

# Emergency Management

# ANNUAL REPORT 2012



# Board of Commissioners



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# gwinnettcounty Police Department



## Office of Emergency Management

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Disasters can strike at anytime and will occur regardless of how prepared we are. Even small preparedness efforts as individuals, families, and as a county will improve the way our community recovers. Our staff worked diligently this year to improve Gwinnett County's ability to respond and recover from natural and manmade disasters and I encourage all Gwinnett County residents to improve their individual and family readiness.

Several significant projects were accomplished in 2012 as we continue to strengthen capabilities in emergency planning, community outreach, training, exercises, and recovery programs. This report describes many of our accomplishments in these areas and provides a glimpse of the challenges we face in the coming year.

As we move into 2013 and beyond, available grant funding and resources to local governments may be reduced. Difficult choices are ahead for prioritizing and maintaining countywide preparedness, response, and recovery programs. Our staff will continue to identify innovative and efficient methods that maintain our essential services in the current and changing economic environment.

It is my pleasure and honor to serve as the Director of Emergency Management for Gwinnett County. The successes noted in this annual report are due to the dedicated, highly professional staff of emergency managers we have in Gwinnett County. They strive daily in the attainment of our vision of fostering a disaster resistant community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Swanson".

Greg **Swanson**  
Director

A Nationally Accredited Agency



# Mission

To administer a community wide comprehensive emergency management program in partnership with all departments, agencies, operating units, administration and neighboring jurisdictions to save lives, protect property and safeguard the environment.

*Mission*

# Vision

The Vision of the Gwinnett County Office of Emergency Management is to encourage and foster a Disaster Resistant Community.

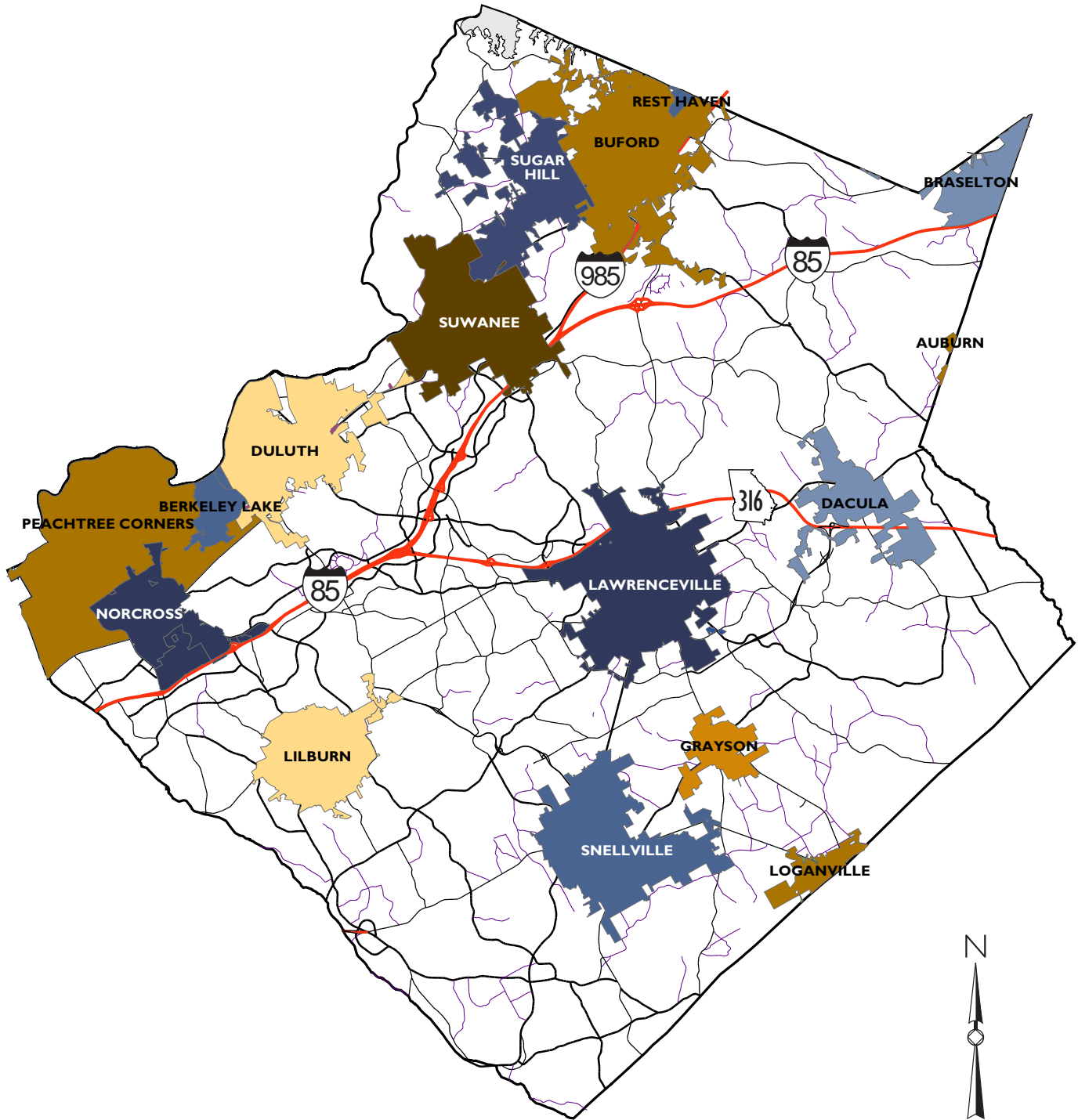
*Vision*



# History

The Gwinnett County Office of Homeland Security was established in December 2005 and Emergency Management was transferred from Gwinnett Fire and Emergency Services to the Police Department in 2006. The Office of Homeland Security was removed from the Office of Emergency Management and assigned to the Special Investigations Section of the Police Department in October 2009.

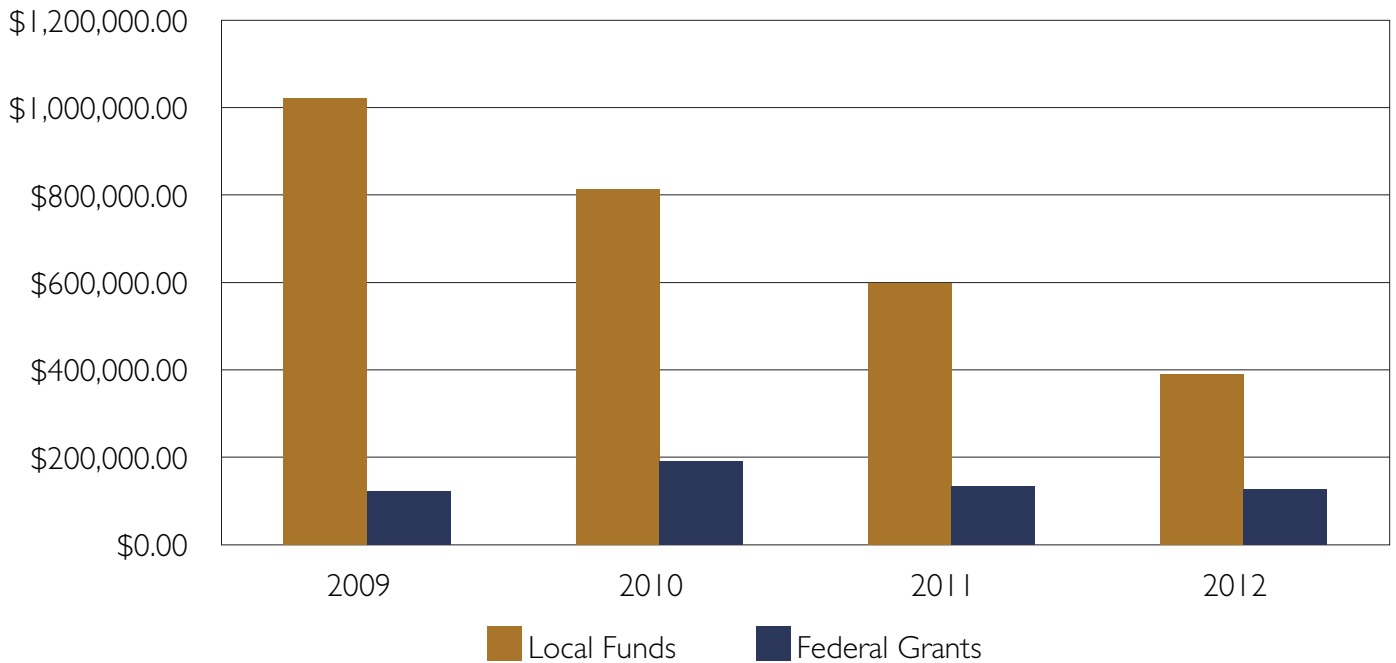
The Gwinnett County Office of Emergency Management represents the governing officials of the county and the cities within the county on matters pertaining to emergency management, helping to identify local hazards and outline plans and efforts to reduce the impact of disasters. The director is appointed by the Board of Commissioners, with concurrence of the governing officials of the cities.



# Administration and Finance

Fiscal and administrative procedures must be in place which support day-to-day and disaster operations. Emergency Management programs are funded from a combination of local General Fund revenue and federal grants. In 2012, the Office of Emergency Management consisted of three full-time employees and one liaison each from Fire and Emergency Services and the Department of Water Resources.

## Emergency Management Funding 2009 – 2012



## Laws and Authorities

The Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) and the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) jointly develop model emergency management ordinance language for local governments. The second edition of this model language was issued in 2011.

Following a comprehensive review of the model ordinance, suggested revisions to Gwinnett's existing local Emergency Management Ordinance were recommended. In its June 19, 2012, meeting, the Gwinnett County Board of Commissioners adopted the revised Code of Ordinances of Gwinnett County pertaining to Emergency Management. The updated language provides clarity to existing provisions based upon the recommendations from ACCG and GEMA.

Model Emergency  
Management  
Ordinances and  
Agreements

Association County Commissioners of Georgia  
2nd Edition 2011



# Hazard Mitigation

The *Disaster Mitigation Act* of 2000 requires all local governments to develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan in order to remain eligible for Hazard Mitigation grant funding. Completed plans must be submitted to and approved by the state and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The Office of Emergency Management oversees the plan development, approval, and maintenance process for Gwinnett County and its municipalities.

A Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee provides interagency and intergovernmental coordination during the planning process. Departments and agencies represented include:

- Gwinnett County Municipal Association
- Gwinnett County Chiefs of Police Association
- Gwinnett County Public Schools
- Gwinnett County Planning and Development
- Georgia Gwinnett College
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency
- Gwinnett, Newton, Rockdale Public Health
- Gwinnett County Chamber of Commerce
- Gwinnett County Department of Transportation
- Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources
- Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services
- Gwinnett County Parks and Recreation

The steering committee completed the plan update process for 2012 and concluded by presenting the plan to interested residents in a public meeting held in April. The annual update included revisions the Hazard Vulnerability Assessment, Community Capability Assessment, Mitigation Strategies, and Individual Jurisdiction Action Plans.

## Top Five Identified Hazards

Hazard	Likelihood	Impact
Thunderstorm Winds	High	High
Lightning	High	High
Tornadoes	Likely	Medium
Winter Storms	Likely	Medium
Tropical Storms	Possible	Medium

Local hazard mitigation planning is a process of organizing community resources, identifying and assessing hazard risks, and determining how to minimize or manage those risks.



# Mitigation Strategies

The foundation of hazard mitigation is the identification of strategies through which Gwinnett County can reduce risk associated with natural, human-caused, and technological hazards. Strategies are projects prioritized by hazard based on repetition of the event, monetary loss, anticipated costs, and the potential for loss of life. The strategies listed below were implemented or continued in 2012:

Project	Status
Distribute severe winter weather preparedness literature at appropriate/identified community events	Ongoing; this material is distributed at various preparedness events throughout the county.
Inventory generators at all city and County critical facilities and consider filling gaps	Ongoing; this inventory is updated annually.
Acquire additional sheltering supplies (e.g., cots, blankets)	Complete; a grant was received to provide this equipment.
Develop and issue a Request for Proposals to obtain pre-positioned contracts for disaster debris removal services	Complete; pre-positioned contracts for disaster debris removal are in place.
Develop/maintain/revise a resource management inventory that is compliant with National Incident Management System (NIMS) guidelines	Ongoing; this is revised annually.
Conduct annual disaster exercises involving all response agencies and County departments	Ongoing; exercises are conducted annually.
Develop and distribute multi-lingual all-hazards preparedness materials	Complete; grant funds were utilized to publish preparedness materials in Spanish.
Assist all critical departments in developing continuity of operations (COOP) plans	Ongoing; County departments and business units have developed and maintain COOP Plans. Plans are updated at least annually.
Provide National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radios to residents	Ongoing; Radios were purchased with grant funds and are distributed to residents.

# Multi-Year Mitigation Project

A disaster can strike in a matter of minutes, although the resulting recovery can take years. Hazard Mitigation grants offered through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may provide funds to reduce the risk of loss of life and property due to natural hazards. Property acquisition for open space consists of a community purchasing flood prone real estate from willing sellers and demolishing the existing structures. The purchased property is then maintained for open green space purposes in perpetuity in order to restore and/or conserve the natural floodplain functions.

The floods of 2009 wreaked havoc in Gwinnett County, resulting in a Presidential Disaster Declaration. In March 2012, Gwinnett County was awarded a \$2.1 million Hazard Mitigation grant to assist 11 property owners affected by the 2009 floods. Federal and state funds will be used to purchase properties and return them to perpetual greenspace.

Although the project will not be complete until 2013, several major milestones were accomplished in 2012. These include preparation of fair market valuations, developing voluntary offer to sell packages, determining duplication of benefits, conducting title searches, preparing for property closings, conducting inspections, and submitting required reports to the state.



# Operational Planning

The Emergency Operations Plan is a guide to how Gwinnett County conducts all-hazards disaster response. The plan is applicable to all departments and agencies that may be requested to provide assistance or conduct operations in the context of actual or potential disasters. Local jurisdictions participating in the development, implementation, and maintenance of the plan include:

- Gwinnett County
- City of Buford
- City of Berkeley Lake
- City of Dacula
- City of Duluth
- City of Grayson
- City of Lawrenceville
- City of Lilburn
- City of Norcross
- City of Peachtree Corners
- City of Snellville
- City of Sugar Hill
- City of Suwanee

Developing a successful preparedness program requires much more than a written plan on a shelf. Communities who engage in a process of collaborative planning are able to attain and sustain greater levels of preparedness over those who do not. More than 150 individuals representing more than 50 government, nonprofit, and volunteer organizations were a part of the annual review and update to the Emergency Operations Plan. Suggested revisions were incorporated into the final version and submitted to all 13 elected bodies for formal adoption. The final product was then submitted to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency for approval.

In addition to completing the annual update, a new annex was developed to establish the framework for the coordination of mass care and sheltering. Gwinnett County is subject to a variety of natural, technological, and human-caused incidents that may result in the need for the public to evacuate their place of residence and seek shelter. The new annex provides a standardized approach for shelter planning and operations, which ensures that the most capable shelter for the situation is used, thereby improving operational efficiency, reducing duplication of efforts, and facilitating proper application of resources.

An Incident Annex to the Emergency Operations Plan was produced in 2012, outlining procedures to minimize risks to life and property when the integrity of a dam or similar structure may be in jeopardy. This Emergency Action Plan identifies critical situations that could threaten dams within Gwinnett County and plans for an expedited, effective response to prevent uncontrolled release of water from the reservoirs.

A Winter Weather Workshop was held prior to the winter season to assist county agencies with preparing for potential weather hazards. Thirteen different county and community agencies were represented.



*“Plans are nothing;  
planning is everything.”*

~Dwight D. Eisenhower

# Incident Management and Facilities

The *Georgia Emergency Management Act* requires “The local director or his designee shall be available or on call at all times beyond working hours.” An Emergency Management Duty Officer is available at all times and serves as the primary emergency point-of-contact for the alert, notification, and initiation of a preliminary response to major emergencies and disaster events occurring in Gwinnett County.

During 2012, the on-call duty officer responded to seventeen requests for assistance that did not warrant EOC activation. These requests normally come from city or County departments that require support in response to a large or complex incident. Examples of these include search and rescue for missing persons, aircraft incidents, commercial fires, public health emergencies, and weather-related damage.



The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will normally be activated incrementally at a level appropriate to the incident. This may be a monitoring, partial, or full activation, depending upon the response requirement. The EOC was activated 12 times during the year for a variety of disaster situations including severe thunderstorms, hurricanes, hazardous materials incidents, a hotel fire, and flooding.

To ensure the EOC is maintained in a state of readiness, the facility is used for planning, training, exercise, and meeting activities that support public safety. More than 650 events were held in the EOC during 2012 with a total attendance of nearly 8,000 people.



# Training and Exercises

Recently, Gwinnett County conducted its 2012 — 2014 Multiyear Training and Exercise Planning Workshop and has since produced a Multi-year Training and Exercise Plan. A Training and Exercise Plan supports local governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations to coordinate the efforts of existing robust training programs. The plan captures the training and exercise priorities of each participating organization and provides a coordinated strategy and schedule designed to strengthen the emergency prevention and response capabilities of all participants including responders and key public officials.

This multi-year plan employs a building-block approach in which training and exercise activities focus on specific capabilities in a cycle of escalating complexity. As planning and training increase in complexity, we will increase our capability to perform critical tasks. The greatest benefit can be achieved through a building-block approach that exposes exercise participants to gradually increasing levels of complexity.

*“Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect.”*

*~Vince Lombardi*

## Training and Exercise Priorities



Forty-two stakeholder agencies were polled in preparation for the Multi-year Training and Exercise Workshop in which local priorities were established. Training and exercise activities were scheduled and conducted to support the following priorities:

- Community Preparedness and Participation
- Emergency Public Information and Warning
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Emergency Public Safety and Security Response
- Emergency Operations Center Management
- Mass Care, Sheltering, and Feeding
- Onsite Incident Management

## Training and Exercise Activities

A total of 33 local training and exercise events were held during 2012, an average of almost three per month. A variety of exercise types were used to best meet the needs of the participants. Target audiences include the general public, first responders, trained volunteers, and key public officials.



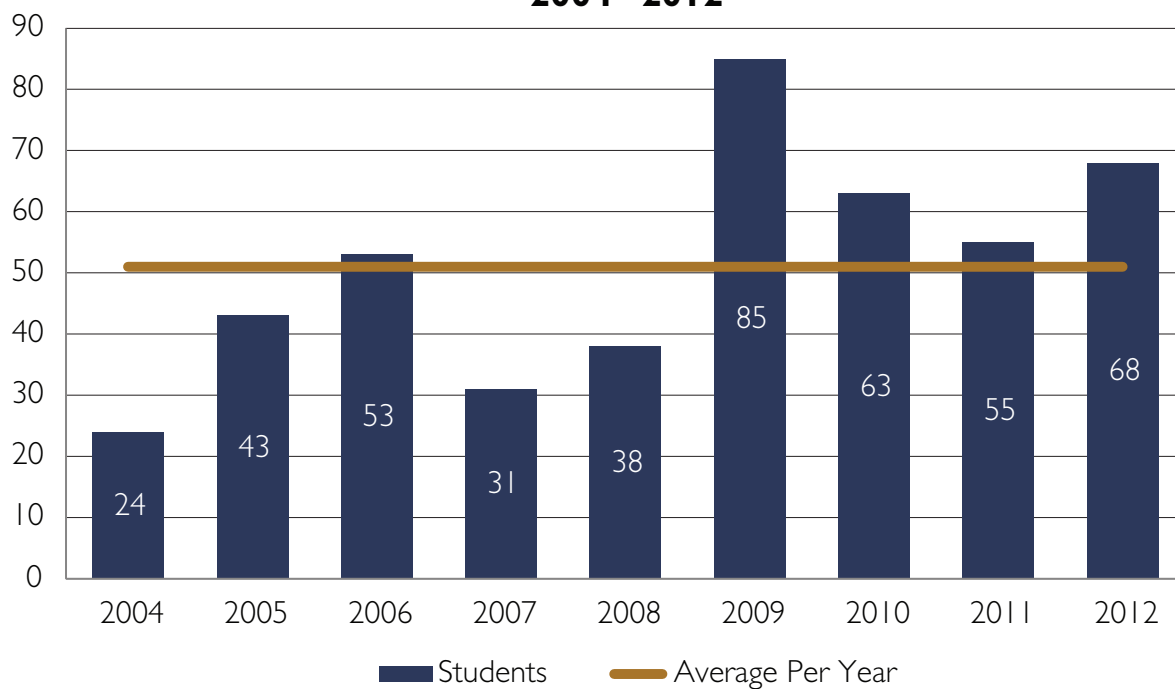
# Public Education

One of the main goals of Emergency Management is to provide our residents with the training to prepare themselves and their families for hazards that may impact our area. Using this training, residents have the skills to assist others following an emergency event when professional responders may be overwhelmed.



The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program is essential in the effort to engage every person in America toward helping make their communities safer, more prepared, and more resilient when incidents occur. CERT volunteers also serve in administrative functions within Gwinnett OEM, and can take additional training to serve in more complex capacities. CERT training is offered throughout the year, and in 2012, 68 individuals graduated from the program. This marks the fourth year in a row for above average attendance in the program.

### CERT Students Trained 2004 –2012



# Regional Collaboration

Disasters do not stop at jurisdictional boundaries. It is important that we plan, train, and exercise with our surrounding jurisdictions and state partners. The Metro Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative is a Department of Homeland Security grant-funded program that addresses the unique planning, organization, equipment, training, and exercise needs of high-threat, high-density urban areas. Gwinnett County joined the Metro Atlanta UASI in 2009 and continues to participate in a variety of regional and statewide emergency management activities. In 2012 these activities included planning and exercise efforts toward regional evacuation, mass care, and interoperable communications. The County has received direct equipment awards from UASI funds to support our Fire Department's Hazardous Materials Team and Hazardous Devices Unit of the Police Department. CERT training is offered throughout the year for Gwinnett County citizens. In 2012, we continued our trend of above-average attendance in the program by graduating 68 students.



# Initiatives and Challenges

The Office of Emergency Management is looking forward to a busy and productive 2013. The staff will be heavily engaged in compliance activities with our federal-mandated planning, training, and exercise programs. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) has expanded requirements on all response organizations, and OEM has taken the lead to ensure that all applicable County employees stay in compliance with these new federal training regulations. Work is also underway to expand our volunteer programs, providing more opportunities for residents of Gwinnett County to create partnerships that help serve our community. Many of the residents of Gwinnett County understand the need for personal preparedness and are taking advantage of the training and mitigation opportunities that OEM is providing – our challenge now is to not only keep up with the demand, but continue to improve our outreach programs to reach a greater number of our residents.



## Principles of Emergency Management

As professional Emergency Managers, we adopt and endorse the Principles of Emergency Management as published by FEMA's Emergency Management Higher Education Program.

### Emergency management must be:

- **Comprehensive** – emergency managers consider and take into account all hazards, all phases, all stakeholders and all impacts relevant to disasters.
- **Progressive** – emergency managers anticipate future disasters and take preventive and preparatory measures to build disaster-resistant and disaster-resilient communities.
- **Risk-driven** – emergency managers use sound risk management principles (hazard identification, risk analysis, and impact analysis) in assigning priorities and resources.
- **Integrated** – emergency managers ensure unity of effort among all levels of government and all elements of a community.
- **Collaborative** – emergency managers create and sustain broad and sincere relationships among individuals and organizations to encourage trust, advocate a team atmosphere, build consensus, and facilitate communication.
- **Coordinated** – emergency managers synchronize the activities of all relevant stakeholders to achieve a common purpose.
- **Flexible** – emergency managers use creative and innovative approaches in solving disaster challenges.
- **Professional** – emergency managers value a science and knowledge-based approach based on education, training, experience, ethical practice, public stewardship, and continuous improvement.





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