

## FOCUS ON

### Gwinnett Office of Emergency Management: Preparing the County before disaster strikes

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*The Gwinnett Office of Emergency Management responds to local hazards such as tornadoes, floods, wildfires, and winter storms in addition to hazardous material spills and public health disasters.*

Snow, ice, and freezing temperatures will soon be replaced with sunny skies and warmer weather—at least that's what we hope for in the spring and summer months. Yet, the threat of severe weather looms throughout the year and these events never occur at a convenient time. Fortunately, the staff of Gwinnett County's Office of Emergency Management works behind the scenes to plan for disaster and assists the county and its residents in recovery after an incident.

Over the years, the Office of Emergency Management team has responded to the aftermath of severe weather events such as tornadoes, floods, and ice storms, in addition to preparing for public health scares such as the H1N1 flu. While the Emergency Management staff does not serve as first-responders to an emergency, they play a pivotal role in coordinating the functions of

emergency response such as collecting and disseminating information, analyzing the impact of a disaster, setting priority actions, and managing requests for resources.

*"Emergency response in Gwinnett County is a coordinated effort that involves our public safety first responders, public health and private/nonprofit agencies, County government departments, and cities depending on the area affected by a disaster,"* said **Greg Swanson**, the County's Emergency Management Director.

In the wake of an emergency, these agencies operate out of the County's Emergency Operations Center, a central location where they coordinate planning, preparedness, and response activities. The center itself is housed in the state-of-the-art Police Annex facility that was designed to withstand severe weather and serve as a backup data center. Depending on the scope of the emergency, the operations center may be active 24-hours-a-day.



Volunteers are also important to fulfilling the role of the Emergency Management office. Emergency Management staff offers training to Gwinnett County residents through the Community Emergency Response Team. CERT volunteers may be called to assist in an emergency when first responders are not immediately available or assist in a non-emergency situation. In addition, the Citizen Corps

*The Emergency Operations Center provides a central location for County departments, municipalities, public health, and private/nonprofit agencies to coordinate disaster response and recovery.*

coordinates volunteer activities to educate communities on how to prepare before for an emergency before it occurs.

Gwinnett County residents can also do their part by preparing for a disaster before it strikes. For tips on how you can prepare your family, visit the [Gwinnett Office of Emergency Management's](#) webpage.