

CEMASignal

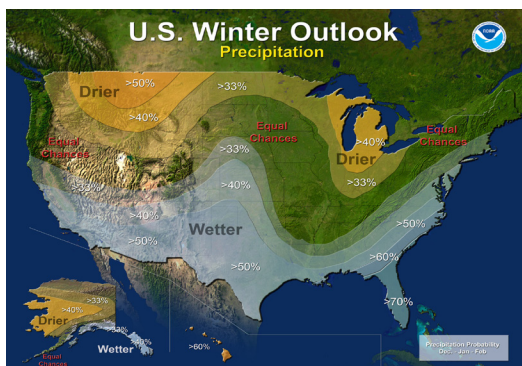
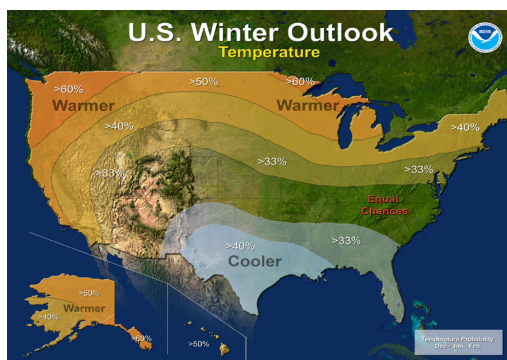


Strong El Niño Sets the Stage for a Cold, Wet Winter

Forecasters at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center issued the U.S. Winter Outlook favoring cooler and wetter weather in Southern Tier states with above-average temperatures most likely in the West and across the North. This year's El Niño, among the strongest on record, is expected to influence weather and climate patterns this winter by impacting the position of the Pacific jet stream.

"A strong El Niño is in place and should exert a strong influence over our weather this winter," said Mike Halpert, Deputy Director, NOAA's Climate Prediction Center. "While temperature and precipitation impacts associated with El Niño are favored, El Niño is not the only player. Cold-air outbreaks and snow storms will likely occur at times this winter. However, the frequency, number and intensity of these events cannot be predicted on a seasonal timescale."

Other factors that often play a role in the winter weather include the Arctic Oscillation, which influences the number of arctic air masses that penetrate into the South and nor'easters on the East Coast, and the Madden-Julian Oscillation, which can impact the number of heavy rain storms in the Pacific Northwest.



Precipitation Outlook:

Wetter-than-average conditions most likely in the Southern Tier of the United States, from central and southern California, across Texas, to Florida, and up the East Coast to southern New England. Above-average precipitation is also favored in southeastern Alaska.

Drier-than-average conditions most likely for Hawaii, central and western Alaska, parts of the Pacific Northwest and northern Rockies, and for areas near the Great Lakes and Ohio Valley.

Temperature Outlook:

Above-average temperatures are favored across much of the West and the northern half of the contiguous United States. Temperatures are also favored to be above-average in Alaska and much of Hawaii. Below-average temperatures are most likely in the southern Plains and Southeast.

This seasonal outlook does not project where and when snowstorms may hit or provide total seasonal snowfall accumulations. Snow forecasts are dependent upon the strength and track of winter storms, which are generally not predictable more than a week in advance.

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EXERCISE NEWS

Damage assessment is one of the most important elements of the county's response to an emergency or disaster. Read more about our full scale damage assessment exercise on page 16.

SAVE THE DATE

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A Message from the Interim Director



To welcome 2016, the Chatham EMA Team developed and prioritized Agency objectives for the upcoming year. An emphasis on training and exercise remains a top priority, however we realize it wouldn't be possible without a commitment to our partners. It is our goal to maximize customer service and build strong relationships with local, state and federal emergency management partners. Ultimately, we are your local emergency management agency. We want you to be a part of the process and we want your feedback so we can provide you a better service. With that in mind, we are starting 2016 off strong with several ways you can get involved.

First, consider joining our Chatham Community Organizations Active in Disasters (CCOAD). The workgroup was established to assist emergency managers in developing guidelines that support quick response and recovery for businesses, volunteer groups and community based organizations. Are you a leader in your field? If so, we need your expertise and knowledge before, during and after a major disaster. With your help, we can identify and leverage community resources which will directly influence how our community recovers. Chatham EMA will host a summit on February 23, 2016 to re-introduce the program and kick off a new year.

Second, learn more about our Emergency Management Program Advisory Committee. Municipal leaders are encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity to get in on the ground floor of this new effort, and help us pave the way for a safer and more prepared tomorrow. Your valuable input will help shape our program and better identify mitigation efforts. The Advisory Committee will meet on the first Thursday of every three months throughout the calendar year. This once a quarter meeting will be conducted in the morning hours unless otherwise arranged and communicated to the members.

Third, stay up to date with our training and exercise calendars and read our "Save the Dates." We know that the best relationships are forged when we work together, so if you have the chance, join us for a training session or participate in an exercise. These opportunities are created for you, with your department's needs in mind. Through exercising our plans or learning something new, we are able to test our abilities as a community and adjust where needed. If you have an event that you would like help promoting, let us know. We are here for you.

Web EOC Training



Information is powerful during an emergency and it helps when all parties know where to go to find the latest updates. WebEOC is a web-based information management system that provides a single access point for the collection and dissemination of emergency or event-related information. To maintain situational awareness and common operating picture, Chatham EMA duty officers use the system daily to track incidents that impact Chatham County and produce reports for elected officials.

On November 12th, Chatham EMA visited the Georgia 165th Air National Guard (ANG) to showcase the system and provide a half day training event. In an emergency, trained 165th staff will help monitor and maintain situational awareness for the Georgia Guard's post at the airport and will provide 165th ANG Command Staff with valuable information needed to make command and tactical decisions. Once they are familiar with WebEOC, staff can be anywhere on or off property and know what is happening as long as they have a smart device or computer/laptop with internet access.

In June, the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport began using WebEOC to track daily operational occurrences on the property. Being able to share real time information with other partners in the county allows for more rapid support to incident commanders in the field and deployment of resources to help accomplish the mission. WebEOC is user friendly and easy to learn; however, it does require practice and becoming familiar with the login process and navigating the control panel. Chatham EMA offers continuous training and requires monthly login of users. For more information, call our office at (912) 201-4500.

Getting Out of Dodge: Exercising Preparedness

The clock is ticking. The storm is approaching and every second counts. You are a Chatham County Department Head with an important job to do. You have an office full of employees who rely on you to know the Hurricane Plan and are looking to you for guidance. Do you know when to evacuate your department? How will you communicate? How will your employees know when to come back and will you have a job for them? Those are just some of the questions we raised to Department Heads during our Hurricane Evacuation Tabletop Exercise on August 25th. The exercise gave Chatham County a chance to review department evacuation procedures, identify best practices, planning gaps and unmet needs, as well as identify department mission essential functions, all in a no-fault environment. There were no trick questions or hidden agendas, the information that was provided was valid, and as we would soon find out, the scenario was realistic. All exercise participants received the information at the same time and were expected to react as if the exercise were a real incident.

The exercise is part of Chatham EMA's new training and exercise initiative for Team Chatham Employees that will take place over the next year. "Gettin' Outta Dodge" was the first exercise to kick off the new program, which is designed to increase emergency management knowledge and participation among all County Departments. County Manager Lee Smith has a background in emergency management and knows the importance of exercising plans. "When the lights go out, when the winds blow, and the water is rising that's not the time to figure it out," he says. "You have to do it well in advance and that's why I appreciate the Chatham EMA staff putting this together."

The exercise kicked off as if the county were 120 hours away from the impact of a tropical storm or hurricane. Department heads had to walk through the evacuation timeline for their office and eventually initiate the evacuation plan. As the scenario progressed, participants gained a new understanding of what is expected and required during an evacuation or emergency. "The purpose of this exercise, is not to overwhelm or scare anyone," says Dennis Jones, Chatham EMA's Interim Director. "Some of what is actually in the plan is new to them, but we are here to help and make the process easier. Hopefully they will go back to their departments knowing that they have an entire office of emergency management professionals behind them. We are a team and we are just a phone call away. It's what we're here to do."



Disaster Recovery Plan

In September 2015, Chatham EMA finalized the draft of Chatham County Disaster Recovery Plan. The purpose of this plan is to facilitate recovery from emergencies that cause significant impact to infrastructure, housing, the economy, and the health, social, cultural, historic and environmental framework of the community. The plan was developed using an all-hazards approach to establish a comprehensive plan for managing recovery efforts within the municipal and county governments in Chatham County. The goal of recovery is to return populations, infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources to pre-disaster or better conditions as quickly as possible following a disaster.

The planning process took over a year after soliciting for information from a multitude of sources such as: The Metropolitan Planning Commission, Chatham County Board of Assessors, Chatham County Building Safety and Regulatory Services, Engineering departments, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, GDOT, Savannah Airport Commission, Savannah-Chatham County Public School System, Department of Public Health, jurisdictional representatives, as well as many others. With partner input, the plan was designed to identify potential actions required and the assistance necessary to support the recovery of the impacted jurisdictions. The Disaster Recovery Plan is only a starting point. It provides the basic framework for recovery, however each disaster is unique and will require different response tactics. Further build out of the plan is expected, as well as training and exercising critical partners in their roles and responsibilities after a disaster strikes.

Tropical Storm Erika: When Practice Counts



Chatham Emergency Management Staff
Monitors Tropical Storm Erika

With the 11 p.m. advisory on August 24, 2015, The National Hurricane Center in Miami issued a statement announcing that a Tropical Storm (TS) had formed in the Atlantic Ocean off of the African Coast. The storm was named Erika and it would soon put Chatham County on high alert. It is standard procedure for the Chatham Emergency Management duty officer to continuously monitor storms, but on August 26th it became clear that Erika would pose a real threat to our community and Chatham EMA began distributing Erika Weather Reports to emergency partners and residents. On August 27th, just two days after our Department Head Tabletop Exercise, the forecast of TS Erika placed Chatham County within the error cone and we advanced to Operating Condition 4 (OPCON 4).

With OPCON 4 comes a Level III Emergency Operations Center Activation, which is staffed by Chatham EMA employees. Once we entered into OPCON 4, in an effort to gain as much situational awareness as possible, conference calls were scheduled with County Department Heads, Local Partners, the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and The National Weather Service. We also contacted the Functional Medical Needs group and the Long Term Care Facilities.

Chatham County remained in OPCON 4 until mid-morning on August 29th when TS Erika was downgraded to a tropical wave after disintegrating over the mountainous landscape of Hispaniola. They say “practice makes perfect” and in this case, that really is true. Having just completed a County Hurricane Exercise with all Department Heads, the response to Erika was seamless and all parties knew exactly what their roles were.

“We were able to test the functionality of monitoring equipment along with the distribution of information,” says Interim Director Dennis Jones. “In the past because staff was split by Emergency Support Function it was difficult to address staffing, with the new way we are organized, weekend staffing was addressed by identifying the need of one person from Planning, Administration and Operations to work a shift.”

Continuity of Operations Plan Facilities

A Continuity of Operations Plan, often referred to as a COOP, can be difficult to understand and intimidating to develop. To make the process easier, Chatham EMA is working with each Chatham County department to develop their own COOP and addresses the recovery of critical and essential government operations in the event of an emergency. One issue was common across the board: the failure to identify or secure alternate facilities for operation. This crucial step has now been worked into the plan.

The initial phase in developing this plan was to look at four key facilities and confirm whether or not they would meet the needs of a COOP facility. Representatives from the departments tasked with setting up an alternate work facility were invited to participate in walk-through tours to validate each location and identify the required resources. The Chatham County COOP Facility Assessment Team (CFAT) was created to identify, inspect and coordinate facility activation, operation and shutdown. The CFAT is made up of representatives from the Chatham Emergency Management Agency, Facilities Maintenance & Operations, Information and Communications Systems, Occupational Safety & Risk Management, and Purchasing.

The plan was developed and now serves as a guide to opening and operating a COOP facility. Within the plan, attachments contain information specific to each facility that should be taken into consideration while operating from that site. When a department is unable to operate out of their primary location due to a critical incident, their COOP will be activated and they will relocate to an alternate facility. Chatham EMA is working with the Department COOP Coordinators to identify appropriate facilities to be incorporated into their plans.

If the incident is large enough, alternate facilities might not be available within the County. CFAT is now tasked with reaching out to other counties to secure possible facilities. Preliminary locations have been identified in Effingham, Bulloch and Richmond Counties. Upcoming walk-through inspections will be scheduled for early 2016.



In November, Chatham Emergency
Management Staff assisted the
Metropolitan Planning Commission
with a tabletop exercise where COOP
was a major topic of discussion

Communication is Critical to an Incident

-By Byron Haire



Byron Haire has 23 years with the Georgia Forestry Commission. He has direct supervision of fire control personnel in eleven counties and has worked as the Public Information Officer for the Incident Management Team for more than a decade.



Wood chip pile fires can burn for months and the potential for hazardous conditions pose a very real threat to communities. On October 30th, Emergency crews found themselves in the thick of it, working a chip fire near the City Limit of Pooler and Quacco Road. Due to the close proximity to the highway and the weather conditions that weekend, the fire event had the opportunity to get out of hand quickly. Early on it was determined that this was going to be an extended event lasting several days and the community needed to know the risks.

Communication during an emergency is critical and this is where Chatham County Public Information Officers Association (CCPIOA) became a very valuable resource. Public Information Officers within Chatham County have a vast array of tools available, should they need assistance when disseminating information from the field. With a simple phone call to the Chatham EMA public information officer, we activated the Joint Information System and text alerts and media notifications went out within minutes. This created some media interest, allowing us the opportunity to explain the safety concerns associated with the fire and why residents should be on alert. By working together within the Joint Information System, we were able to share critical information in a very short time period. The warnings and information could have taken days for me to get to the public if I were working alone. I rested comfortably that night knowing that the public was informed.

As field personnel, we often forget how valuable it can be to get information out to the public. I think back on past events and the number of phone calls we receive from concerned citizens who just need or want to know what was happening and they want to know ASAP. I'm glad we were able to utilize the resources available to for strong public information dissemination. It was a great exercise in emergency communication.

I encourage you to seek opportunities to work with cooperating agencies. Attend training events, even if you don't think they affect you or your agency. Training events provide a great opportunity to get to know the players and assets in your community that may be able to assist you when you need help.

Preventing the Flu, One Car at a Time

-By Sally Silbermann



Sally Silbermann is the Risk Communicator/Public Information Officer for the Coastal Health District which includes health departments and public health programs in Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Liberty, Long, and McIntosh counties. She is responsible for promoting public health services and initiatives and communicating in crisis situations. She has worked for the Coastal Health District for eight years.



When residents pulled up in their vehicles to get flu shots at the Chatham County Health Department's drive-through flu vaccination clinic, they saw it as a convenient way to get protection from the flu. What they didn't see was the hours of preparation that went into planning the clinic that doubled as an exercise in emergency preparedness and response.

"If and when there is a public health emergency that requires getting medicine to people quickly, the health department would be responsible for that," said Chatham County Environmental Health Manager, Mike Pitts. "The drive-through model of dispensing medication is a great way to accomplish that task in a timely and efficient manner."

Several community partners joined the health department to test emergency preparedness and response procedures. Chatham County Emergency Management Agency, Salvation Army, McIntosh County Environmental Health, Glynn County Health Department, Armstrong State University, Georgia Air National Guard, Savannah Technical College, Chatham County Sheriff's Office, Savannah-Chatham Metropolitan Police Department, Southside Fire/EMS, and South University were among those taking part in the exercise which was part of a three-day statewide exercise conducted by the Georgia Department of Public Health. As part of the statewide effort, a large truck from the metro-Atlanta area arrived during the exercise to simulate the delivery of a cache of medicine. The truck was escorted by Georgia State Patrol officers.

"Exercising preparedness capabilities means testing whatever tasks we might need to perform during an actual event – from setting up tents and signs to making sure that the delivery of medication follows the appropriate chain of custody," said Pitts.

The exercise also allowed those involved to test communication tools, gauge vaccination times, and react to issues that came up during the day. A hot wash analysis was conducted after the exercise to discuss processes that worked along with procedures that could be improved.

"One of the most important parts of any exercise is taking a long, hard look at everything that happened before and during the event so we can learn from things that worked and things that didn't," said Pitts. "This was an outstanding exercise that solidified processes, protocols, and partnerships."



Unity of Effort: Emergency Management Advisory Committee

A new and exciting initiative is in the works for Chatham County. Inclusion and increased participation is a primary focus for the Chatham EMA and continues to be our driving force to ensure we are prepared for any disaster. We recognize that the best way to accomplish this is through partnership and collaboration with community members and local leaders.

Beginning in January, we have asked each City Manager / Administrator and Senior County Leadership to serve on an Advisory Committee for the Emergency Management Program. Your input is equally important and valued. With your participation, Advisory Committee members will analyze Chatham EMA's emergency management initiatives and evaluate our effectiveness in emergency preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation efforts. The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to offer an opportunity for partners to have ownership and a voice within the emergency management program.

The Emergency Management Program Advisory Committee is a County-wide workgroup consisting of the members below. Additional attendees are welcomed and encouraged.

- Bloomingdale
- Garden City
- Pooler
- Port Wentworth
- Savannah
- Thunderbolt
- Tybee Island
- The County Manager
- The Chairman of the County Commission
- Other key stakeholders

The advisory Committee is designed to offer guidance and feedback on the status, delivery and effectiveness of the county-wide Emergency Management Program regarding preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation initiatives.

Coordination of the community-wide Emergency Management Program creates a resilient community and provides confidence in government responsibility. Building a holistic approach to preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation principals begins with executive leadership at each government promoting a top-down organizational

The Advisory Committee will meet on the first Thursday of every three months throughout the calendar year. This once a quarter meeting will be conducted in the morning hours unless otherwise arranged and communicated to the members.

FACT: About 50% of businesses do not survive a natural disaster.
CCOAD is here for you.

CCOAD is a community work group comprised of for-profit and non-profit businesses, faith-based communities, and public agencies.

Together, we strengthen county-wide disaster coordination by sharing information and identifying resources.

Partnerships ease access to available services to help meet the needs of the community after a disaster.

BE READY. JOIN US.

**PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP
SUMMIT**

**February 23, 2016
8:00 AM -12:00 PM
Savannah Civic Center**



CHATHAM

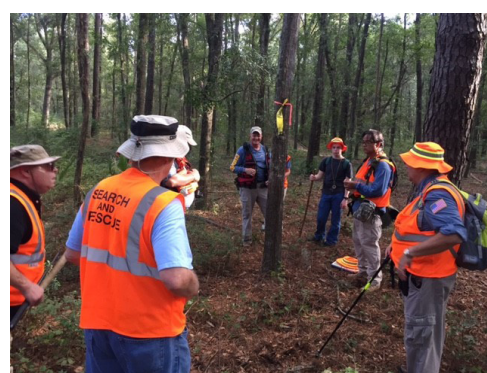
Community Organizations Active in Disaster

COOPERATION - COMMUNICATION - COORDINATION - COLLABORATION



Metro officers block US Highway 80 to Tybee due to rising waters. Read more on page 10.

Search and Rescue News



On August 29, Chatham EMA's Search and Rescue Team took to the woods of Tom Triplett Park to simulate searching for a missing autistic child that had gone missing overnight. A dozen seasoned Chatham EMA Search and Rescue team members answered the call, along with a prospective volunteer, and two scent tracking dogs. Prior to the search team's arrival, a young volunteer and her mother had headed out into the woods, to simulate a lost victim.

After the situation briefing, the two search teams were created. One team worked with the K9, trying to track the scent article provided, and another searched the northern section of Tom Triplett Park. It didn't take long for the K9 to pick up the scent of the missing girl, tracking the scent over pavement, a walking bridge, as well as through the woods. After about 30 minutes, the K9 team was able to locate the "missing child" off the beaten path in the woods.

After finding the missing child, the team then navigated back to the starting point, regrouped, then began the next exercise. For the next exercise, the team was given a plot of land to search. On this plot, team members lined up and practiced sweeping an area, looking for clues. This was meant to help train the eyes of the search team, where finding even the smallest of clues could help in the overall search for a missing person. On September 19, the volunteer Search and Rescue Team spent the morning practicing navigation using a compass. This technique is very useful for conducting wilderness searches, where teams may split up to cover specific grids, or areas. During this training, SAR team members were able to verify their pace count so they had an approximate idea of distance traveled while conducting searches, as well as practice navigating around large obstacles, such as ponds, while still maintain a precise course. Also discussed were best practices for SAR team members while conducting searches, in order to keep the searches safe while attempting to locate the victim.

Detention Center Evacuation Planning



During the 2015 Atlantic Hurricane Season, the Chatham County Sheriff's Office assessed their facilities and determined that their plan to shelter in place was no longer valid. They contacted Chatham EMA to assist in creating a disaster evacuation plan for the officers and inmates. The Chatham EMA Planning Team met with officers, administrative staff and facilities staff to lay the basic framework for the evacuation plan.

The evacuation of inmates requires an enormous amount of forethought and can present many logistical challenges. Working as a team, we discussed possible evacuation locations, transportation issues and how specific groups of inmates should be transferred. To support these conversations, officials from other facilities outside the county, members of the Chatham County Court System, and transportation companies were invited to give recommendations. Chatham EMA also contacted employees within the Georgia Department of Prisons and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency for guidance. Using the information garnered from these parties, the Planning Team began the framework for the plan.

Once that was completed, Chatham EMA met with the Sheriff's Office to discuss the timeline of the evacuation process and the logistical order for each step in the plan. Walking through the process allowed for both parties to ask questions as to what would be happening in Chatham County during a specific time-period. It also gave both sides more insight into what additional support is needed for each agency involved.

With the framework and the evacuation process complete, the Planning Team was able to begin drafting a plan using all the information gathered at the meetings. In December, a draft of the Evacuation Plan was presented to the Sheriff's Office and other impacted partners. After revisions and a final review, Chatham County will have an official evacuation plan for the Chatham County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center.

Intern Spotlight: Darian Buckmon

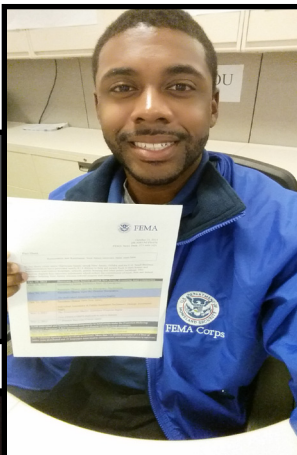
Darian was an intern for Chatham EMA during his Senior Spring Semester at Savannah State University. We noticed he was a fast learner and was obviously eager to make the most of his time with us. We quickly gave Darian ownership of several of our plans for review and he exceeded our expectations. We are proud of his recent work! Thank you, Darian, for sharing this with us. We wish you best in the future! --Dennis Jones, Interim Director

I have joined a Community Service program that partners with FEMA called AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). The goal of the program is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. We are required to get 1700 hours of FEMA work and complete Independent Study Projects in order to graduate from the program. Monday through Friday, you will find me working with FEMA on various projects, and on weekends I work with non-profit organizations. Our work consists of building houses, painting, sanding, laying cement, clearing invasive species, building nature trails, soup kitchens, and much more!

I was based out of the Vinton, Iowa campus. It's a nice, small, rural town with lots of corn! I had my training in Vicksburg, Mississippi in Public Assistance and Eligibility. We are required to do three rounds of Public Assistance work. I am currently in my first round which has placed me in the Sandy Recovery Office in Eatontown, New Jersey. I am an Atlanta native who went to Savannah State University for Homeland Security & Emergency Management. I am in a team of eight people and we live, eat, sleep, and do everything together for 10 months of the program. It is very exciting!

I am extremely grateful for the time I spent at Chatham EMA and for the opportunities I had to learn. I got one-on-one attention from staff and they took time to answer all my questions. My internship helped prepare me for the work I am doing with FEMA and I'm loving every minute of it!

"This is me holding the New Jersey Timesheet for Hurricane Sandy that I created. It's going onto the FEMA website soon!"



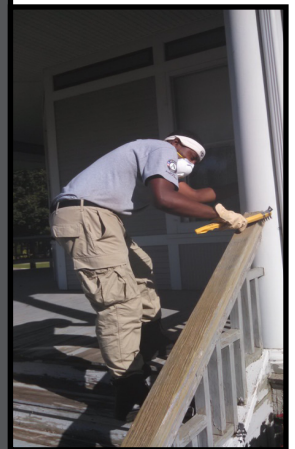
"The blue shirts are FEMA CORPS required Uniform. The tall gentleman in the middle Jose Phillips, the National Director of the Program."

Darian is the fourth from the left.

"The photos of us in the gray uniforms are the NCCC uniforms that we wear when we do Independent Study Projects for non-profits."

ISPs to date include:

- The historic Rays House Museum, in Vinton, Iowa, Beach Clean-up at the Sandy Hook National Park in New Jersey
- Building nature trails at Vicksburg's National Military Park/Museum
- The St. Bernard Project-Building a home for Hurricane Sandy Survivors in Seaside Heights, New Jersey



High(er) Tides: You Aren't Imagining It



On October 27th and 28th, Chatham County residents on the islands experienced road closures and delays thanks to a "King Tide." This tidal event became the third highest recorded tidal event for the Fort Pulaski, Savannah River Gage since the National Weather Service started recording at Fort Pulaski. A "King Tide" is described as an especially high tide. Coastal communities around the world experience perigean spring tides about three or four times a year when the Moon is at its closest point to the Earth and coincides when the Earth, Sun and Moon are nearly aligned every two weeks. A King Tide is not a scientific term, but is used to describe the very highest of high tides. A weather pattern off shore produced onshore flow from the Atlantic that helped bring the water further into Chatham County, covering roads and seeping into homes. These King Tide events lasted up to four hours, frustrating residents and causing them to be late for work and miss school.

As flood reports came in, the Chatham Emergency Management Agency deployed five staff members around the County to monitor, record and document flooding. Flooding was reported on Oatland Island, Wilmington Island, Whitmarsh Island, Burnside Island, Dutch Island and Tybee Island.

During the days surrounding the highest part of the tidal impacts, Chatham EMA reached out and coordinated with various partners to ensure residents and visitors were informed and protected. These partners helped monitor the status of various roads, cleared debris, closed and open roads when needed and stage additional assets to support the areas. The Savannah Chatham Metropolitan Police Department, Savannah Chatham 911 Dispatch, Southside Fire/EMS, Chatham County Public Works, Tybee Island Police, Tybee Island Fire and the Georgia Department of Transportation worked together to assist those in impacted areas.

Residents should take the time to prepare in between the perigean spring tides and have plans in place to support themselves and their families if they are displaced during one of these events. Consider leaving early to drive home or to work. Ensure you have adequate flood insurance if you live along an area that could experience a shallow coastal flooding event. Remember, "turn around, don't drown" and never attempt to drive through water on the roadway. For more information on preparedness or flood safety, visit our website at ChathamEmergency.org.



Rising waters covered roads forcing many Tybee Island Residents to miss work, stranding them on the island for a short period of time.

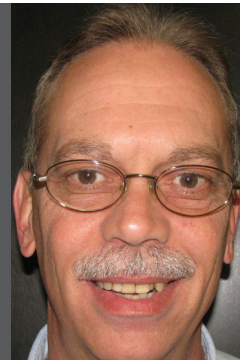
Fighting Fire From the Water

-By Mark Keller



Savannah Fire Chief Charles Middleton & members of Savannah City Council christen the vessel on September 15, 2015

Mark Keller is the Public Information Officer for Savannah Fire and Emergency Services.



Savannah Fire Chief Charles G. Middleton and Savannah Mayor Edna B. Jackson christened the department's new All Hazards boat "Courageous" September 15th at the city dock on River St. The new boat arrived in the city a couple of weeks earlier as Savannah firefighters, along with manufacturer representatives, piloted the vessel up the

Savannah River following a weeklong journey from Kingston, Ontario where it was designed and built to SFES specifications.

The City Of Savannah was awarded a \$1.2-million grant through the Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's Port Security Grant Program in 2014 for the singular purpose of acquiring an "All Hazards Response Boat".

The All Hazards vessel will be utilized by Savannah Fire & Emergency Services in the event of a natural, technological or human-caused event involving chemicals, biological agents, explosives, radiological and/or nuclear devices. Savannah firefighters will also use the boat's capabilities for maritime firefighting and for fighting fires along the city's riverfront.

The Port of Savannah is a leading southern port and is the main distribution point for surrounding areas of the country. The City of Savannah provides first responders and resources for much of the Port of Savannah. The city provides the first layer of protection regarding fire protection and prevention, as well as responses to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive incidents with its specialized units. In addition, the city is expected to support local, state and federal personnel with specialized response teams for incidents involving any type of commercial or private vessel.

Application for the grant was a joint effort between Savannah Fire & Emergency Services and the Georgia Ports Authority. Chief Middleton says the boat will be another tool for the department to help protect lives and property within the port. "This is another step in Savannah Fire's continuing efforts to enhance the department's maritime firefighting capabilities that will help ensure the continuity of operations for an important part of the local and state economies," he said.

The vessel was constructed by Metal Craft Marine. It is 50 feet long with a pumping capacity of 8,000 gallons per minute. It will augment Savannah Fire's industrial firefighting equipment (IFE) which includes submersible pumps and high output canons that allow Savannah firefighters to utilize water from all sources, including rivers and ponds. That equipment was acquired through a Department of Homeland Security/FEMA Port Security Grant in 2011.



Residents battle encroaching waters on Lewis Avenue on Tybee Island. Property owners laid sandbags at their front doors to keep water from the road and yards from entering their homes.

Internship Opportunities at Chatham EMA

Interns play an important part in our operations. In the past, interns have assisted in reviewing and researching plans, researching grants and grant components, conducting scheduled equipment checks and researching volunteer opportunities. Realizing that internships are an investment in the development of future Emergency Management professionals, the Chatham Emergency Management Agency has performed a review of the current internship program and made changes that will create a stronger relationship between future interns and Chatham EMA staff.

Beginning in Spring 2016, all internship candidates must complete an application packet consisting of an application, cover letter, resume and letter of recommendation from a professor. In order to be considered for an internship, each candidate must be at least a rising junior in college, possess a B average and have a declared major. Consideration will be given to candidates that have a strong interest in Emergency Management or a related field and demonstrate the ability to write professionally; work both independently and as a team; and conduct and analyze research. Within the new internship program, interns are now able to apply for a specific internship position within Chatham EMA.

Depending on the upcoming needs of the agency, the positions will rotate between Operations, Planning and Public Relations. Operation Interns will shadow the agency's Operations Emergency Specialist and assist in conducting scheduled equipment tests, perform maintenance checks on emergency equipment and review new initiatives for inclusion in the agency's response systems. Planning Interns will work directly with the Planning Emergency Specialists and assist in reviewing, writing and compiling plans and planning efforts. Public Information Interns will aid the Public Information Officer with creating and disseminating information related to emergencies and public awareness while also cultivating the agency's volunteer program. Another position will be added as needed for graduate students. Graduate level interns will rotate throughout the agency and shadow not only the planning, operations and public information sections but also the training and exercise area as well as observe the daily functions necessary to maintaining the department.

As the Chatham EMA grows and strengthens the internship program, we look forward to cultivating and broadening the views of college students and helping them begin their career in Emergency Management with hands-on experience and a basic knowledge of how an Emergency Management Agency operates. For additional information on how to apply for an internship, please contact the Chatham Emergency Management Agency at (912) 201-4500.

"Save The Dates" & Why They Matter



Emergency Management Program

SAVE THE DATE

September & October 2015

County Department Follow up Meetings

WHEN: September 1 - 30, 2015 at a Time Convenient for Each Department
WHERE: Each Department's Location
WHO: Department Head, Key Staff Member, CEMA
ACTION: Please coordinate a convenient date & time with CEMA by calling (912) 201-4500.

National Preparedness Month Lunch & Learn

WHEN: September 4, 2015, 11:30 AM- 1:00 PM
WHERE: Old Co. Courthouse, 2nd Floor Commission Room
WHO: All Interested County Team Members
ACTION: None

ESF-6/8 Functional Medical Needs (FMN) Meeting

WHEN: September 8, 2015 9:00 AM- 10:00 AM

Daniel Defense Public Safety Day

WHEN: September 12, 2015, 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM
WHERE: Pooler Park
WHO: General Public
ACTION: None

New Employee Orientation

WHEN: September 14, 2015, 8:00 AM
WHERE: Old County Courthouse, Commission Room
WHO: New Team Chatham Employees
ACTION: None

ESF-02: Communications Workgroup

WHEN: September 15, 2015, 10:00 AM- 11:00 AM
WHERE: Annex EOC
WHO: Building Safety, Fleet, Public Works, Parks &

Beginning in August, Chatham EMA announced a new planning, training and exercise initiative that will continue over the next year. In an effort to increase participation, partners will receive an Emergency Management Program "Save the Date" flyer at the start of each month that lists upcoming events for a two month period. It is our goal to give key players and partners sufficient notification about important upcoming opportunities, that through involvement, helps strengthen our community. We have simplified the information so recipients can quickly assess whether or not the event pertains to them, their department or municipality. Action items are also included to take the guess work out of registration. If you have any questions or need additional information, we are happy to assist! Give us a call at (912) 201-4500.

For the latest happenings in Emergency Management training and exercise, view our calendar on page 19.

Pooler Patriots Day



On September 12th, 2015, the Mobile Emergency Operations Center (MEOC) was deployed to the Pooler Park for the 2015 Pooler Patriot's Day Weekend and was used as a static display for visitors to look at as well as a tactical command post for Pooler Police Department. Chatham EMA Staff welcomed hundreds of visitors to tour the display and explained the technology inside the MEOC. During the twelve hour display, it was used for shelter by some as a light shower moved over the area. In the evening hours during the concert, the MEOC helped illuminate the areas around the vehicle. The MEOC was used by the Pooler Police Department Command Staff for tactical observations of the event and weather monitoring. In the Command Section of the MEOC, the high speed internet connection allowed direct communication to the National Weather Service in Charleston, as well as download radar data on the touch screen Mondopad. The MEOC's video surveillance support provides Command Staff multiple cameras on the outside to monitor the area and record the event.

Situational Awareness & COP

Situational Awareness (SA) and Common Operating Picture (COP) are critical to decision making, rapid staff action and mission execution under the Incident Command System (ICS). During the month of August, FEMA hosted a class in Chatham County to teach these principals to area emergency management personnel and first responders from across the country. The four day course taught students on how to stay aware of happenings in their City, County, State, Region and nationally.

The class stressed the importance of maintaining SA/COP during daily operations and especially for planned or unplanned events. Everyone, from the lowest ranked staff member to the highest elected official, has a responsibility to contribute information that is reliable and timely. The class was taught by two FEMA instructors who each brought their own expertise and background to the discussion. Interactive exercises walked students through the process of gaining situational awareness and guided questions to help them paint a common operating picture.

Throughout the training, students were shown best practices that are easy to implement at their agency to help gain SA/COP. In today's technology driven world, agencies need to know how to utilize social media tools that can help gain SA/COP. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Periscope are easily accessible and free to use. By planning and training together information can be decimated to all agencies during a real world event and can allow Incident or Unified Command to make timely, safe and wise decisions.



Spreading the News is Easier Thanks to Public-Private Partnerships



Digital billboards are not just for the advertisement of restaurants, shopping and services anymore. Private companies have begun opening airspace to broadcast Amber Alerts and other emergency notifications when every second counts. As Emergency Managers, it's our job to get lifesaving information to the public as quickly as possible. We use a variety of mediums to accomplish this goal, but now we have another tool in our arsenal thanks to a public-private partnership with Adams Outdoor Advertising.

In October 2015, Chatham EMA entered into a year-long agreement with Adams where the billboard company agreed to host emergency preparedness messages on the digital board located at Exit 102 on Highway 95. The benefit to using digital boards is that they are bright and hard to miss—especially at night, and they can be updated with an emergency notification within minutes. Adams Real Estate Manager Michael Ruthsatz says they are excited about the partnership and the agreement just makes sense. "We reached out to our local EMA because we truly believe outdoor advertising is a vital tool in delivering a message to the public. A partnership with Chatham Emergency Management allows us to help convey important messages, not just in the event of an emergency, to the citizens and community we live and work in every day."

Adams has strong ties to the community and has a commitment to giving back. We have worked with an Adams graphic artist to create several preparedness campaigns that will run through the winter, including special messaging for severe weather. When it comes to emergency management and public safety, partnerships are critical. "Chatham EMA works hard for our county on many fronts," says Ruthsatz. "We are looking forward to building a relationship that can help further their efforts."

We understand that no agency can do it alone and we are grateful that Adams is supporting our mission.



There are up to 400,000 billboards nationwide and more than 2,400 are digital.

Since June 2008, more than 500 Amber Alerts have been transmitted to digital billboards by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

In 2011, the FBI has captured more than 40 fugitives based on tips generated by digital billboards.

-Outdoor Advertising Association of America

NPREP Exercise

The Savannah Spill Response Corporation (SSRC) sponsored the annual National Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (NPREP) Functional Tabletop Exercise on September 30th at the Coastal Georgia Center. The 2015 Exercise was planned by members of the Savannah Spill Response Corporation, Gallagher Marine Systems, and United States Coast Guard MSU Savannah.

The NPREP provides a framework and guiding principle for conducting oil pollution response exercises as outlined in the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. To ensure that the Savannah area maritime community remains prepared for oil pollution response, NPREP exercises are documented and evaluated to reinforce best practices and identify opportunities for improvement.

This exercise scenario was to focus on participants' emergency response plans, policies, and procedures, as they pertain to pollution discharge. One of the SSRC facilities located on the Savannah River had simulated oil spill into the river requiring numerous resources. A Unified Command based response organization was established and comprised of responders from local, state, federal and industry response organizations, as well as community representatives and other stakeholders.

This exercise is different from others in Chatham County, which focuses on government agencies who operate routinely within the Incident Command System (ICS) environment. The participants in this exercise are primarily represented by the SSRC industries. CEMA has been participating in the NPREP exercises for years. The knowledge and experience demonstrated at this year's exercise reflected the importance of this program and a level of confidence that SSRC is prepared to respond to oil pollution incidents.



Chatham EMA Staff Rings Bell for Salvation Army



On Thanksgiving Day, the Salvation Army's 125th National Red Kettle Campaign kicked-off. For two days in December, Chatham EMA Staff rotated as Bell Ringers to collect funds on their behalf. Locally, the non-profit is known for their 24 hour, 365-day-a-year emergency shelter for men, women and children, but the non-profit is also a critical partner in Disaster Response and

Recovery. In a disaster, no single organization can do it all. The Salvation Army goes above and beyond to support Chatham EMA and area first responders at a moment's notice, which is why we were so happy to offer our support this holiday season.

The most visible Salvation Army disaster service is often the hot meals and cold drinks served from the Salvation Army mobile kitchen to disaster survivors and emergency personnel. Whenever there is an activation of the Emergency Operations Center or an Emergency Response Exercise, the Salvation Army's Canteen is there making sure crews don't work on empty stomachs. Their service goes beyond just a meal, it lets recipients know people care and sometimes that is what they need the most.

Cash donations allow the Salvation Army to immediately meet the specific needs of disaster survivors and emergency crews. Disaster relief services are funded entirely by donors and 100% of all disaster donations are used in support of disaster relief. Monetary donations are welcome and can be made by calling 1-800-SAL-ARMY or online at www.salvationarmyusa.org.



Damage Assessment Critical to Recovery



In the very early hours of November 5, 2015, western areas of Chatham County (primarily the Bloomingdale and Pooler area) experienced a Severe Thunderstorm with very strong winds causing wide spread damage to structures and infrastructure in the area. During the immediate aftermath (hours of darkness) First Responders were able to conduct initial Search and Rescue Operations and dealt with immediate life-safety issues. Both Bloomingdale and Pooler requested support as outlined in the County-wide Damage Assessment Strategy. This sounds like a very real weather event for Chatham County, but on this day it was the scenario for a Full Scale Exercise to test the training and mobilization of the Chatham County Damage Assessment Team.

Damage Assessment personnel were notified to report to the Staging Area by 7:30 AM located at the Bi-Lo Parking Lot on Highway 80 and Chatham Parkway in Pooler. This five hour exercise allowed Damage Assessment Team members to utilize training and knowledge of the Damage Assessment Strategy. They conducted structural damage and safety assessments of simulated residential, commercial, and not for profit properties within three separate areas within bordering jurisdictions. Once the Teams completed their inspections, the Damage Assessment Field Reports were reviewed by Team Leaders and transmitted to the EOC Damage Assessment Unit located in the Mobile Emergency Operations Center. Upon receiving the Field Sheets, Summary Reports were compiled that would be forwarded to the Georgia State Operations Center in a real incident.

An exercise After Action Report and Improvement Plan has been prepared to cover the exercise schedule, scenario, Players' activities, evaluations, issues, opportunities, and best practices. The evaluation of overall exercise performance will be used to revise and update the Chatham County Damage Assessment Strategy.



DO YOU HAVE A PASSION FOR PETS?

JOIN THE CHATHAM ANIMAL RESPONSE TEAM.

Because **all** lives deserve to be protected during a disaster.

LEARN MORE ON PAGE 18

Calliope the Cat and Storm the Dog are both available for adoption at the Humane Society of Greater Savannah



Humane Society News



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PROGRAMS

SERVICES

HOW TO HELP

ANSWERS

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Lynn Gensamer



Michelle Thevenin

PET FIX SAVANNAH

AVAILABLE FOR APPOINTMENTS IN JANUARY

2016 is shaping up to be a big year for the Humane Society of Greater Savannah! For over 40 years, it has been their dream to offer affordable spay and neuter services to pet-owners. With Executive Director Lynn Gensamer at the helm, that dream became a goal on October 1, 2010 when they began raising funds to open and operate a community low-cost clinic. After years of endless hard work, that goal is almost reality as they prepare to open Pet Fix Savannah in January 2016! The clinic will be located directly next to HSGS and will be open Monday - Friday 8 AM to 5 PM. For questions please call (912) 354-6265.

It is with immense gratitude and a bit of selfish sadness, we say "best wishes" to Gensamer as she begins a well deserved retirement. During her decade of service, she was a tireless advocate for the wellbeing and safety of all pets in our community, not just the ones in the shelter. She has a passion for emergency management and helped Chatham EMA shape our "Pets in Disasters" plan to ensure all members of the family are cared for in an emergency, especially hurricanes. We will miss her, however the Humane Society is gaining another tremendous leader in Michelle Thevenin.

Thevenin most recently served as the executive director of the Monadnock Humane Society in Keene, New Hampshire and has an extensive background in fundraising and animal welfare. "I am delighted to be joining the Humane Society for Greater Savannah and the community of Savannah. I am looking forward to partnering with staff, the board, volunteers and the community as we work together to better the lives of pets and people," said Thevenin. She will assume her duties on January 4, 2016.

Because the Entire Family Matters

We understand that pets are family too. Unlike people, our pets cannot speak for themselves and rely on us to protect them from harm. We also know that people will often stay behind when a hurricane threatens a community if they feel that there are not appropriate accommodations for their pets. Hurricane Katrina proved this and prompted a shift in pet rights. Its estimated that 250,000 pets were left behind and 150,000 died during the hurricane or in its aftermath. Less than a year after Katrina, the Pet Evacuation Transportation Standards (PETS) Act of 2006 was created. The law demands that state and local governments factor pets into emergency evacuation plans, and authorize the use of funds for rescue workers to "procure, construct, or renovate emergency shelter facilities and materials that will temporarily accommodate people with pets and service animals."

Every year before hurricane season, Chatham EMA works with Savannah Chatham Animal Control and the Humane Society to review and update Chatham County's Animals in Disasters Plan. When an evacuation order is issued, the Evacuation Assembly Area (EAA) will be activated to assist members of the public and their pets who do not have reliable transportation out of town. Appropriate staffing at the pet evacuation area has always been a major concern in regards to pet check in procedures, registration, vaccination and loading. Animal Control and the Humane Society both are responsible for evacuating their own shelters and simply will not have enough staff to assist with pet evacuations of the general public at the EAA. This year, we decided to do something about it.

Chatham EMA has partnered with the Florida State Animal Response Coalition to train Chatham County citizens on all-hazard disaster preparation, planning, training, response and recovery during animal emergencies. When a hurricane, fire, tornado or other disaster threatens our area, the Chatham Animal Response Team (CART) will be there to assist the animals that rely on us. CART is organized under Chatham Emergency Management and utilizes the principles of The Incident Command System (ICS). At this time, no program like this exists in the state of Georgia. With the Florida State Animal Response Coalition's help, our volunteers will be able to not only learn and exercise pet emergency response, they will become certified trainers and have the ability to train other teams throughout Georgia.



The image that gripped the nation and started a movement: The dog named "Snowball" was ripped from a little boy's arms as he was boarding a public bus for evacuation. The boy was among the thousands sheltered at the Superdome after Hurricane Katrina. But when he went to board a bus to be evacuated to Houston, a police officer took the dog away. The boy cried out — "Snowball! Snowball!" — then fell to his knees and vomited in distress. The confrontation was first reported by The Associated Press.



Chatham Animal Response Team training dates are as follows:

Awareness Level: February 20, 2016, 8:00 AM- 5:00 PM

Advanced Training: March 5-6, 2016, 8:00 AM- 4:00 PM

Train the Trainer Course: April 16-17, 8:00 AM- 4:00 PM

*Please note, the Awareness Level course is required for the Advanced Training. All courses are required for the Train the Trainer Course. For more information, contact Meredith Ley at maley@chathamcounty.org.

Homeland Security Launches New Terror Alert System

On Wednesday, December 16, 2015, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security unveiled a new "bulletin" category intended to better inform the public about evolving terrorist threats. The bulletin will be in effect until June 16, 2016 and outlines much of what Johnson and other federal have said in the days and weeks since the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino.

The bulletin states that "we are in a new phase in the global threat environment, which has implications on the homeland." It goes on to say that recent attacks and attempted attacks internationally and in the homeland warrant increased security, as well as increased public vigilance and awareness. In the current environment, DHS is also concerned about threats and violence directed at particular communities and individuals across the country, based on perceived religion, ethnicity, or nationality.

While there is no intelligence that is both specific and credible at this time of a plot by terrorist organizations to attack the homeland, the bulletin states that the reality is terrorist-inspired individuals have conducted, or attempted to conduct, attacks in the United States this year.

The bulletin joins two other existing alert categories, elevated and imminent. An *elevated alert* warns of a credible terrorism threat while an *imminent alert* advises the public of a credible, specific and impending terrorism threat. This is the first change to the National Terrorism Advisory System since it replaced the color-coded system in 2011. Visit DHS.gov/advisories to learn more or follow the National Terrorism Advisory System on Twitter at @NTASAlerts.



DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson discusses the updates to the National Terrorism Advisory System on Dec. 16

Training & Exercise Calendar

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
Emergency Management Advisory Committee January 7	Severe Weather Preparedness Lunch and Learn February 3	Chatham Animal Response Team Advanced Training March 5-6	Emergency Management Advisory Committee April 7
Chatham Community Organizations Active in Disaster January 12	Tornado Awareness Training February 11	Continuity of Operations Plan Training March 10	Functional Medical Needs Full Scale Exercise April 8
Emergency Operations Center Staff and WebEOC Training January 14	Search and Rescue Team Training February 12	Functional Medical Needs Seminar March 23	Chatham Animal Response Team Train the Trainer Course April 16-17
Search and Rescue Team Training January 16	Chatham Animal Response Team Awareness Level Training February 20		Chatham County Hurricane Conference April 19, 2016
Emergency Operations Center Supervisor Training January 21	Public-Private Partnership Summit February 23		EMAG Conference April 20-22
Emergency Operations Center Full Scale Exercise January 26	County and Municipal Hurricane Response Tabletop Exercise February 24		Disaster Finance Training April 28
Region J Ebola Table Top Exercise January 28			
Storm Spotter Training January 28			

SAVE THE DATE: 2016 CHATHAM COUNTY HURRICANE CONFERENCE **Mapping the Road to Success**

When: April 19, 2016

**Where: Savannah International Trade
& Convention Center**

Price: \$60.00, Hot Lunch Provided

Visit ChathamEmergency.org to register or to adopt a workshop,
contact Kate Busbee at kbusbee@chathamcounty.org.



Have an Idea for The Signal?

This newsletter focuses on activities and accomplishments for each Emergency Support Function and other areas of the Emergency Management System throughout Chatham County. The newsletter is an available conduit for our partners who may have an interest in submitting a short article or to advertise an upcoming meeting, training event or exercise. For those interested in submitting content for the upcoming newsletter, please follow the submission criteria below:

- **Submissions emailed to:** Meredith Ley, maley@chathamemergency.org
- **Deadline:** March 7, 2016
- **Article Length:** 100 - 750 words
- **Article Submissions:** Include Article Title, Author Name, Title and Agency
- **Meeting Notices:** Include Meeting Title, Date, Time, Location and Point of Contact (Name, Phone and Email Address)
- **Training Notice:** Include Training Title, Date(s), Time(s), Location, Prerequisites, Registration Deadline, Costs, Point of Contact (Name, Phone and Email Address)
- **Exercise Notices:** Include Exercise Title, Date(s), Time(s), Location and Point of Contact (Name, Phone and Email Address)
- **Editorial Note:** The Editor has the discretion to edit submissions. If changes are considered substantive, the author will be contacted to review the changes prior to publication.

DENNIS JONES
INTERIM DIRECTOR

MEREDITH LEY
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

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