

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

INTRODUCTION

Section 186.511, Florida Statutes, calls for the Council to prepare an assessment of the regional plan once every five years. The purpose of the assessment is to evaluate the successes and failures of the plan and the preparation necessary amendments, revisions, or updates to the plan based upon the assessment. The assessment report is to primarily be based on the region's progress toward attainment of strategic regional policy plan goals using the plan's regional indicators. The rule also notes that the assessments shall identify plan amendments which may be necessary as a result of changing regional conditions, changes to the State Comprehensive Plan, or other statutory changes.

The assessment of the regional plan's Emergency Preparedness Element is organized around the reporting requirements of Chapter 186.511, F.S. and Rule 27E-5, F.A.C. The assessment includes an evaluation of regional indicators, the identification of the successes and shortcomings of the region in implementing the policies of the plan, the impact of the element on local government comprehensive plans, an evaluation of unanticipated problems and opportunities, and an appraisal of the impact of changes in state statutes and rules on the regional plan. The assessment concludes with the identification of recommended plan amendments and new actions necessary to address issues identified herein.

AN ASSESSMENT OF REGIONAL INDICATORS

Significant progress has been made with regards to the region's preparedness for coastal storms. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio coverage has significantly increased, a majority of the region's coastal communities have installed warning sirens while funds are actively being sought for installation in the remaining coastal communities. The quality of public emergency shelters is improving as indicated by use of ARC 4496 guidelines to determine the fitness of structures for use as emergency shelters within areas experiencing a hurricane. the ability of local governments to receive emergency assistance has increased with all but five local governments becoming signatories to the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement for Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery.

With regards to longer-term planning issues, an additional four north central local governments have become participants in the National Flood Insurance Program. Additionally, the region's two coastal counties are in the process of expanding the geographic extent of their Coastal High Hazard Areas as designated in their local government comprehensive plans.

North central Florida still does not have a regional emergency response hazmat team and certain areas of the region remain beyond a 60-minute response time of the nearest available hazmat team. However, the region is moving towards the creation of such a team in the near future.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.1. IMPROVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR COASTAL STORMS IN THE REGION.

Regional Indicator 3.1.1 notes that as of June 1, 1995, one coastal weather buoy exists in the Gulf of Mexico located approximately 100 miles southwest of Horseshoe Beach. As of January 1, 2000, the region still has one coastal weather buoy located approximately 100 miles southwest of Horseshoe Beach. At the time of the Storm of the Century, no weather buoys or other weather monitoring instruments were located off or on the region's coast. Weather buoys provide valuable information regarding temperature, wind speed, wind direction, and barometric pressure. Using this information, meteorologists can predict storm surge height and issue appropriate weather warnings. The regional plan notes a need for additional weather buoys located at 50 and ten miles off-shore to better help meteorologists predict storm surges as coastal storms move inland.

Regional Indicator 3.1.2 notes that as of June 1, 1995, NOAA weather radio transmissions covered 25.0 percent of the region. As of January 1, 2000, NOAA weather radio transmissions covered approximately 70.0 percent of the region.

In late 1996, an additional 1,000 watt NOAA weather radio station was established in the unincorporated Taylor County community of Salem. The station provides weather radio coverage for both Dixie and Taylor County. As a result of the new station, NOAA weather radio transmissions now covers approximately 70 percent of the region. The Department of Emergency Management (DEM) is conducting a study to determine gaps in radio coverage and is planning to add additional stations or upgrade existing stations to provide 100 percent coverage statewide. Currently, Hamilton, northern Madison, & northern Columbia County are without NOAA weather radio coverage. Upgrading the existing 300-watt NOAA weather radio station in Live Oak to a 1,000-watt station may provide the necessary coverage for the remaining unserved areas of the region.

Regional Indicator 3.1.3 notes that, as of June 1, 1995, one north central Florida coastal community had an emergency warning siren. As of January 1, 2000, four north central Florida coastal communities (Horseshoe Beach, Dekle beach, Keaton Beach, & Steinhatchee) had emergency warning sirens. The unincorporated communities of Suwannee and Jena do not have sirens, although Dixie County is actively seeing funds for the installation of sirens in these two coastal communities.

Regional Indicator 3.1.4 notes that, as of January 1, 1996, Dixie County had a surplus of 1,569 public shelter spaces. Similarly, Regional Indicator 3.1.5 notes that, as of January 1, 1996, Taylor County had a surplus of 4,931 public shelter spaces. As of January 1, 2000, no updated information is available with regard to public shelter surpluses/deficits for north central Florida counties.

In 1993, the State of Florida began using American Red Cross (ARC) guidelines for determination of the fitness of public shelters and their capacities. The ARC identifies two different types of shelters, Host and Risk, and correspondingly, two different county shelter capacities. Host shelters are buildings which are used in counties which are not experiencing a flood or weather emergency

to house out-of-county residents from counties experiencing a flood or weather emergency. Under the ARC guidelines, Host shelters are subject to less stringent standards than Risk shelters. Risk shelters are buildings used within a county experiencing a weather-related emergency such as a hurricane. Risk shelters must be able to withstand winds of 150 miles per hour under, belocated outside a flood hazard/storm surge area, and be in compliance with the other provisions of ARC document 4496, Guidelines for Shelter Survey.

At the time of adoption of the regional plan in 1996, no north central Florida public shelters had been surveyed to determine whether they meet the criteria of the ARC guidelines. As of January 1, 2000, DEM records indicate that the region has 150 public shelters, principally public schools and churches. The Host capacity has been determined for 46 of the region’s 153 public shelters. Only 19 have been surveyed for compliance with ARC 4496 for use as a Risk shelter. DEM’s goal is to complete surveys of all identified public shelters by the end of 2003.

While all public shelters in Taylor County have been surveyed for compliance with ARC 4496, Dixie County shelters have not been surveyed. In fact, the only other north Central Florida counties which have had public shelters evaluated for compliance with ARC 4496 guidelines are Gilchrist and Madison Counties, where four of the county’s six public shelters have been surveyed. Table 3.1 below identifies host and risk shelter capacities for north central Florida counties.

**TABLE 3.1
NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA PUBLIC SHELTER CAPACITY
USING AMERICAN RED CROSS PUBLIC SHELTER GUIDELINES**

County	No. of Shelters	Host Capacity	No. Shelters Surveyed for ARC 4496 Compliance	Risk Capacity ARC 4496 Compliant	Risk Capacity ARC 4496 Non-compliant	PSN⁺ Storm Capacity
Alachua	79	4,139	0	0	8,777	0
Bradford	6	0	0	0	0	0
Columbia	24	0	0	0	0	0
Dixie	3	384	0	0	0	0
Gilchrist	6	2,258	4	1,380	428	52
Hamilton	5	0	0	0	0	0
Lafayette	6	1,394	0	0	842	0
Madison	8	3,810	8	3,810	0	0
Suwannee	6	4,199	0	0	0	0
Taylor	7	2,590	7	1,910	0	0

County	No. of Shelters	Host Capacity	No. Shelters Surveyed for ARC 4496 Compliance	Risk Capacity ARC 4496 Compliant	Risk Capacity ARC 4496 Non-compliant	PSN* Storm Capacity
Union	3	0	0	0	0	0
Region	153	18,774	19	7,100	10,047	52

*Persons with Special Needs.

Source: Florida Department of Community Affairs, Division of Emergency Management, January 3, 2000.

Therefore, it is recommended that two new policies and regional indicators be added under Regional Goal 3.1 which address the completion of shelter surveys. Possible wording for the new policies and regional indicators are as follows:

Policy 3.1.5. Complete public shelter surveys to determine their compliance status with ARC publication 4496 guidelines in order to determine the public shelter Risk Capacity for the region.

Policy 3.1.6. Determine the public shelter Risk Capacity net surplus/deficit for all north central Florida counties.

Regional Indicators

7. As of January 1, 2000, 19 of the region's 153 public shelters had been surveyed for compliance with ARC 4496 guidelines.

8. As of January 1, 2000, the region's ARC 4496-Compliant Risk Public Shelter Capacity was 7,100.

Regional Indicator 3.1.6 notes that, as of January 1, 1996, Dixie County had a Long Response clearance time of 9.00 hours. Similarly, Regional Indicator 3.1.7 notes that, as of January 1, 1996, Taylor County had a Long Response clearance time of 9.25 hours. As of January 1, 2000, no updated information was available on Long Response clearance times.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.2. PARTICIPATION BY ALL NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE NATIONAL FLOOD INSURANCE PROGRAM.

Regional Indicator 3.2.1 notes, that as of February 17, 1995, 30 of the region's 35 local governments containing flood hazard areas within their jurisdiction participated in the National Flood Insurance Program. As of January 1, 2000, 34 of the region's 35 local governments with mapped flood hazard areas within their jurisdiction are participants in the National Flood Insurance Program.

Regional Indicator 3.2.2 notes, that as of January 1, 1996, National Flood Insurance Rate Maps are unavailable for eight north central Florida municipalities. As of January 1, 2000, National Flood Insurance Rate Maps are unavailable for eight north central Florida municipalities.

In an effort to maximize limited financial resources, DEM has recently signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Federal emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to participate in FEMA's Map Modernization Program. Part of the program calls for water management district's to provide an inventory of flood mapping needs. Once a priority list is assembled by DEM, maps will be prepared/updated by FEMA using, where available water management district flood map data. The program is significant as it marks the first time FEMA has been willing to use state data in preparing flood insurance rate maps. Normally, FEMA uses maps prepared by either the Army Corps of Engineers or private contractors. This approach is thought to be more economical since many water management districts have already developed extensive maps of floodable areas. In the past, FEMA has been reluctant to use water management district maps due to differing methodologies used to delineate flood hazard areas. The new FEMA program is the first step in an effort to reach agreement between FEMA and the state regarding the acceptance of alternative floodable area mapping methodologies. At this point, it is unknown when new flood maps will be produced as a result of this program.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.3. REDUCE RESPONSE TIMES OF REGIONAL HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RESPONSE TEAMS TO 60 MINUTES FOR HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EMERGENCIES IN PERRY, CROSS CITY, AND GREENVILLE.

Regional Indicator 3.3.1 notes, that as of January 1, 1994, no regional hazardous materials response team is located within a sixty minute response time of Perry, Cross City, or Greenville. As of January 1, 2000, no regional hazardous materials response team is located within a 60 minute response time of Perry, Cross City, or Greenville. However, the emergency response team located at Buckeye, in Perry, has contracted with Taylor County to provide emergency response within Taylor County.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.4. IMPROVE THE ABILITY OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAMS TO RESPOND TO HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EMERGENCES.

Regional Indicator 3.4.1 notes, that as of January 1, 1996, no commodity flow studies have been undertaken to determine the types and amounts of hazardous materials moving via railroads and highways in the region. As of January 1, 2000, no commodity flow studies have been undertaken to determine the types and amounts of hazardous materials moving via railroads and highways in the region.

Perhaps the area where the least progress has been made is the region's inability to conduct a commodity flow study to determine the types and amounts of hazardous materials moving via railroads and highways through the region. As noted in the regional plan, it is suspected that, given

the rural nature of the region, it is likely that the region's largest hazardous materials emergencies are likely to involve unknown chemicals accidentally released by trucks and trains passing through. A commodity flow study will provide important information to local hazardous materials response teams, allowing them to better train and equip for the types of chemicals likely to be encountered in such releases.

REGIONAL GOAL 3.5. ALL NORTH CENTRAL FLORIDA LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ARE SIGNATORIES TO THE STATEWIDE MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT FOR CATASTROPHIC DISASTER RESPONSE AND RECOVERY.

Regional Indicator 3.5.1 notes, that as of January 4, 1995, ten of north central Florida's 44 local governments had adopted the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement for Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery. As of October 15, 1998, 39 of north central Florida's 44 local governments had adopted the Statewide Mutual Aid Agreement for Catastrophic Disaster Response and Recovery.

IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

The Emergency Preparedness Element does not directly address local government comprehensive plans. Rather, its goals and policies address areas of either state or regional responsibility. Therefore, the element has not affected local government comprehensive plans.

IMPACT OF CHANGES IN STATE STATUTES AND RULES AS WELL AS THE STATE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

While not a change due to state statutes or rules, or the State Comprehensive Plan, the Army Corps of Engineers published its Cedar Key Basin Hurricane evacuation Study Final Technical Report, both Dixie and Taylor Counties are in the process of redefining their coastal high hazard areas. Currently, both comprehensive plans use the most landward FEMA Velocity Zone (V-Zone) line to determine their coastal high hazard areas. As a result of the publication of the Final Technical Report, both counties are amending their comprehensive plans to use the Tropical Storm 2 Hurricane Evacuation Area as their coastal high hazard areas. The new areas will cover a somewhat larger area, perhaps 10 percent larger in areal extent, than the area defined by the V-Zone. Both plans continue to contain policy direction limiting development within coastal high hazard areas.

SUCCESSSES AND SHORT COMINGS

The successes of the Emergency Preparedness Element have been identified in other sections of this report and will not be repeated here. The most noticeable shortcoming has been the failure of _____ (?) to conduct commodity flow studies to determine the type and quantity of hazardous materials transported on highways and railroads through the region. The studies have not been conducted due to a lack of funding _____

UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Annual reports prepared by the Council since 1996 contain a section entitled Upcoming Activities, which outlines actions and work activities of the Council for the upcoming year. While emergency preparedness activities contained in the annual reports are consistent with the goals and policies of the emergency Preparedness Element, the action and work activity statements represent an unanticipated opportunity to amend regional plan policies to more accurately reflect Council actions in support of regional goals.

The 1996, 1997, and 1998 annual reports state that the Council will update the regional emergency response plan to incorporate the most recent information on the location of hazardous materials. This action is consistent with regional policies 3.4.2, 3.4.3, and 3.4.4, which are as follows:

Policy 3.4.2. Continue to provide technical assistance to local governments in the preparation of their hazardous materials response plans.

Policy 3.4.3. Continue to serve as staff to the North Central Florida LEPC.

Policy 3.4.4. Provide local emergency dispatch operators with a summary of hazards analysis information so as to inform responders as to what types of hazardous materials at the scene of the emergency.

The annual reports also note that the Local emergency Planning Committee will continue its efforts to ensure that emergency personnel are properly trained and the general public informed of potential dangers facing their communities. While these activities are consistent with Regional Policies 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4, it is recommended that two additional policies be added which more completely reflect these two ongoing activities. Possible wording for the two additional policies is as follows:

Policy 3.4.5. Provide training to local emergency personnel for dealing with hazardous materials emergencies by

Policy 3.4.6. Keep the general public informed of potential hazardous materials dangers facing their communities through...

NEED FOR PLAN AMENDMENTS AND NEW ACTIONS TO ADDRESS PLANNING ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE EAR

Various recommendations have been included in earlier sections of this review regarding possible changes to the plan's Emergency Preparedness Element. This section recaps the recommended amendments.

1. Add Regional Policy 3.1.5 to address the completion of public shelter surveys. Possible language is as follows:

Policy 3.1.5. Complete public shelter surveys to determine their compliance status with ARC publication 4496 guidelines in order to determine the public shelter Risk Capacity for the region.

2. Add Regional Policy 3.1.6 to address the a new determination of north central Florida public shelter net surpluses and deficits based on Risk-compliant ARC 4496 shelter guidelines. Possible language is as follows:

Policy 3.1.6. Determine the public shelter Risk Capacity net surplus/deficit for all north central Florida counties.

3. Add two new regional indicators under Regional Goal 3.1 to address the region's ARC 4496 guideline-compliant public shelter capacity and net surplus/deficit Risk shelter capacity. Possible language for the two new regional indicators follows:

Regional Indicators

7. As of January 1, 2000, 19 of the region's 153 public shelters had been surveyed for compliance with ARC 4496 guidelines.

8. As of January 1, 2000, the region's ARC 4496-Compliant Risk Public Shelter Capacity was 7,100.

4. Add a new Regional Policy 3.4.5 to calling for the training of local emergency personnel for dealing with hazardous materials. Possible wording for the new policy is as follows:

Policy 3.4.5. Provide training to local emergency personnel for dealing with hazardous materials emergencies by

5. Add a new Regional Policy 3.4.6 to address public education of hazardous materials dangers. Possible wording of the new policy follows:

Policy 3.4.6. Keep the general public informed of potential hazardous materials dangers facing their communities through...

6. Where possible, update the regional indicators with the most recent data.