



POLK COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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Message from the Director

Disasters can strike at any time and will occur regardless of how prepared we are. Preparedness is the responsibility of the whole community including government, private, nonprofit sectors, and individual citizens. I am extremely proud that the Polk County Emergency Management Agency (Polk EMA) has built a strong relationship within our community. We have worked diligently this year to improve Polk County's ability to respond and recover from natural and manmade disasters.

Our readiness was put to the test as Hurricane Helene was forecasted to impact our area. With this threat predicted to impact our community Polk County EMA began providing updates to our emergency responders county-wide. Prior to the impact our newly renovated Emergency Operations Center was activated and then staffed by County and City responders, and as Director I felt we had a great team of talented emergency responders ready for the citizens of Polk County. I am extremely proud to be a small part of this team. Fortunately for Polk County, Helene's path changed and we did not receive the impacts predicted. Either way, Polk County was ready!

Several significant projects were accomplished in 2024 as we continue to strengthen capabilities in emergency planning, community outreach, training, and exercises programs. This report describes many of our accomplishments in these areas and provides a glimpse of the challenges we face in the coming year.

As we move into 2025 and beyond, difficult choices are ahead for prioritizing and maintaining county wide preparedness, response, and recovery programs.

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 for emergency management is crucial for ensuring that responders are well-prepared to handle any disaster or emergency situation. Polk County EMA places a strong emphasis on continuous training and education for its personnel. This training covers a wide range of topics, including terrorism, hazardous materials, emergency planning, and incident management. By equipping ourselves with the necessary knowledge and skills, Polk County EMA can effectively coordinate and respond to emergencies, thereby minimizing the impact on the community.

This comprehensive training not only enhances the capabilities of emergency responders but also ensures that residents receive timely and effective assistance during disasters. The Polk County EMA's commitment to training helps create a "Culture of Preparedness" within the community, encouraging residents to stay informed and involved in emergency preparedness efforts. Ultimately, this proactive approach to training and preparedness helps protect the lives and property of Polk County residents, making the community more resilient in the face of emergencies.

In the year of 2024 all EMA personnel had a combined 342 of training hours. This is a 25 hour increase in training compared to the previous year.

Exercises

Spring 2024 Full Scale HazMat Exercise

In April of 2024, Polk County Emergency Management Agency in partnership with the Polk County Local Emergency Planning Committee conducted a Full Scale Hazardous Materials Exercise. The scenerio was a tanker truck carrying 2,000 gallons of sulfuric acid flipped and was leaking into a ditch. During the exercise there was over 42 participants including staff who evaluated and controlled the exercise.



During the exercise first responders was evaluated on their capabilities of situational awareness, operational communication & coordination, environmental response/health and safety, on-scene security, protection and law enforcement, and public health, healthcare & emergency medical services.

Agencies including Cedartown Fire, Cedartown Police, Rockmart Fire & Emergency Services, Advent-Redmond EMS, Polk County E-911, and several other agencies participated in this exercise.

This exercise satisfied the state requirements for a full scale exercise to be conducted every 5 years.

EOC Activations

The EOC was activated at a Level 2 twice during 2024. The activations included one for Hurricane Helene and the second for the 2024 General Election.

Hurricane Helene

Hurricane Helene was a devastating storm that struck the Southeastern United States in late September 2024. It was the strongest hurricane on record to hit the Big Bend region of Florida, reaching Category 4 intensity with maximum sustained winds of 140 mph. The hurricane caused widespread catastrophic damage and numerous fatalities across Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and other states.



Polk County EMA staff began tracking the possibility of Helene about 14 days from the time it struck after the weather models began showing a possibility of a storm coming through Polk County. Over the course of those next 14 days it became evident that there was a major threat of an unprecedented storm that would strike the Southeastern United States.

On September 25th, a Local State of Emergency was declared by the Chairman of the Polk County Board of Commissioners upon recommendation by Director Bobby Dockery in response to the threats from a Tropical Event that was forecasted due to Hurricane Helene. This activated the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) as well as the Emergency Management Ordinances of Polk County. We began preparing for the EOC activation. CERT Team was activated to fill Planning Section roles. Shortly after the Local State of Emergency was declared the National Weather Service issued a Tropical Storm Warning for Cedartown, Polk County. Threats included uncertainty in track, size, and intensity with a potential for wind gusts 39-57 MPH, potential flooding with rainfall of 4-8 inches possible, and the potential for tornadoes. Additionally the path of Helene was projected to make a direct impact to Polk County.

At midnight on September 27th the EOC was activated until 8 A.M. personnel from EMA, Law Enforcement, Fire-Rescue, EMS, and Public Works was set up in the EOC prepared to coordinate the response to Hurricane Helene in Polk County. The local response to Hurricane Helene in Polk County, Georgia, showcased the strength of community collaboration and the dedication of emergency responders and volunteers.

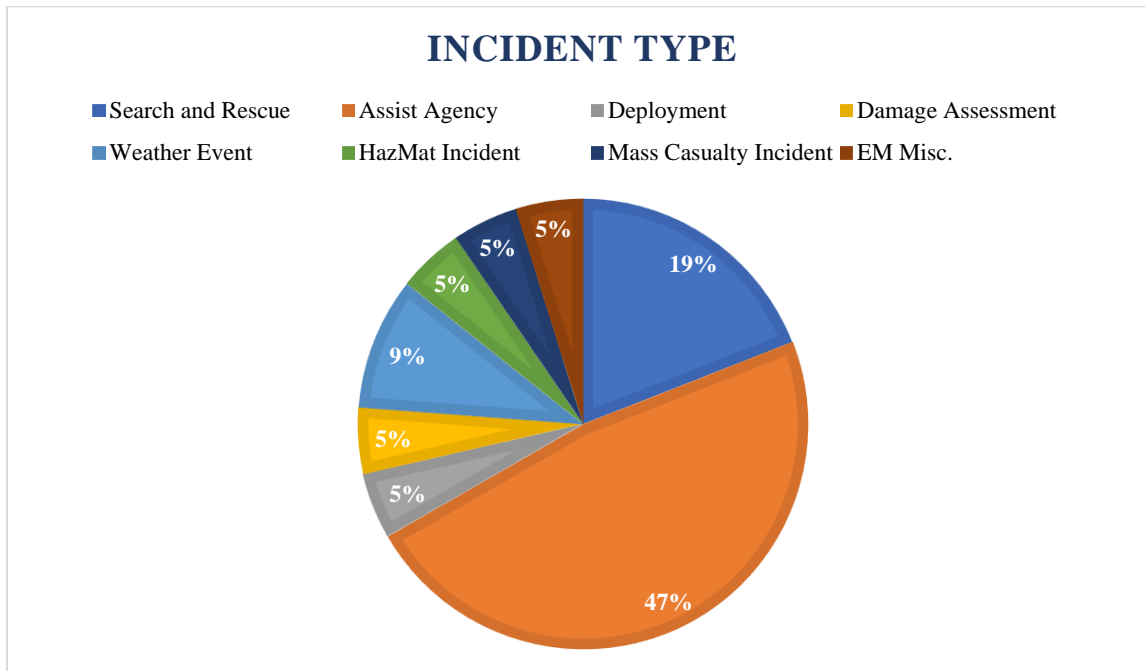
Incident Responses

Polk County EMA is dedicated to providing robust incident responses to emergencies and disasters. The agency's goal is to support local agencies by coordinating efforts and resources effectively during crises. The Polk County EMA operates an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) that serves as the hub for multi-jurisdiction and multi-agency response coordination. This center facilitates a coordinated response, ensuring that all involved parties work together seamlessly to address the emergency at hand.

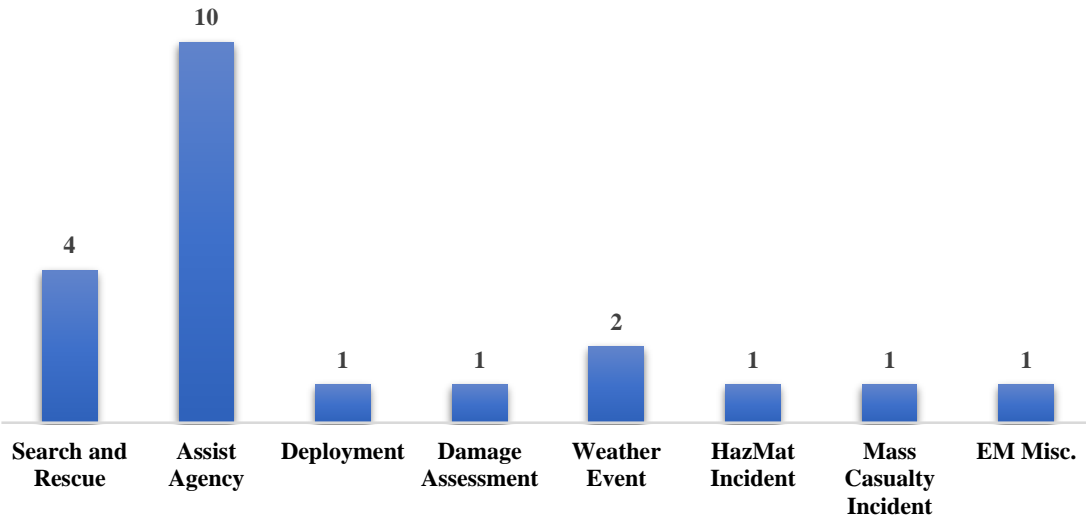
In addition to their coordinated response efforts from the EOC, the Polk County EMA also provides field response to directly assist public safety agencies. By deploying trained personnel and resources to the field, the agency ensures that on-the-ground support is readily available to address immediate needs and enhance the overall effectiveness of incident responses. This hands-on approach helps public safety agencies manage emergencies more efficiently, ultimately benefiting the residents of Polk County.

By maintaining strong partnerships and active collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies, as well as volunteer organizations, the Polk County EMA enhances the overall effectiveness of incident responses, ultimately benefiting the residents of Polk County.

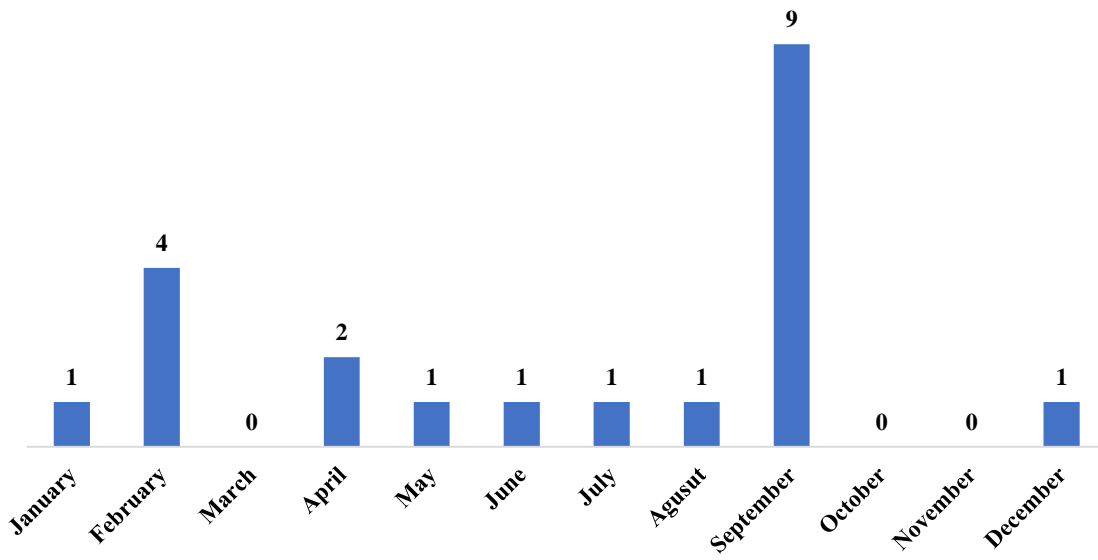
Polk County EMA responded to a total of 21 incidents during 2024. Below is a breakdown of the incident response statistics.



Incident Type



Incident By Month



Facebook & Community Outreach

Polk County EMA has made significant strides in public outreach through its Facebook page, reaching over 80.1 thousand people and attracting more than 360 thousand views in 2024. The agency's posts cover a wide range of preparedness topics, including winter weather, severe weather awareness, volunteer opportunities, and holiday safety. This extensive engagement has not only increased community awareness but also fostered a culture of preparedness among residents.

Moreover, the Polk County EMA's Facebook outreach is a key component of the disaster match program with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA). By sharing critical preparedness information and encouraging community involvement, the agency ensures that residents are well-informed and ready to respond to disasters. This collaboration with GEMA enhances the overall resilience of the community, making it better equipped to handle emergencies and recover from disasters more effectively.

In 2024, Polk County EMA content published includes 92 photos, 13 post, and 1 video.

Additional statistics include:

- 1.6 Thousand new followers;
- 23 Thousand visits to our page; and
- 7.6 Thousand Content interactions

CERT Team

In 2024 Polk County EMA completed the project of starting a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). Two basic training classes was held in which a total of 8 members was trained and certified as CERT Members.



The CERT Team in Polk County, Georgia, plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and resilience of the community during emergencies. These volunteers are trained to assist first responders and Polk County EMA in handling a variety of disasters, from natural events like hurricanes and floods to man-made incidents such as fires. CERT members provide essential support to first responders, Emergency Operation Center staff, offer basic medical aid, and help coordinate resources and information during crises. Their presence enhances the overall preparedness of the community, empowers residents to take an active role in their own safety, and fosters a spirit of cooperation and resilience. By bridging the gap between professional emergency services and the public, CERT ensures a swift, organized, and effective response to emergencies, ultimately saving lives and minimizing damage.

Polk County P25 Radio System Administrator

The administration of the Polk County P25 Radio system is an ancillary duty of EMA. During the calendar year of 2024 EMA has processed around 1000 Technical Support reports from Motorola in regards to tower site issues alone. In addition EMA has processed 65 work orders from our P25 customers including quotes, repairs, warranty issues, and programming. Radio firmware has been manually updated on 500 plus radios and counting, additionally, we have created user channels as requested. A tower site visit is conducted at each site quarterly to ensure the equipment is operating correctly, and to ensure the site is clean and safe. We understand the importance of a healthy radio system and work diligently to provide a quick and reliable customer service experience.

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 October of this year and according to their report our “*numbers are trending down*” which is good news! Due to the great audit we were awarded the annual safety grant which will be used to purchase safety related items.

Internship Program

In 2024, we established an internship position within Polk County EMA. This program is designed to provide local graduate and undergraduate students pursuing a degree in Emergency Management or a related field with practical experience in the field. The internship offers participants the opportunity to engage in hands-on work, thereby enhancing their understanding of emergency management practices. The internship also serves to support the EMA office by enabling interns to assist with routine plans and documentation. This arrangement allows the EMA Director and Coordinator to allocate more time to address urgent and time-sensitive issues while ensuring that regular tasks are completed efficiently and without delay.

Throughout the internship period, both the Director and Coordinator have supervised the intern in various activities, including the development of plans, conducting exercises, engaging in outreach efforts, managing operations, and maintaining the EOC. These responsibilities not only provide valuable experience for the intern but also contribute significantly to the operations of the EMA. To date, the EMA Internship Program has achieved considerable success and we intend to continue offering this valuable opportunity to students for the foreseeable future.

Looking Ahead to 2025



As 2024 comes to a close, the Polk County Emergency Management Agency reflects on a year of steadfast dedication and resilience in the face of numerous challenges. The agency successfully responded to twenty one incidents, including search and rescue missions, industrial emergencies, and 2 EOC activations.

Looking ahead to 2025, the agency is excited to implement the Polk County Emergency & Community Alert Network that will utilize the RAVE Mobile Safety platform, which promises to enhance critical communication and public alert and warning capabilities. This innovative tool will enable more

efficient dissemination of emergency alerts and foster better coordination among first responders and the public, ensuring that the community remains informed and protected during crises. The platform's real-time alerting system will provide residents with timely information, enabling them to make informed decisions and stay safe in times of need.

Additionally, the agency is devoted to conducting a comprehensive review and enhancement of the Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) this year. This endeavor will involve a thorough assessment of current procedures, identification of potential gaps, and incorporation of best practices to address emerging threats. By engaging key stakeholders and leveraging expert insights, the agency aims to create a more robust and adaptive framework that can effectively respond to a wide range of emergencies. This proactive approach will not only fortify our preparedness but also support community resilience.

With these ambitious initiatives on the horizon, the Polk County Emergency Management Agency is poised to achieve new heights in emergency preparedness and public safety, ensuring the well-being of our community for years to come.