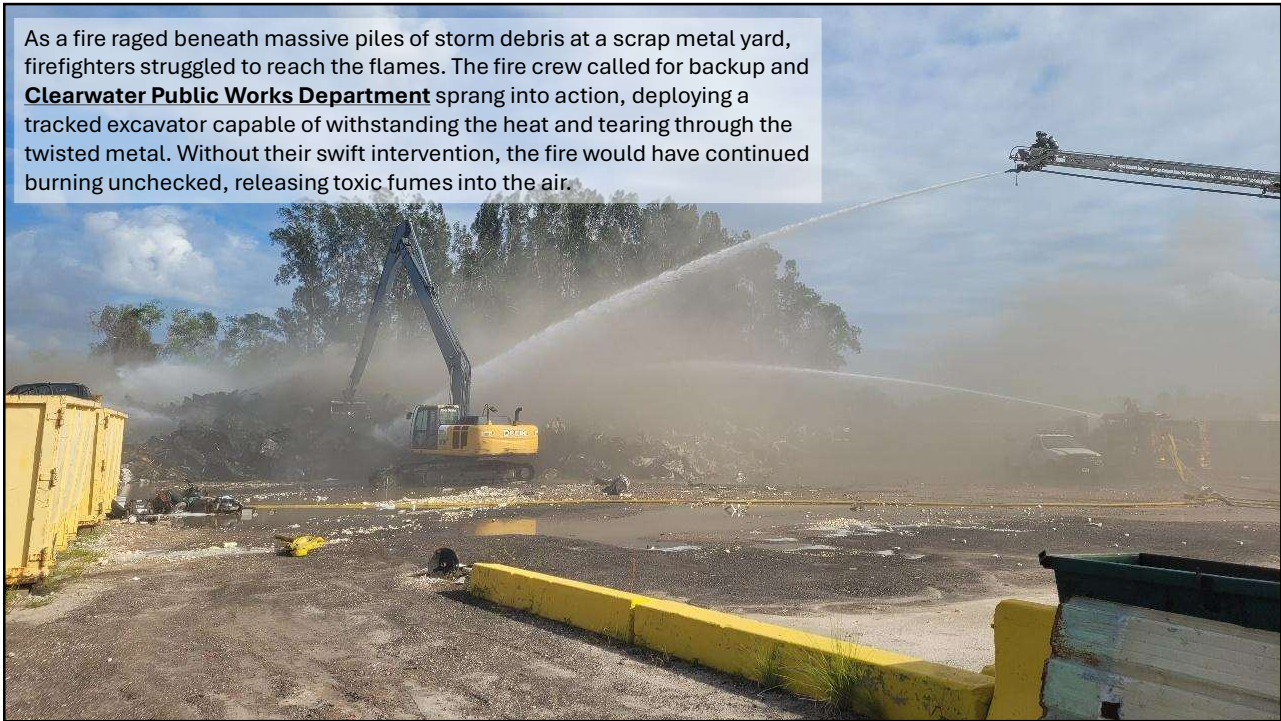


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As a fire raged beneath massive piles of storm debris at a scrap metal yard, firefighters struggled to reach the flames. The fire crew called for backup and **Clearwater Public Works Department** sprang into action, deploying a tracked excavator capable of withstanding the heat and tearing through the twisted metal. Without their swift intervention, the fire would have continued burning unchecked, releasing toxic fumes into the air.

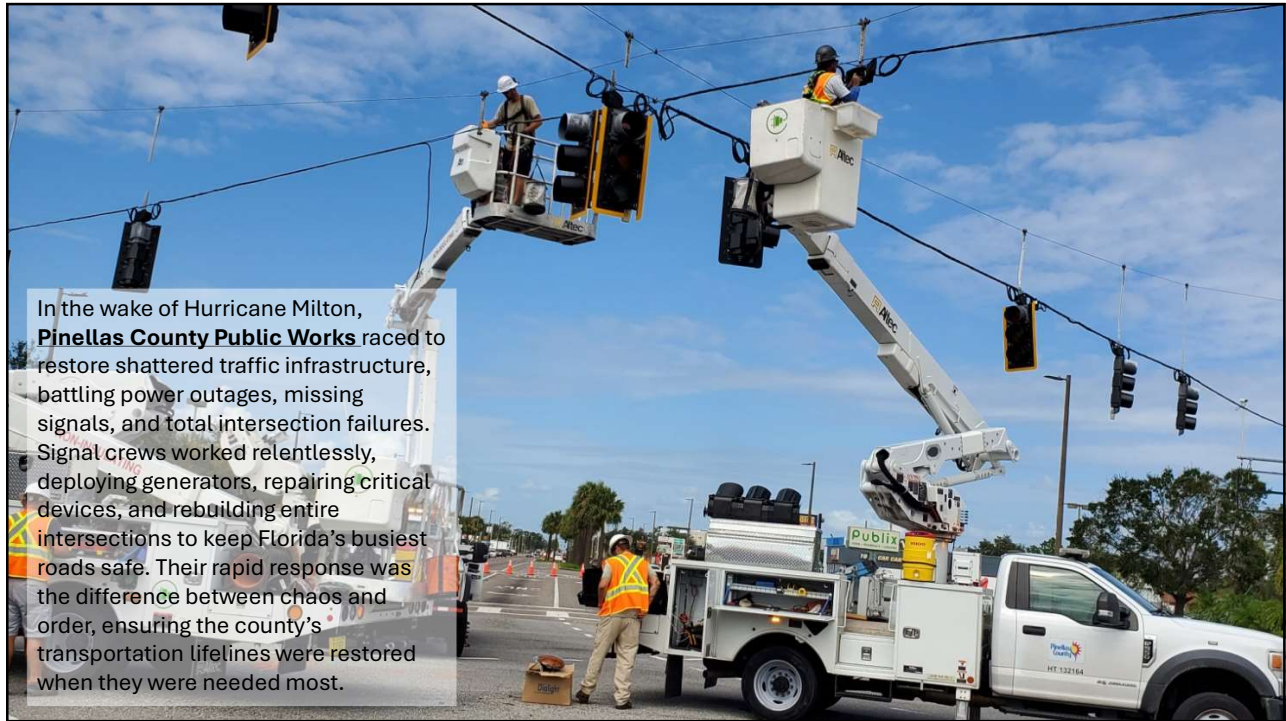


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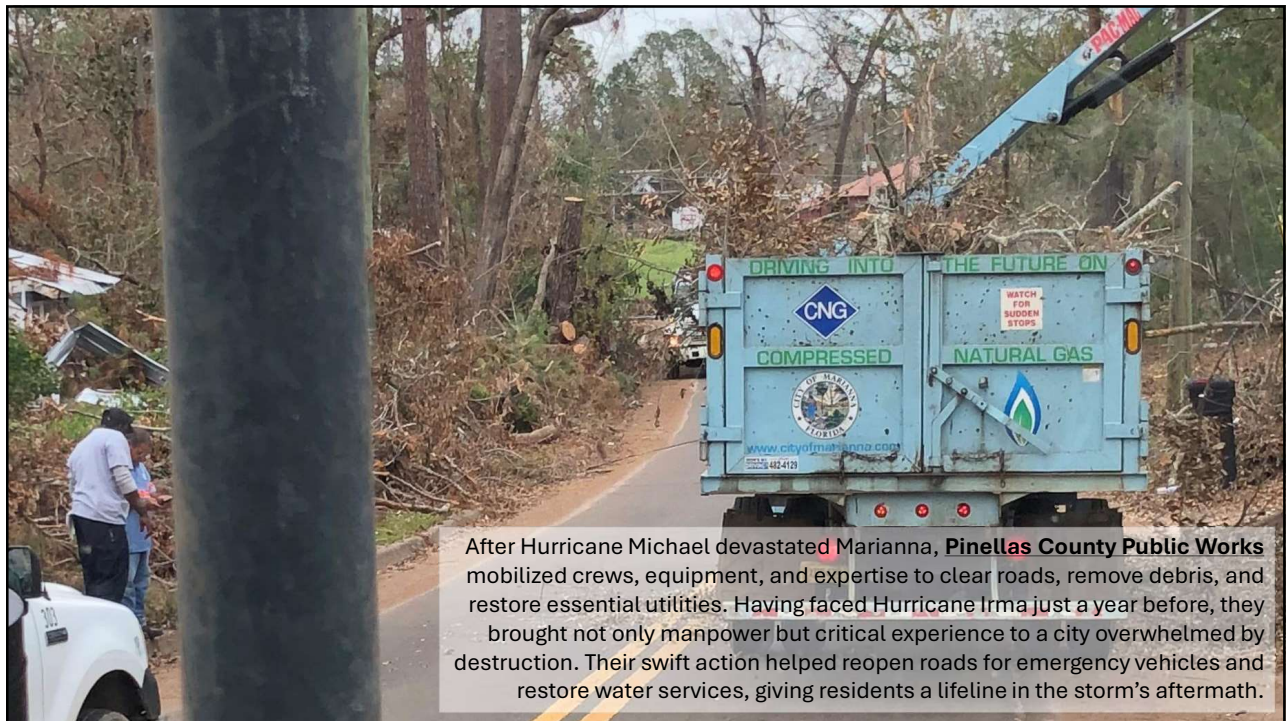
When a water main break threatened to shut down all of Clearwater Beach, the **Clearwater Water Department** leaped into action. Battling through shoulder-deep water, crews worked relentlessly to restore service and prevent a major crisis. Their swift response kept the community running with minimal disruption.

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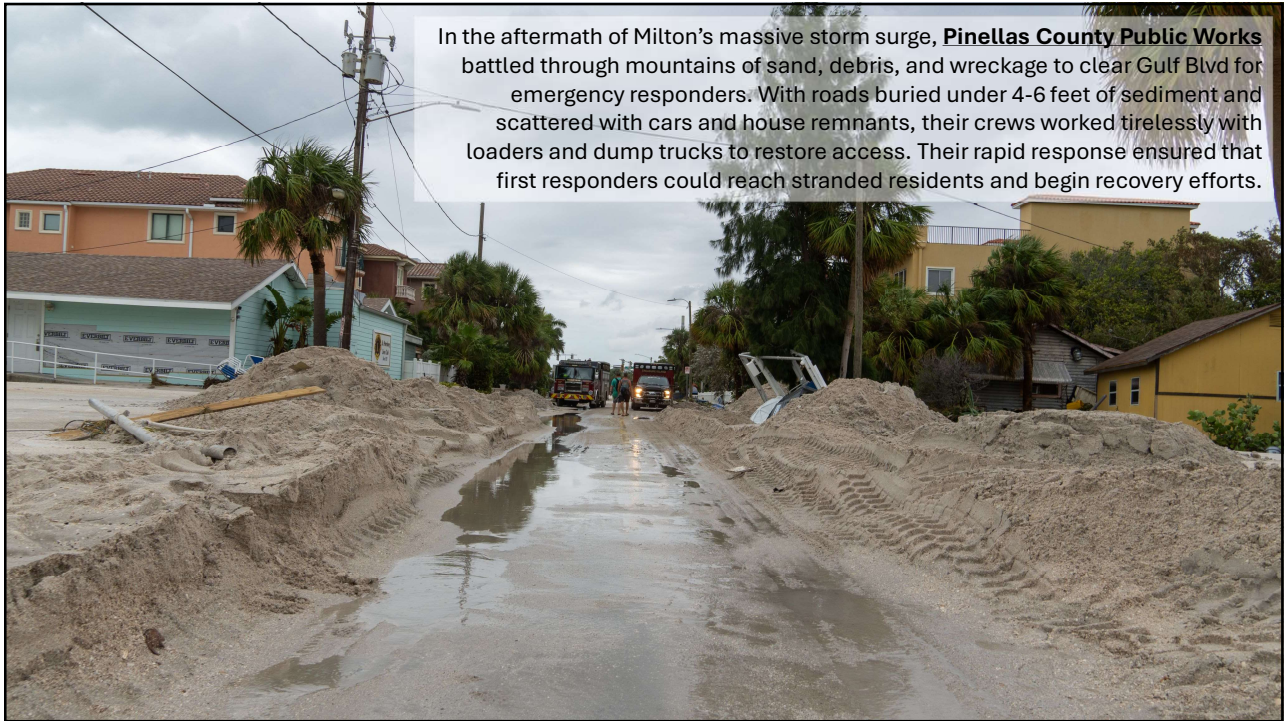
In the wake of Hurricane Milton, **Pinellas County Public Works** raced to restore shattered traffic infrastructure, battling power outages, missing signals, and total intersection failures. Signal crews worked relentlessly, deploying generators, repairing critical devices, and rebuilding entire intersections to keep Florida's busiest roads safe. Their rapid response was the difference between chaos and order, ensuring the county's transportation lifelines were restored when they were needed most.

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After Hurricane Michael devastated Marianna, **Pinellas County Public Works** mobilized crews, equipment, and expertise to clear roads, remove debris, and restore essential utilities. Having faced Hurricane Irma just a year before, they brought not only manpower but critical experience to a city overwhelmed by destruction. Their swift action helped reopen roads for emergency vehicles and restore water services, giving residents a lifeline in the storm's aftermath.

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PUBLIC WORKS

FIRST RESPONDER

“First to Respond, Last to Leave.”

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1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to identification cards for public
3 works employees; requiring the Office of Program
4 Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to
5 produce a report on how the state could provide an
6 identification card for public works employees
7 identifying them as first responders; providing
8 requirements for the report; providing an effective
9 date.

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11 WHEREAS, public works employees support the operation,
12 inspection, and maintenance of essential public works facilities
13 and operations, including bridges, water and sewer main breaks,
14 fleet maintenance, construction of critical and strategic
15 infrastructure, traffic signals, emergency location services for
16 buried utilities, digital systems infrastructure supporting
17 public works operations, and other emergent issues, and

18 WHEREAS, workers such as plumbers, electricians,
19 exterminators, builders, contractors, HVAC technicians,
20 landscapers, pool care service providers, and other service
21 providers who provide services that are necessary to maintaining
22 the safety, sanitation, and essential operation of residences,
23 businesses, and buildings such as hospitals, senior living
24 facilities, and temporary construction required to support the
25 COVID-19 response, and

26 WHEREAS, public works employees engage in essential tasks
27 after emergencies, such as road and line clearing, to ensure the
28 availability of and access to needed facilities, transportation,
29 energy, and communications, and

30 WHEREAS, public works employees ensure the effective
31 removal, storage, and disposal of residential and commercial
32 solid waste and hazardous waste, including landfill operations,
33 and

34 WHEREAS, public works employees ensure the operation,
35 inspection, and maintenance of essential dams, locks, and
36 levees, and

37 WHEREAS, workers who support the inspection and maintenance
38 of aids to navigation provide services that ensure continued
39 maritime commerce, and

40 WHEREAS, in 2003, President George W. Bush issued
41 Presidential Policy Directive 8 officially, recognizing public
42 works employees as first responders, and

43 WHEREAS, in 2017, the American Public Works Association's
44 board of directors approved the adoption of a national "Public
45 Works First Responder" symbol for use throughout North America
46 to identify public works personnel and acknowledge their
47 federally mandated role as first responders, and

48 WHEREAS, public works employees were designated as
49 essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, NOW, THEREFORE,
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51 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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53 **Section 1.** The Office of Program Policy Analysis and
54 Government Accountability shall, no later than January 1, 2026,
55 produce a report on how the state could best implement a state-
56 issued identification card for public works employees that would
57 identify them as first responders. The report shall be provided
58 to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of
59 the House of Representatives. The report shall consider the
60 feasibility of the card, including the national Public Works
61 First Responder symbol developed by the American Public Works
62 Association.

63 **Section 2.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.