Effingham County

Public Awareness, Education and Preparedness Program

2014 - 2018

EFFINGHAM COUNTY, GEORGIA
Local Emergency Operations Plan – Annex

The Effingham County Emergency Management Agency has developed this document as a Public Awareness, Education, and Preparedness Program. EEMA will be partnering with multiple private and public agencies in an effort to educate and prepare our public.

This Plan was developed in compliance with all state and federal requirements and has been approved as attested by the signatures below, and is being submitted to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Emergency Management Agency for review.

As authorized support groups County Government officials in Effingham County, Georgia, we the undersigned, understand and support the Public Awareness, Education, and Preparedness Program

ATTEST: This __17__ day of June, 2014

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Emergency Management – Director

_____
Chairman
Effingham County Board of Commissioners

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I. Introduction

Effingham County is vulnerable to a large number of natural and man-made disasters. This makes it imperative that the community be made aware of all the hazards they may face. The community should be educated on not only what actions to take during and after an incident, but what preventative measures can be taken as well. It is essential that the community have the knowledge and resources to be able to manage emergencies when they occur.

In order to raise the level of disaster awareness, the Effingham Emergency Management Public Education, Awareness and Preparedness Plan (PEAPP) has been developed.

The Primary objective of the PEAPP is to create an informed public that know the steps that should be taken to prevent and respond to a wide range of emergency incidents. These steps are to protect life, property, and the environment, and to promptly notify emergency response services.

II. Purpose

Emergency Preparedness is everyone's responsibility. The basic tenet of public awareness and education is to increase citizen's knowledge to enable safe attitudes and behaviors. The purpose of PEAPP is to reach out to the residents and businesses in our community and educate and prepare them with the knowledge and resources necessary for them to be prepared during an incident. Effingham Emergency Management provides informational materials and resources to keep the public informed on a variety of Emergency Preparedness topics ranging from Hurricane and flood preparedness, winter weather preparedness, hazardous materials awareness, and more. In addition, before and during specific emergency situations, Effingham Emergency Management provides additional information to be made available to the public.

III. Scope

Effingham Emergency Management reaches the public through a broad number of methods. These include programs that are targeted to specific audiences such as school children, seniors or the disabled, church and civic groups, programs and services that are directed to the general public through publications and teaching resources. The Effingham Emergency Management Agency, Effingham County Fire Rescue and the Sheriff's Office play a vital role in providing public awareness/information messages to our community.

IV. Mission, Goals and Objectives

The mission, goals and objectives of the Effingham Public Awareness, Education and Preparedness Program are:

- To inform residents and business of the types of hazards that has been specifically identified for this community. These hazards include natural and man-made threats.
- Educate residents and businesses that may be affected by these hazards with information about what they can do to prepare for, respond to and recover from an emergency.
- Inform residents and businesses about individual and family emergency preparedness.
- Increase awareness about Effingham County's Emergency Response Plan and who to contact about the community's emergency management program.
- Properly plan and prioritize disaster awareness programs in order to fully utilize limited resources.

V. Authorities

Effingham Emergency Management Agency is mandated by the State of Georgia to operate under the purview of the Effingham County Commissioner's and is directly responsible for emergency operations to include necessary actions incidental to the preparations for an emergency. During an emergency, Effingham Emergency Management has the responsibility to provide residents and businesses, which are potentially affected by these hazards with information about what they can do to prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency. The Effingham Emergency Management Agency has developed and exercised a variety of tools and systems to assist with notifying and disseminating information to the public to include the following: (i.e. SMS Text Alerts, the Emergency Alert System (EAS), NOAA All-hazard Weather Radio, media outlets, emergency notification systems (phone, email), website, and social media forums).

VI. Assumptions

Many disasters can occur rapidly, hampering the ability of response organizations and local government to provide comprehensive information to everyone impacted at the onset. For this reason, there is a need for public education to prepare people for action in future warnings. The public needs timely and accurate information regarding disasters before, during, and after disasters.

The demand for information will be overwhelming if the scope of the disaster is of large scale; there will undoubtedly be a need for press releases to inform the public with instructions and important information. During an incident messages on television and radio can be effective; however, there must be an information stream of multiple communications through diverse media such as websites and social media.

VII. Public Education and Public Information

What is the difference between Public Education and Public Information?

> Public Education is the process of making the public aware of its risks and preparing citizens for hazards in advance of a disaster and as a long term strategic effort. Public Education needs to occur prior to an event. When a disaster hits, it should not be the first time that the public is hearing emergency preparedness information.
o Public Education includes awareness, education and outreach activities.
o Public Education is on-going, long term and strategic

> Public Information is the delivery of messages to the public in anticipation of and during an incident. Public information is incident specific and includes the development and release of messages in real time.
o Public information is real-time and incident specific
o Public information gives specific information to the community regarding an impending event or following an event

VIII. Steps to Planning and Implementing a Public Awareness Campaign
Public Education Planning and Implementation is an ongoing process. There are numerous steps in planning a successful and effective campaign.

A. **Identify Community Hazards-** hazards should be identified that are specific to our area. The Effingham County Mitigation Plan identifies hazards that are most likely to affect Effingham County. Many of these are weather related such as thunderstorms, hurricanes, flooding and tornadoes. These hazards as well as current events will be used in planning and implementing the public awareness campaign.

B. **Identify Target Audiences, Vulnerable Populations and Key Stakeholders-** To develop community awareness, key messages must be communicated to target audiences in a way that they understand, and inspires them to take action. Target audiences include but are not limited to: Civic Groups, Business Organizations, Community Groups, Churches, schools, and individuals with special considerations.

C. **Identify and work with Contributing Groups in the Community-** We have many groups in our community that Effingham Emergency Management collaborates with

before an incident to help educate our citizens. We also work with many groups during an incident to ensure resources. These groups include but are not limited to:

1. United Way
2. Coastal Health
3. Senior Citizens Center
4. Meals-on-Wheels
   Meals-on-Wheels have been a great facilitating partner in circulating the Functional Needs Registration Forms. They have the ability to reach those citizen's that we would otherwise not have access to.
5. National Weather Center in Charleston
   a. Storm Ready Certification- In 1999, The National Weather Service (NWS) started the StormREADY® Program to help arm America's communities with the communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property--before and during the event. StormREADY® helps community leaders and emergency managers strengthen local safety programs.
   b. Storm Spotter Class and Certifications- Storm Spotter is a class taught by the Charleston National Weather Center and Hosted by the Effingham Emergency Management Agency. The class educates the participants on spotting severe weather conditions and what to do to prepare for them.
6. Society of Human Resources Management (SHRM)
   The Savannah Area Chapter of the Society of Human Resources Management is a professional organization for policy makers in the corporate field. The Effingham Emergency Management Agency collaborates with TSAC SHRM for the purpose of bridging the gap between emergency management, first responders and the corporate arena. This is done through programs such as Preserving Human Capital, Business Continuity and the Pinnacle Program.
7. Rotary Club
8. Praise and Preparedness/Family Promise
   a. Effingham Emergency Management has paired with the Family Promise Project to reach out to churches in our community. Praise and Preparedness is a program that encourages churches to offer their locations as emergency shelters to first responders and their families during a post evacuation event.
   b. Family Promise is a community project that encourages churches to open their doors to qualifying families or individuals that have lost their homes and need temporary shelter till they can become established again.
9. Student Drinking and Drug Awareness Program- ECBOE
10. American Red Cross
11. Coastal Regional Coaches

D. **Develop messages** – messages and educational materials will be obtained or developed based upon the identified messages, the audience and the method of delivery.

E. **Deliver Messages**

A variety of techniques shall be used to deliver the message(s) out to the community. These include:
- Local Media: newspaper articles, radio/television programs
- Speaking engagements: civic organizations, school events, SHRM and EEMA Programs
- Special events: local festivals, career day at schools
- Educational Materials: pamphlets, flyers

IX. Maintain Positive Media Relationships

Having an ongoing, positive relationship with local media is vital to an effective education and awareness campaign. Effingham Emergency Management Agency has already established this relationship with each of the local media. Regular press releases and media notices are provided as part of the departments Public Relations activities.

X. Recognize Challenges

There are many challenges to be recognized during the educational process. In order for the educational process to work, these challenges must be identified and steps taken to mitigate the challenge.

- Is the message the right one for the audience and for the topic?
    - Careful evaluation of the message needs to be completed prior to delivery. Ensure that the topic is covered in an appropriate format for the intended audience and delivery method
- Is the delivery method of the message right for the audience and for the topic?
    - Careful evaluation of the audience and message needs to be completed prior to delivery. Ensure that the delivery style of the message is appropriate for the audience.
- Is the timing of the message appropriate for the audience and the topic?
    - Careful evaluation of the timing of the message needs to be completed prior to delivery. Make sure that the message is appropriate to the time (i.e. winter weather messages need to be delivered in January rather than August).

XI. Annual Calendar of Events:

January

Winter Weather:

- Target Audience: General Public, senior citizens, businesses
- Safety tips on Effingham Emergency Management Website
- Winter weather warnings via SMS Text Alerts

February

Severe Weather Awareness Month:

- Target Audience: General public, children, senior citizens, businesses
- Safety tips for severe thunderstorms, flooding, tornadoes ,supply kits and lightning
- Severe weather warnings via SMS Text Alerts

We will participate in:
- Statewide Tornado Drill
- Severe Weather Week

March

Volunteer Opportunities

- Target Audience: General public, businesses, civic groups
- Volunteer opportunities placed on social media sites and Effingham's Emergency Management Website
- Organizations may include:
    A. Effingham Emergency Management Volunteers
    B. Fire Departments in County
    C. Sheriff's Office Explorers Volunteer Program
    D. Family Promise
    E. Backpack Buddies
    F. Red Cross
- Flood Awareness Week

April

Hazardous Materials

- Target audience: General Public, businesses, civic groups
- Tier II Reporting
- Hazardous Materials information made available on Effingham Emergency Management website

June

Hurricane Season

- Target Audience: Entire Effingham County Population
- Outreach in neighborhoods, schools, civic groups and businesses

- Literature regarding hurricane season will be made available at EEMA office and public speaking engagements
- Hurricane information will be placed on Effingham Emergency Management website
- SMS text alerts will be sent to keep citizen's updated with current severe weather threats
- Promote Lightning Awareness Week

September

National Preparedness Month

- Target Audience: General public, education institutions, businesses, senior citizens
- National Preparedness Month information placed on Effingham Emergency Management website
- Preparedness discussions presented to elementary schools

December

Holiday Safety

- Target Audience: General public, education institutions, businesses
- Holiday safety information available on Effingham Emergency Management website
- Winter Weather Awareness Week (Georgia)

XII. Conclusion

Our ultimate goal at Effingham Emergency Management Agency is to educate our public about the natural and manmade hazards they may face in Effingham County. We intend to educate our residents and businesses on how to prepare for such incidents with intentions of protecting life, property, and the environment, and to promptly notify emergency response services. This plan has been designed to help facilitate this goal to the best of our ability.