

Board of Leon County Board of  
County Commissioners  
Workshop  
January 29, 2009  
**Acceptance of Emergency Management Preparedness**

The Board of County Commissioners met for a Workshop on the Acceptance of Emergency Management Preparedness on Thursday, January 29, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. with Chairman Bryan Desloge presiding.

Present were Commissioners Sauls, Thael, Akinyemi, Rackleff and Dailey. Commissioner Proctor was absent. Also present were County Administrator Parvez Alam, County Attorney Herb Thiele, Finance Director David Reid and Board Secretary Rebecca Vause.

**Facilitator:** Vince Long, Deputy County Administrator

Mr. Long explained that the Workshop was scheduled to evaluate the County's emergency response to Tropical Storm (TS) Fay. He added that each department would present detailed reports on the **planning, preparation, response and recovery** during the storm, present "lessons learned" and make recommendations for improvements in future events. Mr. Long indicated that the Workshop would provide an opportunity for the Board to provide staff direction on improvements to the County's Emergency Management Program and future policy direction.

Staff who attended and made presentations included:

- Richard Smith, Emergency Services Director
- Tony Park, Public Works Director
- Jon Brown, Public Information Director
- Alex Mahon, Environmental Health Director
- Wayne Tedder, Planning Director
- David McDevitt, Growth & Environmental Management Director
- Jeri Bush, Volunteer Services
- Lee Hartsfield, Geographic Information Services (GIS) Coordinator
- Ray Burroughs, Building Inspections Director

Staff provided Commissioners with detailed information on the planning, preparation, response, and recovery phases of Tropical Storm Fay and developed a series of recommendations for continued improvements to the County's emergency management preparedness and its response based on "lessons learned" from the event.

The following "lessons learned" were identified by staff:

- #1. Revise and edit the Emergency Response Manual and Debris Management Plan to incorporate Incident command System (ICS) methodologies and identify response and recovery activities built around the five major ICS management activities. (Public Works)
- #2. Fully staff and train the Public Information Office in preparation of hurricane season. (Public Services/Public Information)
- #3. Prepare for a high demand of sandbags and select a location that does not interfere with, or cause, traffic congestion. (Public Works)

- #4. Improve accuracy and timeliness of road closure listings by coordinating and standardizing terminology between Public works and the Leon County Sheriff's Office. (Public Works)
- #5. Expand cross-training opportunities for Public Works Senior Management staff to enhance operational and emergency response capabilities. (Public Works)
- #6. Formalize a Critical Response Task Force made up of a law enforcement officer, a paramedic, a building inspector, an engineer from Public Works, and a representative from the Health Department to respond to affected areas and allocate County resources in consultation with the County Administrator. (County Administration)
- #7. Increase the availability of pet friendly shelters. (Animal Control)
- #8. Enhance informational and educational program content through Comcast Channel 16 for potential state of emergency events. (Public Information)
- #9. Continuously improve the Emergency Operations Center Incident Tracking System (EOC ITS) software through the EOC ITS cross-jurisdictional workgroup. (Geographic Information Services)
- #10. Pursue the integration of workflow activities with the City of Tallahassee to share pertinent information from one database to another and improve the efficiency of information exchange. (Geographic Information Services)
- #11. Improve staffing levels for TLCGIS during an emergency event and extended activation to adequately operate the EOC ITS and Remote Server Center (RSC) while creating real-time maps and logging incidents. (Geographic Information Services)
- #12. Increase public information through press releases and advisories to remind citizens that it is not appropriate to use water testing kits in flood waters and that flood waters should be presumed to be contaminated. (County Administration/Health Department)
- #13. Cross-train the Health Department PIO with the Leon County PIO to serve as a back up to the County PIO. (County Administration/Emergency Management)
- #14. Continue to pursue a protected, secure, sustainable, survivable facility of adequate size for emergency communications and operations. The County and City will continue to pursue the construction of a joint dispatch center to include the County EOC. (County Administration)
- #15. Request additional City liaisons from key emergency support functions to assist in coordinating the response from the EOC. These functions include: Transportation - StarMetro; Public Works/Traffic Management; Energy-City of Tallahassee Electric Utility; Public Information/Joint Information Center, and Animal Protection/Services. (Emergency Management)
- #16. Increase staffing and volunteer levels to help operate the Volunteer Center and Citizens Information Line. (Human Resources)
- #17. Establish clear parameters for activation of the debris removal contracts. (Public Works)
- #18. Improve coordination with the debris removal vendors to establish a close-out procedure whereby it can be 'certified' that all areas and zones assigned to the contractor have been completed. (Public Works)

- #19. Provide more information on proper waste and debris separation to expedite community recovery by distributing pamphlets at sandbag distribution locations. (Public Works)
- #20. Consider planning for aerial spray services in advance since standing rain water leads to mosquito outbreaks and excessive call volumes at the Mosquito Control Division. (Public Works/Mosquito Control)
- #21. Continue to utilize Board sponsored training and FEMA incident and management training to provide staff the skill sets to quickly and accurately assess damage to effectively respond to emergency situations. (Emergency Management)
- #22. Expand the County's ability to receive online damage assessments for homes and businesses to streamline the damage assessment process. (Public Services/Public Information)
- #23. Continue to promote the Catastrophe Fund for future emergency events to assist residents with the payment of Leon County Solid Waste and Leon County Building/Growth Management fees for damages associated with a local declared state of emergency. (Public Services/Public Information)

The Board was presented with the following recommendation for consideration:

Recommendations to Enhance Emergency Response:

1. Authorize staff to bring back an agenda item to consider a mobile emergency animal shelter for evacuees' pets to resolve the challenges of locating a suitable pet-friendly shelter during a storm.
2. Direct staff to explore the use of reverse 911 technology and/or a citizen subscription service to reach thousands of citizens within minutes with phone messages and mass e-mail alerts and bring back an agenda item for Board consideration. Note: These communication systems vary and may cost anywhere from \$250,000 to \$1 million.
3. Direct staff to explore opportunities to enhance informational and educational program content through Comcast Channel 16 for the response to emergency events.
4. Authorize staff to explore the expanded use of the County's website during an emergency to reduce the number of calls from the media and citizens.
5. Formalize a Critical Response Task Force made up of a law enforcement officer, a paramedic, a building inspector, an engineer from Public Works, and a representative from the Health Department to respond to affected areas and allocate County resources in consultation with the County administrator.
6. Direct staff to bring back a draft policy to maximize staffing levels during a Declared State of Local Emergency

Recommendations to Enhance Emergency Recovery:

7. Direct staff to explore the expanded use of the County's website for damage assessment efforts during the recovery phase by allowing citizens to report damages online.
8. Direct staff to bring back an agenda item to consider putting a plan in place for aerial spray services prior to a heavy rain event.

9. Direct staff to bring back an agenda item to consider the establishment of a County Recovery Center.

Mr. Long acknowledged that all of the recommendations presented for consideration are very "actionable" items and staff welcomed the Board's direction. He also noted that the lessons learned had been assigned to staff and are being worked on. Mr. Long added that preparation for the Workshop was a concerted effort that required great inter-departmental coordination.

Sheriff Larry Campbell provided remarks on the establishment of the Emergency Operations Center and commented that coordination, communication and cooperation between all entities (City, State, and Federal) is essential during a disaster and also for disaster recovery.

#### **Board Discussion:**

Commissioner Thaele thanked staff for their efforts to provide the Board with information that improved its understanding of the ramifications of the storm, the County's response and methods to address what worked and didn't work. He noted the financial challenges that face the County to address the issues. Commissioner Thaele discussed with Tony Park, Public Works Director, problems in debris collection from private subdivisions as compared with public subdivisions. Mr. Park remarked that direction and guidance from the Board was needed in addressing this issue. *Commissioner Thaele requested that this item be agendaed for further discussion a future meeting. Chairman Desloge stated that the issue could be added as an amendment to the motion.*

Commissioner Rackleff thanked staff for a thorough presentation and provided the following comments:

- Emphasized the need to use radio, particularly public radio, communications during emergencies.
- Stressed the need to expand the number of boats available to evacuate residents.
- Need to ensure that FSU, FAMU, TCC are included in discussions, especially in evacuation plans, as they represent approximately 70,000 students.
- Wakulla and Franklin County should be involved in planning.
- Accentuated the need to involve TMH, Capital Regional Medical Center and Capital Medical Society.
- Pointed out the lack of signage by the Health Department proclaiming contaminated water bodies. He added that, if needed, an ordinance could be enacted to facilitate that need.
- Direct lobbyist to target any monies available from the Stimulus Package. He articulated that the County should carefully prioritize its need.
- Suggested that the debris monitoring contract be put out for bid.

*Commissioner Rackleff moved, duly seconded by Commissioner Sauls, to accept Option #1, as amended: Accept the Emergency Management Status Report on Tropical Storm Fay and adopt the following staff recommendations:*

- 1) *Authorize staff to bring back an agenda item to consider a mobile emergency animal shelter for evacuees' pets to resolve the challenges of locating a suitable pet-friendly shelter during a storm.*
- 2) *Direct staff to explore the use of reverse 911 technology and/or a citizen subscription service to reach thousands of citizens within minutes with phone messages and mass e-mail alerts and bring back an agenda item for Board consideration. Note: These communication systems vary and may cost anywhere from \$250,000 to \$1 million.*

- 3) *Direct staff to explore opportunities to enhance informational and educational program content through Comcast Channel 16 for the response to emergency events.*
- 4) *Authorize staff to explore the expanded use of the County's website during an emergency to reduce the number of calls from the media and citizens.*
- 5) *Formalize a Critical Response Task Force made up of a law enforcement officer, a paramedic, a building inspector, an engineer from Public Works, and a representative from the Health Department to respond to affected areas and allocate County resources in consultation with the County administrator.*
- 6) *Direct staff to bring back a draft policy to maximize staffing levels during a Declared State of Local Emergency*
- 7) *Direct staff to explore the expanded use of the County's website for damage assessment efforts during the recovery phase by allowing citizens to report damages online.*
- 8) *Direct staff to bring back an agenda item to consider putting a plan in place for aerial spray services prior to a heavy rain event.*
- 9) *Direct staff to bring back an agenda item to consider the establishment of a County Recovery Center.*
- 10) *Emphasize the use of radio communications, particularly public radio, communications during emergencies*
- 11) *Direct staff to agenda the issue debris removal in private subdivisions for a future meeting.*

Commissioner Dailey thanked the County Administrator and staff for a tremendous job in putting the Workshop together and expressed his appreciation for all partners involved. He inquired from Sheriff Campbell if Board assistance was needed to aid in establishing better inter/intra-state communications. Sheriff Campbell replied that meetings, trainings, and collaboration exercises have been conducted; an emergency management plan has also been developed to include an expanded North Florida area, as well as South Florida. Commissioner Dailey asked for an update on the Catastrophe Fund. Mr. Long responded that the Cat Fund performed very well and assisted those individuals who needed help.

Commissioner Akinyemi thanked staff for efforts during and after TS Fay. He confirmed with Lee Hartsfield, GIS Coordinator, that GIS maps accessed by staff during the event were real life mappings providing updated information. Commissioner Akinyemi asked for clarification on water testing kits and Alex Mahan, Health Department Director, provided that any well that is flooded is contaminated and should be tested only after water levels have receded. Mr. Long commented that this was included as a "lesson learned" item and would to be addressed through public education.

Commissioner Sauls expressed her gratitude to staff and volunteers for all the hard work done during the event. She acknowledged the need to act on and learn from the "lessons learned". Commissioner Sauls stated that the private road situation is always problematic and needed to be addressed by the Board. She stated that the Joint Dispatch continues to be a top priority of the Commission.

Commissioner Rackleff asked if the Civic Center was considered a possible emergency shelter site. Mr. Smith, Emergency Management Director, stated that smaller host shelters are preferred. He also shared that the Regional Evacuation Study identifies the potential number of evacuees that would seek shelter and protected facilities are identified for that number. Mr. Smith added that there are approximately 20,000 spaces identified for evacuees.

Chairman Desloge echoed his appreciation for staff's response to TS Fay. He asked for Mr. Smith's feedback on the County's efforts to the storm. Mr. Smith stated that cooperation and coordination was very good and overall above average. He graded the County's efforts as a "strong B, recognizing that we can do better". Chairman Desloge commented that the EOC

would be housed in the Joint Dispatch Facility and that it is the intent to have space for the City in the facility.

The motion to approve Option #1, as amended, carried 6-0 (Commissioner Proctor absent)

The Workshop adjourned at 11:05 a.m.

LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA

ATTEST:

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bryan Desloge, Chairman  
Board of County Commissioners

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bob Inzer, Clerk of the Court  
Leon County, Florida