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GEORGIA

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OFFICE OF  
**EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**  
ANNUAL REPORT

## Board of Commissioners



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## County Administration



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## Letter from the Director



It is my pleasure to share a year-end summary of activities and accomplishments of the Gwinnett County Office of Emergency Management for 2017. For only the second time in my tenure as director, Gwinnett County was included in a major disaster declaration as approved by the president. Although Gwinnett County is well inland, Hurricane Irma brought significant impacts, damaging nearly 200 homes. We have to go back to the historic floods of 2009 to find an event with more widespread damage.

Public and individual preparedness is vital to Gwinnett's resilience. Our staff and partners worked diligently this year to improve Gwinnett County's ability to respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters. I encourage all Gwinnett County residents to improve their individual and family readiness. In our complex and diverse environment, whole-community engagement is critical. It is my honor to serve as the director of Emergency Management for Gwinnett County. The successes noted in this annual report are a product of the dedicated, highly professional staff of emergency managers we have in Gwinnett County.

Sincerely,

**Greg Swanson**, Director of Emergency Management



## Mission & Vision



### 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.

### Vision

The Vision of the Gwinnett County Office of Emergency Management is to encourage and foster a disaster-resistant community.



## Hazards



To create a safer and more disaster-resistant community, it is important to first understand the hazards and risks that can impact that community. The Office of Emergency Management, along with the Gwinnett County Hazard Mitigation Steering Committee, has developed a comprehensive list of hazards to which the county is vulnerable. This list was compiled after evaluating historical data from scientific and news media sources, soliciting opinions and experiences from participating jurisdictions and Gwinnett County residents, and surveying risks in surrounding counties. By understanding our risks, we can work to mitigate the impacts of events, or even prevent some hazards from taking place.

### **Hazards potentially threatening Gwinnett County**

- Severe thunderstorms/windstorms
- Lightning
- Tornadoes
- Flooding
- Winter storms
- Drought
- Tropical storms/hurricanes
- Hazardous material releases
- Pandemic/epidemic
- Terrorism
- Wildfires
- Dam / Levee Failure
- Cyber Crime
- Earthquakes

## Administration & Finance



**Greg Swanson**  
Director

Greg Swanson joined the Gwinnett County Office of Emergency Management in 2006 and was appointed Director in 2009. A certified emergency manager through the International Association of Emergency Managers and the State of Georgia, Mr. Swanson holds an undergraduate degree in Business Administration and a Masters of Public Administration. In 2014 he graduated from FEMA's National Emergency Management Executive Academy, a program designed for senior executives with coursework from Harvard University, the Naval Postgraduate School and other prominent higher education institutions.



**Kevin Hill**  
Emergency Management Specialist

Kevin joined the Gwinnett Office of Emergency Management in 2017. For the previous 10 years, he served as a police officer with the Greenville, S.C., Police Department. While a police officer he became involved in the city's emergency management division. He is a graduate of Arkansas State University with a Masters in Emergency Management and he holds a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice from the University of South Carolina.



**Nancy Coltrin**  
Emergency Management Specialist

Nancy was promoted to the position of Emergency Management Specialist in June 2014. She came to the department from the private sector, holds a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice/Emergency and Disaster Management, and is a Certified Emergency Manager through the state of Georgia.



**Ronald Brown**  
Emergency Management Specialist

Ronald was hired in December 2014 after recently retiring from a 26-year career with the New Jersey State Police. In 2013, he was promoted to the rank of captain and served in the Emergency Management Section, Homeland Security Branch as the bureau chief. In addition to his vast experience in public safety and emergency management, Ronald has a bachelor's degree in Public Administration.

## Administration & Finance



### **Giles Roberts**

#### **Emergency Management Specialist**

Giles was hired in December 2014 to begin his career in emergency management. He was a captain with 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment Royal Horse Artillery (British Army), serving in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2007 to 2010. He graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 2006, and from the University of Reading in 2005 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology.



### **Thad Smith**

#### **Fire and Emergency Services Liaison**

Thad was appointed to the position of Fire and Emergency Services Liaison in September 2017. Lt. Smith has 19 years of service with Gwinnett Fire and Emergency Services, and served 8 years on the Swift Water Rescue Team. He also served in the Marine Corps. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science.



### **Michael Shaw**

#### **Office of Emergency Management**

Michael was appointed to the position of Fire & Emergency Services Liaison in May of 2016. In May of 2017, he transferred to the Office of Emergency Management to fill the role of Emergency Management Specialist. Michael has a Masters of Arts Degree in Emergency and Disaster Management from American Public University.



### **Stephanie Swanson**

#### **Administrative Support Associate II**

Stephanie transferred from the Department's Animal Welfare and Enforcement Unit to the Office of Emergency Management in September 2016. She is a graduate of Mississippi State University with a Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Music.

## Summary of Accomplishments for 2017



- Staffing
  - Filled a new emergency management specialist position with Fire Department Liaison Michael Shaw.
  - Lt. Thad Smith was named liaison to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.
  - Another new emergency management specialist position was filled by Kevin Hill from the Greenville, S.C., Police Department.
- Launched the Gwinnett Search Team. Under OEM direction, resources from Code Enforcement, CSI, Parks and Recreation, and the Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association are trained and deployed for coordinated search efforts across the county when required.
  - Quarterly training for the Search Team was conducted to maintain and expand the knowledge and skill of the team in accordance with the Gwinnett Police Department General Directives Manual policy.
- OEM participated in the planning of the 2017 MARTA full-scale exercise. Through the exercise, OEM and Gwinnett Fire and Emergency Services partnered with MARTA to train with Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services' newly formed Mass Casualty Unit and with similar units throughout the Atlanta Metro area.
- Updated the Counties Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment.
- Worked with the Gwinnett County Department of Water Resources and the US Geological Survey to obtain the equipment and data collection mechanisms to expand flood gauge data availability. This data will allow for more expansive flood inundation mapping, allowing both Gwinnett residents and responders to better prepare for flooding events.
- Worked extensively with the 10th grade students in the public safety class at South Gwinnett High School as they studied disaster preparedness. Six students applied to FEMA to be part of the National Youth Preparedness Council and four of the students were invited to be part of the FEMA Region IV Youth Preparedness Council.
- Improved the post-disaster damage assessment process. The new process was implemented during Hurricane Irma.
  - FEMA Emergency Management Program Specialist Steve Michaels, who participated in the Joint Damage Assessment, was quoted in Gwinnett Daily Post on September 22, 2017, as saying, "Gwinnett County is very detail-oriented and their system that they utilize and implement is one of the best I've seen."

## Hurricane/Tropical Storm Irma



After causing significant damage on the west coast of Florida, Hurricane Irma swept into Gwinnett County as a tropical storm on September 11, 2017, bringing with it sheets of rain and high winds.

As the storm approached, Gwinnett Emergency Management Director Greg Swanson opened the Emergency Operations Center in Lawrenceville and began bringing county partners together to manage the effects of the storm. Hurricane Irma severely affected Gwinnett County, causing schools and government offices to close. The County also experienced isolated flooding and numerous downed trees, resulting in blocked roads and power outages, but no deaths. In the Emergency Operations Center, Swanson and the OEM staff coordinated the multi-agency response, ensuring roads were re-opened in a timely manner, people in damaged homes were safe, and worked with utility companies to ensure that power was restored.

After the storm passed, the County began assessing the aftermath and developed a detailed inventory of the effects of the storm. Damage across the county was so significant that Gwinnett County qualified for federal assistance for removing debris and other recovery expenses. Approximately 200 homes were damaged or destroyed by Tropical Storm Irma.

Hurricane Irma did significant damage across Georgia, and the Office of Emergency Management coordinated a significant amount of mutual aid to other stricken counties, as well as dealing with the local effects of the storm. OEM Specialist Ron Brown and Gwinnett Police Lt. Valerie Southard deployed to Chatham County to assist them in their EOC during the hurricane. In addition, OEM coordinated requests for generators, search and rescue teams, and assisted the Animal Welfare and Enforcement Division with sheltering animals from Glynn County.



## Planning

The Office of Emergency Management is committed to being prepared for disasters, both natural and human-caused. OEM and their partners continuously plan and then exercise those plans to ensure that their skills stay sharp and they have the knowledge to help keep the public safe. These plan documents are developed, reviewed, and revised on a specific schedule.

### 2017 Planning

#### New Plans Developed

- Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Plan
- Winter Weather Incident Support Annex

#### Plans Reviewed

- Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Debris Management Support Annex
- State Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment Plan
- Emergency Operations Plan, Base Plan
- Emergency Support Function Annex
- Closed Points of Dispensing Support Annex
- Communications and Warning Support Annex
- Commodity Distribution Support Annex
- Crisis Communication Support Annex
- Volunteer Management Support Annex
- Mass Care and Sheltering Support Annex
- Standard Operating Guides Support Annex



#### Plans Revised

- Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Emergency Support Function Annex
- Standard Operating Guides Support Annex



The National Weather Service recognized Gwinnett County's efforts in preparing the county for hazardous weather and designated Gwinnett as a StormReady Community. Gwinnett first received the prestigious designation in 2007, and has received it every three years since.

To be officially StormReady, a community or site must:

- Establish a 24-hour warning point and emergency operations center;
- Have redundant communications systems to receive severe weather forecasts and warnings and to alert the public.
- Create a system that monitors local weather conditions;
- Promote the importance of public readiness through community seminars;
- Develop a formal hazardous weather plan, which includes training severe weather spotters and holding emergency exercises.

At a minimum, NOAA Weather Radios with tone alert and Specific Area Message Encoding capability must be located at least four sites within StormReady communities. Gwinnett has SAME capability at the Emergency Operations Center, the Gwinnett Justice and Administration Center, and several school facilities and other locations throughout the county. For example, each police precinct has a weather radio. The SAME project allows people to program their phones to receive warnings only within their ZIP codes.

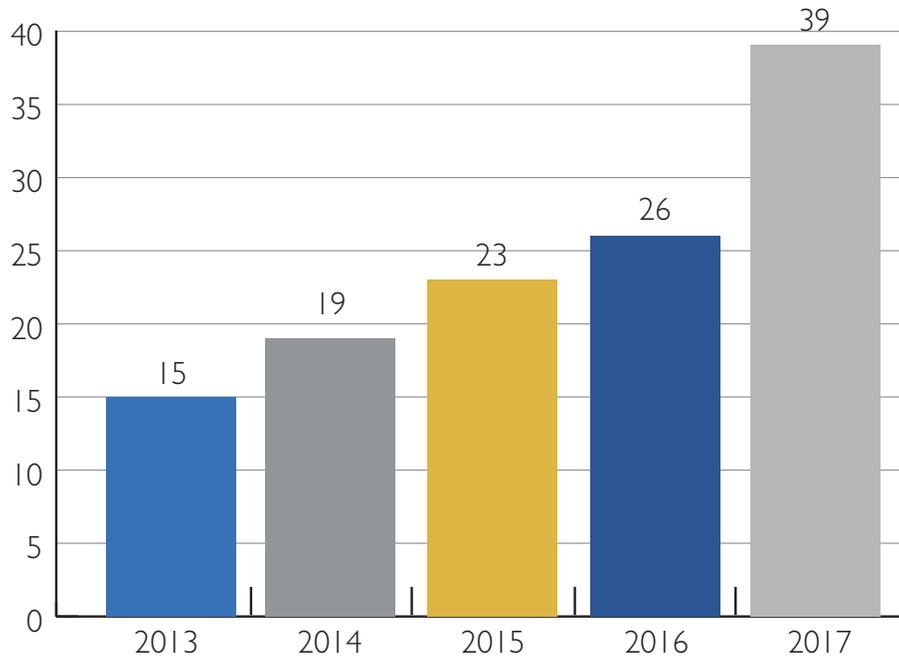
The National Weather Service SKYWARN storm spotter program trains emergency managers, dispatchers, first responders such as police officers and firefighters, and the general public on how identify features in clouds that usually precede severe weather. Trained SKYWARN storm spotters report hazardous weather conditions to their local NWS offices. The next Gwinnett County Storm Spotter Training will be held in 2019.

<https://www.weather.gov/stormready>

# Training

## 2017 OEM Training Courses offered

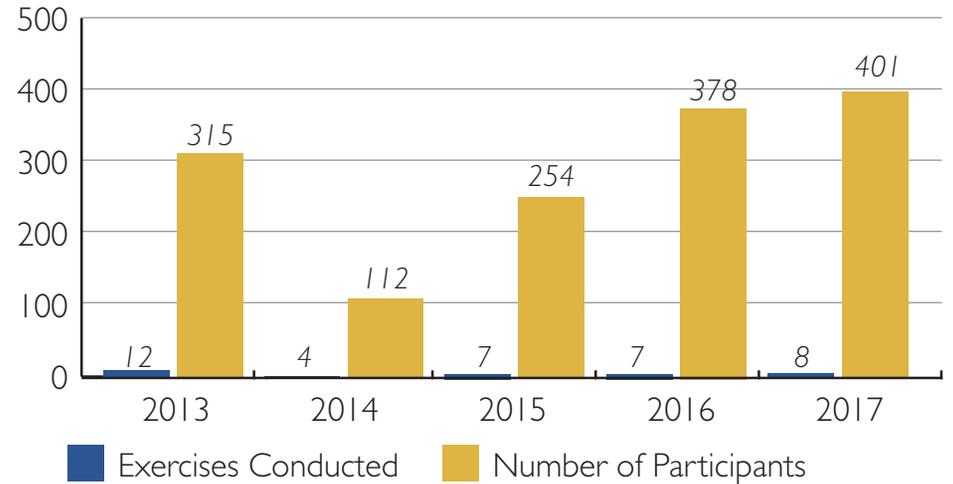
OEM manages a formal documented training program that includes training needs assessments, curriculum, course evaluations, and records of training. Training is regularly scheduled and specialized to the threats and hazards of the county.



## OEM Exercises

Gwinnett County OEM manages a formal exercise program to test the skills, abilities, and experience of emergency personnel as well as plans, policies, procedures, equipment, and facilities. Most exercises are conducted and documented in accordance with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program.

Georgia mandates that the County holds two exercises per year. For the past five years, the Gwinnett OEM has conducted twice as many exercises as required by the state.

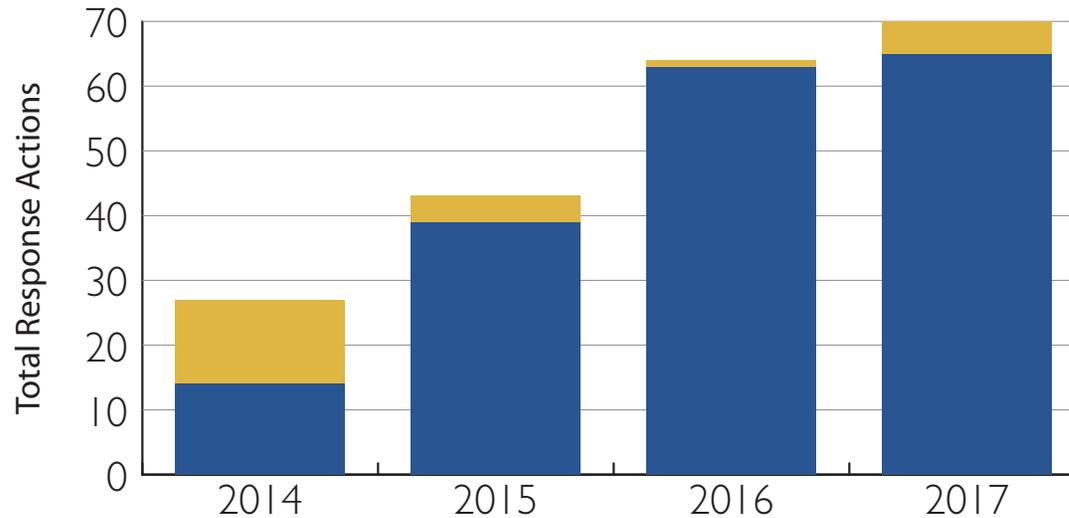


## 2017 Incidents Summary

The Georgia Emergency Management Act of 1981 (O.C.G.A. § 38-3-27), requires the local director or his designee be available or on call at all times beyond normal working hours. The duty officer serves as the OEM 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. The EOC may be activated when the Office of Emergency Management becomes aware of an incident and anticipates a need for coordination and/or resource support from the EOC. Typically, an Initial Situation Assessment is completed by the OEM duty officer and the decision to activate is made.

The marked decrease in the Days of EOC Activation between 2014 and 2015 can be traced to the increase in the ability to handle more serious and complex incidents being built into the Duty Officer’s capabilities. The upward trend in number of incidents is believed to be linked to two factors: an increase in the awareness of the OEM Duty Officer’s existence, function and ability to be of use and an increase in the number of Weather Watches and Warnings issued by the National Weather Service.

Office of Emergency Management: Incident Responses (2011 – 2016)



Days of EOC Activation	13	4	1	5
Duty Officer Actions	14	39	63	65
<b>Total Responses</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>70</b>

## Mall of Georgia Active Shooter Exercise



On February 26, 2017, a full-scale exercise depicting an active shooter incident was conducted at the Mall of Georgia. It brought together Gwinnett County Police, Gwinnett County Fire and Emergency Services, and Mall of Georgia management and security in order to build experience with large-scale scenario on high-profile targets within the county.





Please consider the environment before printing this report.

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