INTRODUCTION

Hurricanes pose a severe threat in the state of Florida every year and Floridians prepare for the worst when there's something on the horizon, since it has a history with massive and powerful hurricanes since the 90s when hurricane Andrew destroyed most of South Florida as a Category 5. Learning from the history of hurricanes in Florida, Floridians evacuated earlier for hurricane Irma. This evacuation is the biggest evacuation the state has ever been in, with data collected we can prove such things in specific interstates as shown in Figure 1.

Last year, these parameters were very significant in the state, through the datacenter from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) we were able to obtain data points of the evacuation. This specific analysis is done for the major interstates in Florida, I-95, I-4, I-75. Comparing these three routes by volume data and level of service (LOS), we are able to make several adjustments for future evacuations.

BACKGROUND

SunGuide program was used to gather data from all the sensor equipment that are on all roads around the state. With this equipment we were able to acquire all the data needed to analyze where the highest volume rate took place in these three evacuation routes. All of the state of Florida is assigned to different evacuation routes and zones. Figure 3 is an example of how the sections within a county is divided by evacuation zones and routes close to those specific zones.

The specific data shows the volume of residents evacuating from every county in different evacuation routes. The analysis done in this study will be only of I-95, I-4, and I-75. These data points are very consistent and crucial in the state of Florida, since it is used by the emergency management for evacuations routes and zones as shown in Figure 3. Also, these three routes make their way North to South and East to West.

ANALYSIS & CALCULATIONS

When looking for the quality of a roadway or high way depending of the area of where it is, it's to be defined as “A” for the highest to “F” for the lowest quality (called Level of Service - shown in Table 1). To define these routes at different days and times, it is required to know the volume, speed, and number of lanes. The following calculation was done to all 8,668 data points, which includes I-95, I-4, and I-75:

$$\text{LOS} = \frac{\text{Current Average Volume} \times \text{Current Average Speed}}{\text{Number of Lanes}}$$

Placing all the data points into a graph to show where we could find the highest volume capacity and the worst quality route between I-95, I-4, and I-75, Figures 4 shown below is a sample. The quality of the three routes vary in locations, whether is rural or urban. For example, if the highway/roadway is sited in an urban area, studies from the Katrina hurricane evacuation in Louisiana have shown that it tends to have a higher LOS than the evacuation routes.

RESULTS

Hurricane Irma had major impacts in the state of Florida since hurricane Andrew. This analysis will help the FDOT as well as educate Floridians how traffic works, especially how the preparations for selecting evacuation routes along the state. These evacuation routes are always done to accommodate the amount of residents in each area for any case of emergency.

I-75 starts from central Florida all the way to the border with Georgia. From Figure 4, the LOS on I-75 is about 65, which is a quality of category “F”. The storm hit Columbia county around September 10th and this LOS was two days before the storm. In Figure 5, the LOS is presented by the amount of cars on a highway.

When comparing these three evacuation routes we can see that many Floridians evacuated North instead of East and West. Table 2 displays that many people stayed in their houses on the East coast of the state from I-4 data and graph as well. I-4 graphs show that there was no low quality LOS, all of the sites along I-4 were below LOS 40. This concludes that the I-4 is capable of accommodating that amount of volume during a threat hurricane evacuation.

I-95 has the second highest volume capacity after I-75, this route is stretched all the way from Key West to the Georgia-Florida border line. The preparations on this route starts Tuesday, September 5th by the Key West residents. Many of the high capacity volume is not from those specific evacuees, but those who evacuated Thursday, September 7th. The LOS for that Thursday reached to more than 45 with poor quality. This tells us that at those Floridians who evacuated late back up the traffic going North.

As stated in the previous section, I-75 had the highest volume capacity for people trying to leave the state. With a poor quality LOS, FDOT can educate residents to take other routes to be able to have a nice flow rate of cars evacuating. This will decrease the travel time and accidents during an evacuation.

REFERENCES


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