FY 22-23
ANNUAL REPORT

WALTON COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
WALTON COUNTY

OUR MISSION AND VISION

MISSION

Prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all hazards, emergencies, and disasters, using a whole community approach.

VISION

Continue to be a recognized leader in Emergency Management by building strategic community partnerships and effective public education.

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MEET OUR TEAM

Jeff Goldberg, FPEM, FMI
Director

Donna Free, FPEM, FMI
Deputy Director

Catie Feeney, MS, FAEM
Operations Coordinator

Justin Powell, FAEM
Logistics Coordinator

Gene Jack
EM Specialist

DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE

FY 22-23 STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

- 2023 Leadership Walton Graduate - *Justin Powell*
- Licenced Ham Radio Operator - *Donna Free*
- L-449 [Incident Command System (ICS) Instructor Authorized] - *Catie Feeney & Justin Powell*
- Florida Associate Emergency Manager (FAEM) - *Catie Feeney*
- Florida Professional Emergency Manager (FPEM) - *Donna Free (recertification)*
- Florida Master Instructor (FMI) - *Donna Free & Jeff Goldberg (recertification)*
- Credentialed Type III Incident Commander - *Jeff Goldberg*

OPERATIONS

22-23
ACTIVATIONS

EMERGENCY COLD WEATHER SHELTERING

October 2022 - March 2023
Level 2 Activation (Partial), 24 nights

- 4 in-person sheltering evenings over Christmas holiday, coordinated by CERT and American Red Cross.
- 20 remote assistance (Alternate CWES Plan)
- Matrix served over 40 clients through CWES efforts.

26
EOC ACTIVATIONS
October 1, 2022 - September 31, 2023

DRIFTWOOD ESTATES TORNADO

January 22, 2023 | Level 2 Activation (Partial)

- EF 2 tornado with estimated peak wind speed of 115 mph, travelled through the Driftwood Estates neighborhood for 0.78 miles and measured 85 yards wide.
- Preliminary damage assessments confirmed 9 affected, 10 minor, 2 major, and 1 destroyed home(s).
- Conducted preliminary damage assessments, provided water and tarps and coordinated with American Red Cross Disaster Assistance Teams (DAT) to support affected residents.

SANDESTIN TORNADO

June 19, 2023 | Level 2 Activation (Partial)

- EF 1 tornado with estimated peak wind speed of 105 mph travelled through the Sandestin neighborhood for 1.65 miles, measuring 200 yards wide.
- Preliminary damage assessments confirmed 4 affected homes.
- Provided water and tarps to affected residents and coordinated with American Red Cross for disaster assistance.

PROGRAMS

DUTY OFFICER PROGRAM

WCEM staff members participate in a two-week rotation to answer any questions from residents, visitors, and partner agencies, as well as provide after-hours emergency response, as needed. This year, there were 76 calls to the 24-hour on call number, with field response provided to 32 scenes for supplies and coordination. Field responses included two tornado touchdowns, an oil spill in Morrison Springs, two wildfires, and multiple motor vehicle accidents involving hydrocarbon or other hazardous materials.

HAZARD ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

The Hazardous Materials Site Assessment Program, led by the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), provides response agencies in the County and the public with updated, hazard-specific planning information and data. These assessments provide first responders with facility information within their jurisdiction that house hazardous materials. Our team inspected and reported on 31 chemical facilities, in accordance with State contract.

MITIGATION PROGRAM

As defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), mitigation is the effort to reduce loss of life and property by lessoning the impact of disasters. The Walton County Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS) Working Group is coordinated by WCEM. The LMS Working Group is comprised of county, municipal, private sector, community partners, and the general public.

EVACUATION ZONE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

WCEM helps manage and plan for the growth of commercial and residential building by assisting the Planning Department in evacuation zone certifications. This data is used to assist with evacuation clearance time and traffic impact studies. Last year, WCEM provided 253 evacuation zone certifications to the Planning Department to support development.

HEALTHCARE COMPREHENSIVE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN (CEMP) REVIEW PROGRAM

State law requires that the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) develop and adopt minimum criteria for these CEMPs, as well as plans for emergency power generation. The law also requires that the CEMPs and emergency power plans be reviewed and approved by WCEM for compliance. These facilities include Adult Day Care (ADC) facilities, Assisted Living Facilities (ALF), Ambulatory Surgical Centers (ASC), Hospitals, and Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF). This year, our team reviewed 41 healthcare CEMPs.

HERricane FLORIDA

LANDFALL | WALTON COUNTY

HERricane is a FREE four-day girl's day camp that was created by Arlington County Emergency Management. Our main goal is to transition young women into community leaders, while demonstrating Emergency Management as a positive force for public safety and local government. Less than 40% of all Emergency Managers are women, and we are here to change that statistic!

The camp curriculum is designed to explore topics such as disaster preparedness, leadership, networking, career exploration, professional development, and confidence. Campers left camp with a CPR certification, service hours to be used toward scholarships, and lasting friendships and confidence for years to come. **Walton County welcomed 18 girls from across Northwest Florida and over 40 mentors/presenters for the 2023 curriculum! Special thanks to all of WCEM's counterparts and supports for making this program possible.**

DRONE OPERATIONS | **EOC FUNCTIONS** | **FIRE SAFETY** | **LEADERSHIP SKILLS** | **CPR CERTIFICATION** | **CONFIDENCE BUILDING**

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

BUILDING RESILIENCY & GIVING BACK.

WALTON COUNTY CERT COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) is a community-based organization of residents who learn how to safely take emergency response actions until the professional responders arrive. The curriculum focuses on skills such as disaster preparedness, disaster medical operations, light search and rescue for trapped survivors, the incident command structure, and more. The CERT members meet monthly, where they host a variety of trainings to expand their preparedness knowledge.

Walton County CERT is heavily involved within our community by participating in dozens of community outreach events, providing services to non-profit organizations, and supporting the EOC in both blue and gray skies. This year, two CERT members deployed to Suwannee County for five days and assisted in the Hurricane Idalia response, providing support to the Logistics section in the EOC.

$60,262

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Monetary value of service to Walton County

2,078

VOLUNTEER HOURS

88

VOLUNTEERED EVENTS

MUTUAL AID

GOVERNOR'S INAUGURATION, BLUE ANGELS AIRSHOW, & HURRICANE IDALIA

Walton County is all too familiar with natural hazards, including wildfires and hurricanes. Fortunately, this year our county was unscathed from major impacts. Our team was fortunate enough to be able help our EM community in their local response.

When a major disaster strikes, it often overwhelms local resources and, in the State of Florida, every jurisdiction is a signatory on the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement. This process allows one jurisdiction to send resources (people and equipment) to another to aid response and recovery from major disasters.

Walton County has had the privilege to serve our sister counties in recent years for a variety of storms, including Hurricane Irma, Hurricane Michael, Chipola Complex Wildfire, and Hurricane Ian, The opportunity to serve impacted counties not only helps our partners in their time of need, but also allows our staff to apply our training and better prepare for future disaster in Walton County.

This year, we had the opportunity to serve in both a chaotic and controlled environment, participating in the Leon County activation for Governor Ron DeSantis's Inauguration, as well as Suwannee County's response to and recovery from Hurricane Idalia.

GUBERNATORIAL INAUGURATION

LEON COUNTY, FL

January 2 - 3, 2023

Provided mutual aid response to Governor Ron DeSantis's Gubernatorial Inauguration in Florida's Capital City. Leon County and City of Tallahassee partnered with Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) across multiple planned events.

- Donna Free: Planning Section Chief
- Catie Feeney: Situation Unit, Operations Section Chief
- Jeff Goldberg: Deputy Incident Commander

BLUE ANGELS AIRSHOW

ESCAMBIA COUNTY, FL

July 8, 2023

Provided mutual aid response to the Escambia County EOC for the iconic Blue Angels Airshow. This planned event was a great opportunity for staff to practice their activation role in a controlled environment. Deputy Director, Donna Free served as Planning Section Chief (PSC) and used the opportunity to gain credit towards her PSC Task Book.

HURRICANE IDALIA

SUWANNEE COUNTY, FL

August 29 - September 24, 2023

Activated to a Level 2 (Partial) to support mutual aid for Category 4 Hurricane Idalia. WCEM staff and CERT volunteers staggered their deployment windows to allow for ample support to the rural county's response and recovery efforts. In addition to EM staff and volunteers, Walton County Purchasing / OMB staff member, Angie Biddle deployed as the Finance Section Chief. Deployed resources included:

- Donna Free: Planning Section Chief, Recovery
- Catie Feeney: Operations Section Chief
- Rick Royston & Dave Wilderman (Walton County CERT members): Logistics and ground truthing support

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

SERVING WITH PURPOSE, LEADING BY EXAMPLE.

Community involvement is the key to building trust with the residents and visitors. We value building relationships with our community and its partners, while providing valuable preparedness information.

Community outreach is the practice of conducting local public awareness activities in the Walton County community. WCEM's outreach outreach program utilizing our website, social media, presentations by WCEM staff, and numerous other activities.

There were 23 in-person community outreach events that reached over 18,000 people. Some of those events included preparedness booths, including the Walton County Fair, Freeport Farmer's Market, CHELCO Safety Day, Senior Center Safety Fairs, and the Sandestin Health and Safety Fair.

Emergency Management provides both local and statewide presentations on preparedness and best practices, including guest lecture for the Florida State University Emergency Management and Homeland Security Program, Walton County Rotary Club, Florida Forest Service Prescribed Burn Town Hall, and Preparedness Town Hall meetings.

The team provided professional presentations at the Florida Emergency Preparedness Association (FEPA) Annual Meeting, including Human Trafficking After a Disaster by Jeff Goldberg and How To HERricane by Donna Free and Catie Feeney. Free and Feeney also presented at the National Hurricane Conference and presented on a panel to discuss their experience as mutual aid during Hurricane Ian.

23

COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

18,000

RESIDENTS AND VISITORS REACHED

SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS

WCEM maintains and manages two social media platforms to notify and engage the public during blue skies as well as grey skies, Facebook and Twitter. Both channels have seen an increases in key analytic measurements, including followers, likes, and content engagement. Total page reach has increased for both platforms, with 240,006 impressions for Facebook and 16,012 for Twitter (X).

Please note, Facebook has changed their analytics reporting structure since the FY 21-22, creating reporting discrepancies.

4,246
TWITTER (X) FOLLOWERS

42,469
FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS

ALERT NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

The key to connecting with our community is our alert and notification system. We use a multi-prong approach to this employing social media, press releases, and Everbridge/AlertWalton system. Since the inception of the program, we have seen a yearly increase in user groups, notifications, and contacts.

Federal Executive Order 1340 ensures we have an effective, reliable, integrated and comprehensive alert system. IPAWS, or the Integrated Public Alert Warning System allows local jurisdictions to deliver messages simultaneously through multiple sources. In blue skies, the system is used for community updates, and in gray skies, the system is used to share life-saving messaging, including safety messaging, Point of Distribution (POD) locations, sheltering options, and more.

This fiscal year saw an increase across all contact paths, with the total internal contact path count at 146,900, AlertWalton contact paths at 242,096, and IPAWS contact paths at 203, 167. 400 total notifications were distributed from this system last year.

ALERT WALTON

242,096
TOTAL ALERTWALTON CONTACT PATHS

400
TOTAL NOTIFICATIONS

FINANCE

DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET

Every year, county emergency management agencies in the State of Florida receive two grants to support efforts to build and sustain core capabilities across the Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery mission areas. WCEM continuously looks for additional grant funding opportunities to increase the number and quality of programs we deliver as well as to continually upgrade our technology and capabilities.

- Emergency Management Preparedness and Assistance (EMPA) grant comes from the Florida Catastrophic Trust Fund and is funded through home and business insurance surcharges. The **EMPA grant award is $105,806, annually.**
- Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) annual award is based on population and distributed from FEMA. **The EMPG grant award for the fiscal year was $63,933.**
- By way of the Florida Shelter Retrofit Program, our department was able to secure funding for the transfer switch at Freeport High School, costing $126,000. In FY 21-22, Walton County was awarded funding for a 375KW portable generator to provide power to critical infrastructure. Freeport High School is home to the Special Needs Shelter (SpNS), where clients are need to be in a climate-controlled setting; thus, requiring the purchase of a transfer switch to support the H-VAC system. **Between the Shelter Retrofit dollars and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Walton County saved $476,000 on this project!**
- Through Volunteer Florida, our department has the opportunity to apply yearly for the Citizen Corp grant, which improves our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Amateur Radio Emergency Support (ARES) programs. **$10,000 was award to purchase equipment and materials to train members of our community to respond to emergencies and disasters.**
- With careful consideration and planning, the WCEM team was able to expand by allotting funding for a part-time, permanent position. Formally working funded under temporary pay through COVID-19 funding, Gene Jack has now in a permanent position as Emergency Management Specialist.

The department's operating budget for FY 22/23 was $738,648, with WCEM receiving $568,909 in general revenue funding.

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) & INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS & CONTRACTS

MOUs and interlocal agreements are the key to successful operations in gray skies.

- MOU with Stronghold SOF Solutions to use company property and facilities during disasters and emergencies.
- Agreement with Juvare and the Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM) for the use of the Statewide WebEOC incident management software.
- Renewal of MOUs for the Fair Association to use their facilities during disasters and emergencies, DRC Emergency Services for disaster response services, and Tetra Tech for emergency management consulting services.
- Addendum to the Matrix COC MOU regarding the utilization of resources during emergencies and disaster-specific to out of county and state deployment.

TRAINING

In Walton County, we understand the importance of providing year-round training to the emergency management professionals and stakeholders in our area. Serving as the center point for the region, our department is dedicated to hosting unique curricula for the Florida Panhandle. Notable courses offered this year were Texas A&M Extension's (TEEX) Wide-Area Search, L-449 ICS Curricula Train-the-Trainer, and the Florida Recovery Obligation Calculation (F-ROC) training series.

Added this year's curriculum was the EOC 101 training, customized for Walton County staff and partners to better understand our expectations and processes when we activate the EOC. This course incorporates resources for their specific roles, as well as leadership and team building exercises. Additionally, WCEM implemented fire safety, Stop the Bleed, and active assailant training to the schedule for all county employees. A combination of CERT volunteers and EM staff travel around the County to provide these trainings to the different departments.

TRAINING STATISTICS
January 2017 - September 2023

EXERCISES

OPERATION: SLEIGH BELLS RING

Donations Management Functional Exercise

In addition to providing support to the Matrix COC's Community Christmas program, this exercise tested our ability to manage donation operations. Participants created a process to sort the thousands of donated resources, as well as to fulfill resource requests from a pre-vetted list.

OPERATION: WHAT'S MY ZONE?

Public Information and Warning Functional Exercise

This exercise was designed to test the County's external notification process and system, AlertWalton. An informational message was sent to the database on the first day of Hurricane Season, sharing the contact's specific evacuation zone and a link to our website for more preparedness material.

OPERATION: SHOT IN THE DARK

Power Outage Functional Exercise

Developed and delivered by WCEM staff the county's activation staff and partners, this discussion-based functional exercise walked through potential issues in a terrorist driven, nation-wide power outage. Participants of this exercise included over 90 activation staff, community partners, and Walton County leadership. It is a priority of the department to provide exercises outside of the normal hazards, such as hurricanes. This allows participants apply the process to different hazards and think outside of the box in their response tactics.

SPECIAL NEEDS (SPNS) SHELTERING

Sheltering Tabletop and Full-Scale Exercise

Designed and delivered by Donna Free and the Walton County Department of Health (FDOH), staff were able to test their skills in the Special Needs (SpNS) sheltering process. FDOH Walton is responsible for all SpNS clients in a disaster, who are registered individuals that are oxygen or power-dependent. Designing, preparing, and executing a tabletop and full-scale exercise is a labor of love, consisting of a year's worth of planning and coordination.

ACTIVE ASSAILANT

Active Assailant Tabletop Exercise

This four-hour tabletop exercise focused on information/intelligence sharing, coordination of resources, and command/coordination in an active shooter incident. The collaborative efforts of Walton County School District, Walton County Sheriff's Office, Walton County Fire Rescue, and WCEM led to the exercise's successful development and delivery, providing an active discussion among stakeholders and various county counterparts.

Following the tabletop discussion, a full-scale exercise was hosted at South Walton High School. More information of the full scale exercise will be covered in the 23-24 Annual Report.

EOC ENHANCEMENTS

EQUIPMENT INVESTMENTS - FORKLIFT, TRAILER, AND GENERATOR

With the use of EMPG supplemental funding, our department was able to purchase a 375KW trailer mounted generator. Primarily used for Freeport High School and Special Needs sheltering (SpNS) operations, this generator can also be deployed countywide to power lard critical infrastructure facilities. In addition to the generator, our department was able to purchase a forklift and trailer for our logistics warehouse. The forklift has been a asset for other county entities, including Public Works and Walton County Fire Rescue.

WILDSTAR INTERNET SERVICE

In Emergency Management, we are in the business of preparedness and redundancy. Internet access and connectivity are critical in a disaster, hence our efforts to provide additional networks to our Emergency Operations Center. Adding Wildstar internet to the EOC now provides us with five levels of redundancy - fiber, cable, HughesNET satellite, and Starlink Satellite.

CRISIS TRACK PLATFORM

Crisis Track, is a disaster management software that helps responders conduct formal damage assessments and costs, estimates debris removal, assists with resource management, and provides overall situational awareness of a disaster's impact. Using GIS mapping, property appraisal data, and FEMA cost codes, damage assessments can now provide the cost of disaster's impact in real-time. Additionally, the platform provides a self-reporting tool for residents and business owners to document their property. This information is critical when coordinating recovery efforts with the State to request a FEMA declaration.

NEW MACC (MULTI-AGENCY COORDINATION CENTER) PLANNING

At the direction of the Board of County Commissioners (BCC), our team was tasked to help identity the required space, cost of construction, and potential funding opportunities for the future MACC, or Multi-Agency Coordination Center. Through field visits to multiple EOC and 9-1-1 facilities throughout Florida and Alabama, staff has collected information on the needs for a potential space. Additionally, staff has been working with Halff Engineering on cost estimates, potential construction plans, and funding opportunities for this project. A new facility is not only necessary for the functionality of a large response, but is an important investment in the future of the county's public safety for years to come.

PRIDE • PRESERVATION • CONSERVATION
WALTON COUNTY, FLORIDA
WEST FLORIDA AREA
EMERGENCY