



2021

OFFICE OF
EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT

END OF YEAR REPORT



Gwinnett

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2021 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Maintain compliance with the Emergency Management Standard as published by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program by completing the annual EMAP report.
- Review and approve safety plans in Gwinnett County public and private schools as required by state law.
- Execute the annual Performance Partnership Agreement with the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) and complete quarterly reporting.
- Maintain and coordinate participation with the Atlanta Urban Area Security Initiative.
- Maintain a training program that includes assessment, development, and implementation of emergency management training for response personnel and the public.
- Design, conduct, and evaluate a minimum of two exercises per year as defined in the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program.

SUMMARY OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS & HIGHLIGHTS

The Gwinnett County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is a unit of the Gwinnett County Police Department that handles a variety of tasks including planning for emergencies and disasters, responding to incidents as a coordinating agency, directing mitigation against hazards, and assisting Gwinnett County Government and its residents in recovery after an incident.

A small agency with a critical mission, OEM works with Gwinnett city and county agencies along with other local, state, and federal agencies to save lives, protect property, and safeguard the environment.

Success with disaster response and recovery relies on effective planning, training, exercise, and stakeholder engagement efforts. The challenges experienced in 2021 with the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with another active year of natural and human-caused disasters, demonstrated the reward of the years of planning and preparation by OEM.

Despite the challenges, all federal and state emergency management mandates were met in 2021. The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency's (GEMA) mandated exercises were completed. GEMA's mandated School Safety Plan review was completed for all 140 of the schools in the Gwinnett County Public School system. The mandated Hazard Mitigation Plan annual review and the National Incident Management System reporting were also completed.

Overall, GCOEM recorded:

- 180 days of Emergency Operations Center activation
- 2,433 hours of response and recovery actions
- 46 days of severe weather monitoring
- 14 missing person actions resulting in 8 deployments
- 140 Gwinnett County Public School emergency plans reviewed
- 27 training classes and two exercises held



Planning

Plans must be in place that describe Gwinnett County's emergency response, continuity of operations, continuity of government, hazard mitigation, and recovery from emergencies or disasters. Specific areas of responsibility need to be assigned for performing functions in response to a disaster, and hazards that impact Gwinnett County must be addressed. Plan documents are developed, evaluated, and revised on a schedule that is based on the specific requirements of that plan. Some plans require additional approvals such as local adoption or state and federal approval. In 2021, the County's Emergency Operations Plan and its 13 supporting annex documents were all subject to an executive review. In addition, three of those annexes received a complete evaluation.

Plans evaluated and revised in 2021 were:

- Volunteer Management Support Annex
- Closed Points of Dispensing Support Annex
- Winter Weather Incident Annex
- Multi-Year Training & Exercise Plan
- Muti-Year Strategic Plan
- Gwinnett County Hazard Mitigation Plan

Hazard Mitigation Plan

Hazard mitigation is any sustainable action that reduces or eliminates long-term risk to people and property from future disasters. Mitigation planning breaks the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. Federal and state funding is occasionally available for specific mitigation efforts for communities that have a federally approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. Gwinnett County worked through the demanding Federal Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Program (HMGP) process and was able to secure a new generator for the County Parks Operations Center. The project was initiated in 2017 and completed in October 2021. While grant-funded projects generally have a long approval timeline, this project was periodically delayed due to manufacturing, skilled trade, and delivery issues caused by COVID-19.

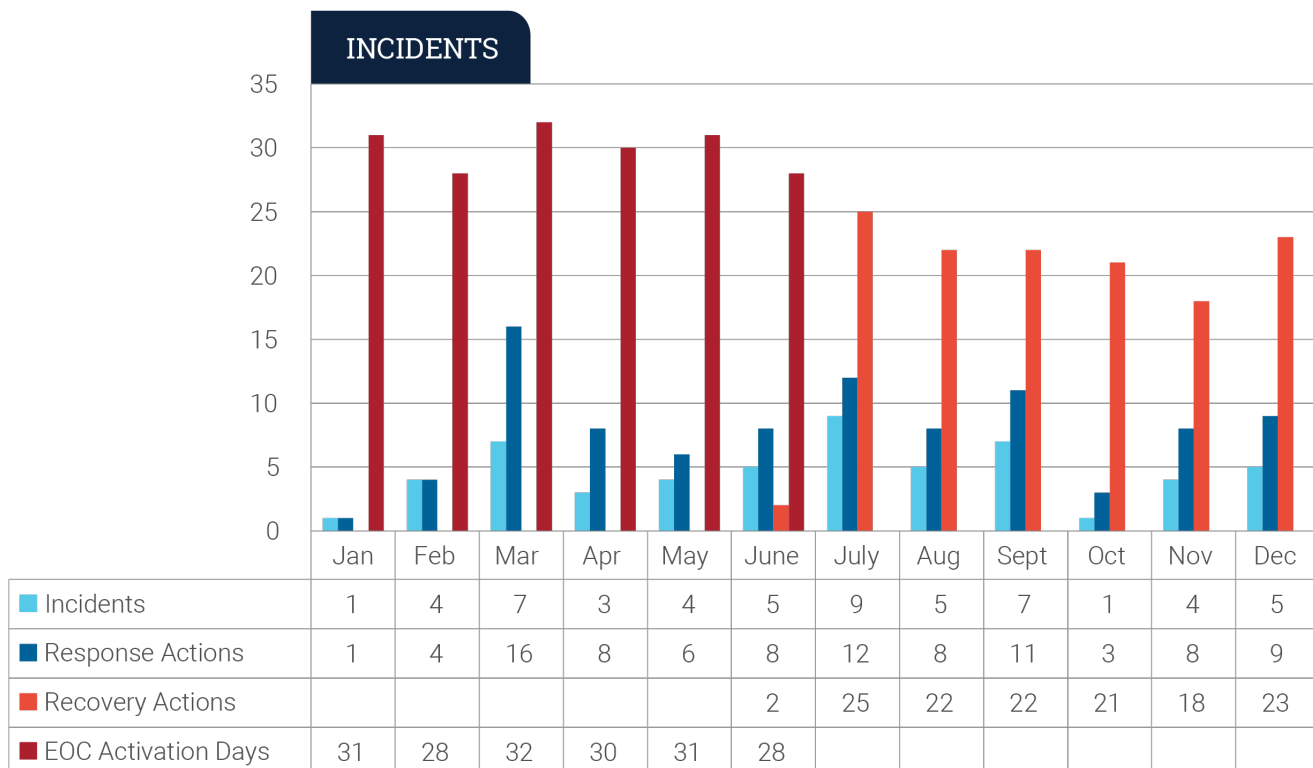
Due to the success of this project, a new HMGP grant application was created in 2021 for generators to be installed at County buildings that serve as winter warming centers. Winter storms often cause power outages, and locations that serve as shelters must be operational in all conditions.

Incident Response

The Georgia Emergency Management Act of 1981 (O.C.G.A. 38-3-27) requires the local director or designee be available or on-call at all times beyond normal working hours.

The OEM Duty Officer 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. Incidents that require a response from a duty officer continue to rise in both quantity and complexity. Whether responding to a request for resources, coordinating disaster response actions, or leading the search for a missing person, the OEM Duty Officers are responsible for putting the County's emergency plans into action. Consideration will be given to activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) when the Duty Officer becomes aware of an incident and anticipates a need for coordination and/or resource support from the EOC. Management of these major emergencies and disasters requires the support of the entire OEM staff. Scheduled planning, training, and exercise activities are put on hold during the response and recovery to these non-scheduled events.

As part of normal operations, OEM Duty Officers responded to a variety of incidents that were not COVID-19 related, resulting in 2,433 staff hours directly related to response and recovery actions.



COVID-19 Response

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office of Emergency Management activated the Emergency Operations Center on March 2, 2020. The EOC remained activated for this event until June 29, 2021.

While the Gwinnett-Newton-Rockdale Health Department led the County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, OEM played a significant role in coordination, resource management, and guiding Gwinnett County's response to the novel coronavirus pandemic. As the COVID-19 vaccine became more widely available, OEM worked to support both the GNR Health Department and Piedmont Eastside Medical Center to open mass vaccination centers.





Tropical Storm Fred

In August, strong Tropical Storm Fred made landfall in the Florida Panhandle and began surging northward. As the storm moved toward the Atlanta Metro area, tornado watches were issued for much of Georgia and the Carolinas. The storm had weakened to a tropical depression by the time it reached Gwinnett County. Nevertheless, the area received three to four inches of rain as the storm passed over. The National Weather Service issued a River Flood Warning for Pew Creek near Lawrenceville, which rose to 11.22 feet, from an average of 3.1 feet. Significant flooding caused Interstate 85 near Jimmy Carter Boulevard be closed to traffic due to significant amounts of water on the roadway.

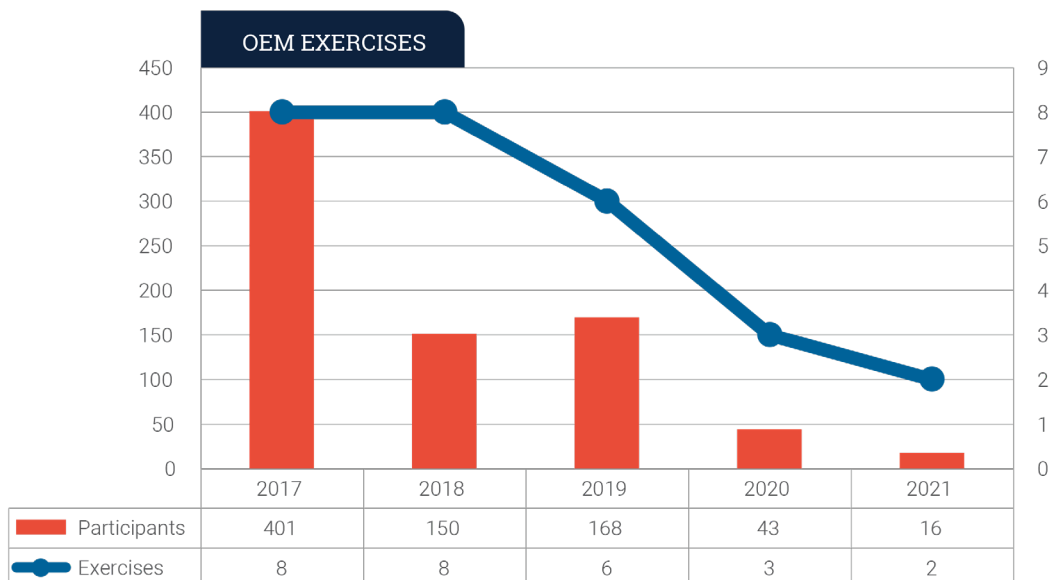
Training

The OEM manages a formal documented training program that includes training needs assessments, curriculum, course evaluations, and records of training. Training is scheduled regularly and specialized to the threats and hazards of the County. The following graph illustrates the number of training courses offered over the past three years. The target audience includes first responders, key public officials, along with the general public.



Exercise

A formal exercise program is in place to test the skills, abilities, and experience of emergency personnel as well as plans, policies, procedures, equipment, and facilities. All exercises must be conducted and documented in accordance with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program. The State of Georgia mandates that two exercises are completed each year. In 2019, GEMA limited the type of exercises they would accept to only tabletop, functional, and full-scale exercises. These are more complicated events to execute resulting in OEM scaling back the total number of exercises to meet the increased planning and run-time demands. Further complicating the exercise program, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the ability of OEM to hold exercises in person in 2020. OEM has continued to meet the state mandate of two exercises per year.



Citizen Corps Council

The Gwinnett County Citizen Corps Council was formed on October 15, 2013, to form a partnership between the Gwinnett County community, government, business, faith-based and volunteer organizations. Their mission is to make the greater Gwinnett community safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of terrorism, crime, public health epidemics, and disasters of all kinds. The goal is increased cooperation, coordination, communication, and collaboration of member organizations. The Council serves as a Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD) program to enhance the community's ability to mitigate, prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, thus ensuring that the human needs inherent in a disaster situation are evaluated and addressed.

Several of the Council's partner volunteer organizations were able to serve the County despite the COVID-19 restrictions in 2021:

Gwinnett Amateur Radio Emergency Service

Gwinnett ARES consists of licensed radio amateurs. With a mission to provide emergency radio communications, the group registered their qualifications and equipment voluntarily for communications duty in public service when disaster strikes. Members continued to meet virtually and monthly in 2021 to train and keep their skills up to date. They also participated in several national exercises.

Medical Reserve Corps – Georgia East Metro

MRC GEM's mission is to augment existing community health operations during large-scale emergencies, aid in response to pressing health care needs, and improve community emergency preparedness. In 2021, MRC GEM volunteers provided 15,179 hours of volunteer support for COVID-19 response efforts, working in the GNR Health Department COVID Call Center, at COVID Testing Sites, and at COVID vaccination clinics. In addition, volunteers participated in 1,627 hours of training and other non-emergency response activities.

Gwinnett Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association

The CPAAA provides Gwinnett residents the opportunity to volunteer with law enforcement in a variety of ways including administrative and training assistance. Another important component of the CPAAA is their Search Team, which participated in eight active missing person searches with County personnel in 2021.

Gwinnett Citizen Fire Academy Alumni Association

GCFAAA traditionally assists Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services at all levels within the department by helping promote fire and life safety education programs. Another service provided by the volunteers is assistance with the "Smoke Alarm Blitz" programs. Despite the ongoing the COVID-19 pandemic, CF AAA volunteers were able to:

- Assist with 589 Home Safety Surveys
- Assist with five Smoke Alarm Blitz weekends
- Install 1,654 smoke alarms
- Install 576 carbon monoxide alarms
- Install nine Firestop Canisters for vulnerable Gwinnett residents

Volunteers also assisted with Gwinnett County's weekly Food Distribution program.



Gwinnett

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