



**POLK COUNTY EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

55 Clines Ingram Jackson Road
Cedartown, GA. 30125
(770) 748-3439 | ema@polkga.org

**2025
Year in Review**

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Message from the Director

The Polk County Emergency Management Agency is proud to present the 2025 Year in Review. This annual review provides a chance for us to reflect as an agency on the hard work that moved us forward thanks to the collaborative efforts of our staff and partners. Our mission may sound simple, but it takes an immense amount of effort year after year.

One of the projects that takes a lot of time is the four year review of the Polk County Emergency Operations Plan. This plan lays out how Polk County will respond during disasters. This plan requires a review and approval every four years as required by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency.

The intern program, managed by EMA Coordinator Landon Hendrix has continued to be a huge success! Intern Brooke Tinnan assisted with the review and editing of the Emergency Operations Plan and has participated, created and facilitated tabletop and full-scale exercises. Brooke recently graduated from Jacksonville State University with a Bachelors in Science in Emergency Management. This valuable hands on approach has been an asset to Polk County and will serve her well in her future endeavors.

It is my honor and pleasure to serve as the Director of Emergency Management for Polk County. The successes noted in this annual report are due to the dedicated, highly professional staff which includes EMA Coordinator Landon Hendrix, EMA Intern Brooke Tinnan, and the Polk County Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Bobby Dockery
Director
Polk County Emergency Management Agency

Statistics & Highlights

Training

Training remains one of the most critical pillars of Polk County EMA’s mission to safeguard the community. A well-trained emergency management staff ensures that Polk County is prepared to respond to a wide spectrum of incidents, from routine emergencies to large-scale disasters. Polk County EMA continues to prioritize rigorous and ongoing professional development for its personnel, engaging in training that spans terrorism preparedness, hazardous materials operations, emergency planning principles, and advanced incident management. This commitment ensures that EMA staff remain highly proficient in coordinating complex, multi-agency operations and supporting the county’s broader public safety system during times of crisis.

Beyond strengthening individual competencies, these training initiatives play an essential role in building a countywide “Culture of Preparedness.” By maintaining high standards of readiness, EMA enhances community resilience and ensures that residents receive timely, coordinated, and well informed support when emergencies occur. The agency’s proactive approach reinforces its dedication to protecting lives, property, and critical infrastructure while reducing the potential impacts of disasters on the community. In 2025, EMA personnel collectively completed 187 hours of training, underscoring Polk County’s continued investment in preparedness and its strong commitment to operational excellence.

Exercises

HON Full Scale Exercise



Figure 1. Cedartown Firefighters during the exercise.

In 2025, Polk County EMA hosted a comprehensive full-scale exercise at The HON Company to evaluate multi-agency response capabilities during a complex industrial emergency. The scenario, developed and coordinated by EMA Intern Brooke Tinnan, simulated a commercial structure fire within the facility. The exercise tested real-time communication, resource deployment, incident command operations, and interagency coordination under realistic conditions. Brooke’s planning efforts ensured that the exercise incorporated both operational challenges and strategic decision-making components, providing participating agencies with an opportunity to refine procedures and strengthen overall readiness.

The exercise brought together a wide range of public safety partners, including Cedartown Fire Department, Cedartown Police Department, Advent-Redmond EMS, Polk County 911, Polk County Police Department, Polk County Sheriff’s Office, and Polk County Fire Department. Their combined participation allowed for a fully integrated response environment reflective of an actual large-scale incident. Evaluation support was provided by representatives from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and Paulding County EMA, whose observations and feedback helped identify strengths, improvement areas, and opportunities to enhance Polk County’s operational capabilities. This exercise not only reinforced interagency collaboration but also demonstrated the county’s ongoing commitment to building a safer, more resilient community.

EOC Activations

The EOC was activated at a Level 2 once during 2025. This activation was a result of a severe weather threat in March of 2025.

March 2025 Severe Weather

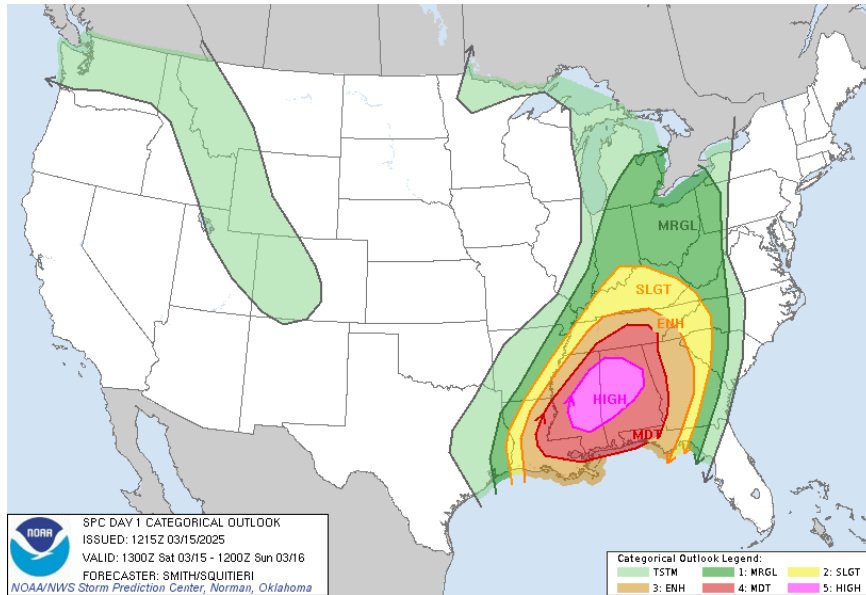


Figure 2.. Day 1 Severe Weather Outlook on March 15, 2025.

On March 15, 2025, the Polk County Emergency Management Agency, in coordination with its public safety partners, activated the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at Level 2 in response to a Level 4 (Moderate) severe weather threat. This activation ensured enhanced coordination and resource readiness as forecasts indicated the potential for significant impacts across the county.

Severe thunderstorms were predicted to move through the area between 8:00 PM and 1:00 AM, with the strongest cells capable of producing damaging winds between 60 and 80 mph, EF2 or stronger

tornadoes, and hail measuring one inch or larger. These conditions posed a substantial risk to life and property, prompting proactive measures to safeguard the community.

Fortunately, Polk County avoided the worst of the storm system; however, localized flooding occurred in Rockmart, resulting in notable damages. The impacts included one single-family home destroyed, three government facilities affected (one with minor damage), six businesses impacted, and one road washed out. Additionally, two fire department responders sustained injuries during response operations, underscoring the challenges faced despite the county being spared from more severe outcomes.

Incident Responses

Polk County EMA remains committed to delivering effective and coordinated incident response for emergencies and disasters affecting the community. The agency’s mission is to support local public safety partners by organizing resources, streamlining communication, and ensuring a unified operational approach during critical events.

The Polk County EMA operates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which functions as the central hub for multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency coordination. Through this center, the agency facilitates situational awareness, resource allocation, and strategic decision-making to ensure a seamless and collaborative response among all participating entities.

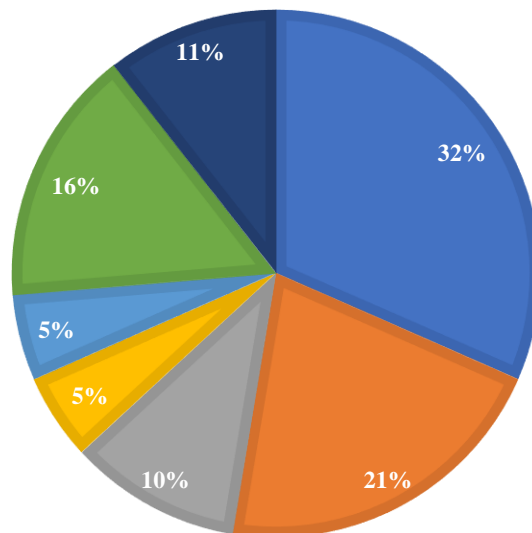
Beyond coordination roles, Polk County EMA also provides direct field response to assist public safety agencies during incidents. Trained EMA personnel deploy to incident scenes to offer operational support, technical assistance, and specialized resources, strengthening front-line response capabilities and enhancing the overall effectiveness of emergency operations across the county.

Through sustained partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, along with strong collaboration with volunteer organizations, Polk County EMA continues to expand its response capacity and improve community resilience. These cooperative efforts ensure that Polk County is better prepared for, equipped to manage, and capable of recovering from a wide range of emergencies.

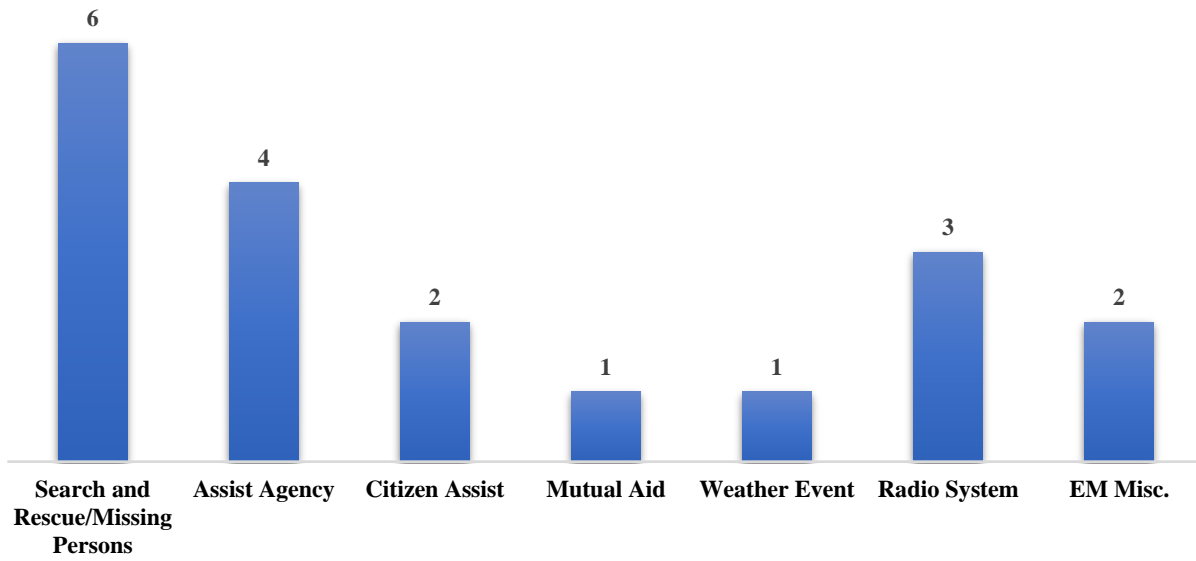
During calendar year 2025, Polk County EMA responded to or assisted in a total of 20 incidents. A detailed breakdown of incident response statistics is provided below.

INCIDENT TYPE

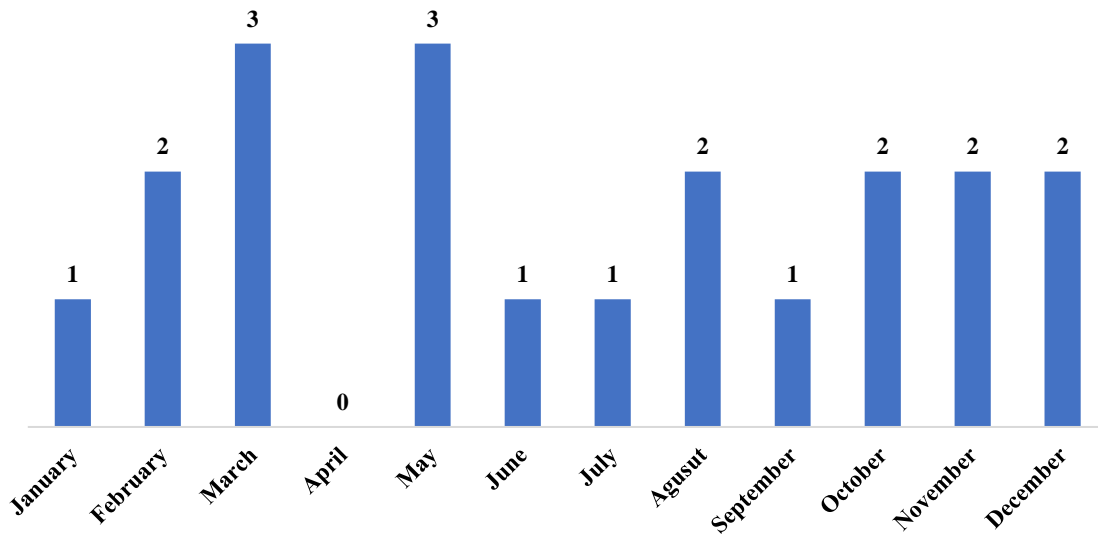
- Search and Rescue/Missing Persons
- Assist Agency
- Citizen Assist
- Mutual Aid
- Weather Event
- Radio System
- EM Misc.



Incident Type



Incident By Month



Facebook & Community Outreach

Polk County EMA achieved remarkable progress in public outreach during 2025, leveraging its Facebook platform to connect with the community on an unprecedented scale. The page generated 1,077,096 views, marking an increase of nearly 700,000 views compared to the previous year. Through consistent and informative posts covering topics such as winter weather preparedness, severe weather awareness, volunteer opportunities, and holiday safety, the agency has significantly enhanced public awareness and fostered a stronger culture of preparedness among residents.



Figure 3 Polk EMA at the annual Touch-A-Truck.

This social media engagement also plays a critical role in supporting the Disaster Match Program in partnership with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA). By disseminating vital preparedness information and encouraging active community participation, Polk County EMA ensures residents remain informed and ready to respond effectively during emergencies. This collaboration strengthens local resilience, enabling the community to better withstand and recover from disasters.

Notably, the agency's most viewed day occurred on March 15, 2025, when Polk County faced a forecast for severe weather, generating 129,270 views in a single day. Additional highlights include 1,500 new followers and 45,543 engagements, reflecting the growing reach and impact of Polk County EMA's outreach efforts.



Figure 4. Polk Count CERT Members at the Rockmart Christmas Parade.

Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

The Polk County CERT continued to serve as a vital support element in the county's preparedness and response efforts throughout 2025. CERT members played an important role during EOC activations, assisting with situational awareness, documentation, resource tracking, and operational support tasks that help maintain a smooth and efficient response environment. Their efforts allowed EMA staff and public safety partners to remain focused on managing field operations and strategic objectives, further demonstrating CERT's value as a dependable and capable force multiplier for Polk County.

In addition to their activation responsibilities, CERT volunteers actively participated in a variety of training opportunities designed to strengthen their skills and readiness. Members completed coursework in disaster response fundamentals, communications, and emergency operations procedures, continuing to build the team's capacity to support countywide activities. This year, Polk County CERT also had the opportunity to train alongside Paulding County CERT during a multi-agency exercise, expanding regional collaboration and enhancing interoperability between neighboring programs. Through these efforts, the CERT Team reinforced its commitment to preparedness and contributed significantly to the resilience and readiness of the Polk County community.

Polk County P25 Radio System Administrator

The administration of the Polk County P25 Radio System remains a critical ancillary responsibility of Polk County EMA. Throughout 2025, EMA processed approximately 2,100 technical support reports from Motorola related to tower site issues alone. In addition, the agency managed numerous work orders from P25 system customers, including requests for quotes, repairs, warranty claims, and programming services.

Significant progress was made in system maintenance and optimization. Firmware updates are being applied to all radios, as well as channels to the new Paulding County System. To ensure system reliability, EMA conducts quarterly tower site inspections at each location, verifying equipment functionality and maintaining clean, safe environments.



Figure 5. Radio Tower Site in Cedartown.

Polk County Safety Program

The Polk County Safety Program is another ancillary duty of EMA. The EMA Director serves as the County Safety Coordinator with the EMA Coordinator serving as the assistant and we are pleased to announce that the coordination of safety training is on track. Departments have been provided a page on the Polk County website where they may obtain training materials such as the county safety plan, handouts, PowerPoints and training videos. In addition safety inspections are going well. All safety related issues are reported to Building Maintenance through the work order system for repair by EMA. We are also pleased to announce that ACCG conducted a safety audit in September of this year in which we passed. Due to the great audit we were awarded the annual safety grant which will be used to purchase safety related items.

Internship Program



Figure 6. Intern Brooke Tinnan at Graduation.

In 2024, Polk County EMA established an internship program designed to provide graduate and undergraduate students pursuing degrees in Emergency Management or related fields with practical, hands-on experience. This initiative offers participants the opportunity to engage in real-world emergency management activities, enhancing their knowledge and skills while supporting the operational needs of the EMA office. By enabling interns to assist with routine planning and documentation, the program allows the EMA Director and Coordinator to focus on urgent and time-sensitive priorities without compromising the completion of essential tasks.

Throughout the internship period, interns have been actively involved in a wide range of responsibilities, including plan development, exercise coordination, public outreach, operational support, and EOC maintenance. These experiences not only provide invaluable professional development for the interns but also contribute significantly to the efficiency and effectiveness of EMA operations. To

date, the program has proven highly successful, and Polk County EMA remains committed to continuing this opportunity for students in the years ahead.

In 2025, the program reached a major milestone with the accomplishments of Brooke, who graduated Summa Cum Laude from Jacksonville State University with a Bachelor of Science in Emergency Management. During her internship, Brooke played a pivotal role in updating the 2026 Local Emergency Operations Plan and independently planned a full-scale exercise, demonstrating exceptional leadership and technical proficiency.

Polk County EMA is actively working to establish a formal partnership with the University of Georgia's Institute for Disaster Management to create expanded internship opportunities for students pursuing careers in emergency and disaster management related fields. This collaboration will provide UGA students with meaningful, hands-on experience in real-world emergency management operations while strengthening Polk County's connection to emerging professionals in the field. By building this partnership, Polk County EMA aims to support academic development, enhance local workforce pathways, and further invest in the next generation of emergency management practitioners.

Drone Program

In 2025, Polk County EMA established its first-ever drone program with the purchase of a DJI Flip, marking a significant advancement in the county's technological capabilities. The program was developed to enhance operational effectiveness in the field and to provide EMA and its public safety partners with new tools to improve situational awareness, reduce risk to responders, and streamline mission-critical tasks. The introduction of this drone represents an important step forward in modernizing the county's emergency response infrastructure.

The drone program is designed to support a wide range of emergency management functions, including Search and Rescue operations where aerial imaging can dramatically improve the speed and accuracy of locating missing or endangered individuals. It will also play a key role in post-storm damage assessments by capturing detailed aerial imagery that expedites documentation, assists with disaster declarations, and informs recovery efforts. Additionally, the drone will assist public safety agencies during active incidents by providing real-time overhead views that improve decision-making and clarify operational needs on the ground.

Beyond emergency response, the drone has already proven valuable in supporting routine county operations. Polk County EMA has incorporated drone flights into its preventative maintenance program for the county's radio communications infrastructure, allowing for in-depth tower inspections without placing personnel in hazardous conditions. This capability not only improves safety but also increases the efficiency and accuracy of tower assessments. In its first year alone, the drone has been deployed for multiple missions, including assisting Polk County Fire Department during a residential structure fire, where aerial footage provided important tactical insights. The early success of the program demonstrates its value and sets the foundation for continued growth and expanded utilization in the years ahead.



Figure 7. Polk EMAs Drone

LEOP Update

In 2025, Polk County EMA successfully completed the draft of the comprehensive update of the 2026 Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP), ensuring that the county's primary emergency response and coordination document reflects current threats, capabilities, and operational practices. The LEOP serves as the foundational framework for how the county prepares for, responds to, and recovers from emergencies, outlining roles, responsibilities, and procedures for every participating agency. Updating this plan is essential to maintaining compliance with state and federal guidance while ensuring that Polk County remains ready to manage both routine incidents and large-scale disasters.

A major focus of the 2026 update was the expansion and refinement of the plan's Hazard and Incident Specific Annexes. These additions provide detailed guidance for responding to a wide range of threats, including severe weather, flooding incidents, tropical storms, airport emergencies, cyber incidents, and mass fatality events. Each annex was developed with local stakeholders to ensure accuracy, clarity, and alignment with operational realities. By enhancing these annexes, the updated LEOP offers clearer decision-making pathways, strengthens interagency coordination, and ensures that responding agencies have actionable, hazard specific procedures to follow during high-stress situations.

The completion of the 2026 LEOP update reflects Polk County EMA's ongoing commitment to preparedness, planning excellence, and continuous improvement. The updated plan strengthens the county's resilience by providing an organized, well structured blueprint for managing emergencies and supporting public safety partners. Through this work, Polk County EMA reinforces its dedication to protecting residents, reducing disaster impacts, and ensuring that all agencies operate from a unified, well-coordinated framework when emergencies occur.

StormReady Renewal

In 2025, Polk County EMA successfully renewed the county's StormReady certification, a national recognition awarded by the National Weather Service to communities that demonstrate a high level of preparedness for severe weather events. The StormReady program requires jurisdictions to maintain robust communication systems, establish multiple methods of receiving and disseminating weather alerts, develop detailed emergency operations plans, and ensure that trained personnel are available to monitor weather conditions and coordinate response efforts. Renewal of this certification reflects Polk County EMA's ongoing commitment to maintaining strong preparedness measures and ensuring that the county remains ready to respond to hazardous weather.

Maintaining StormReady status is an important achievement for Polk County because it directly enhances public safety and strengthens the community's resilience. Severe weather is one of the most common threats faced by the county, and having well-established warning systems, trained staff, and effective response procedures significantly reduces risk to life and property. The renewal of this certification demonstrates that Polk County continues to meet national standards for readiness while reinforcing public confidence in the county's ability to protect residents during weather-related emergencies. This accomplishment highlights EMA's dedication to proactive preparedness and continuous improvement.