

Severe
Weather
Response
Guide

2013

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Georgia
Association of
Fire Chiefs

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Georgia Fire Service Severe Weather Response

Fire Departments in Georgia serve a vital role during a severe weather emergency by providing the equipment, skills, and manpower necessary to help return the community to normal conditions. Georgia is vulnerable to numerous severe weather hazards including floods, hurricanes, ice storms, thunderstorms, and tornadoes. Severe weather incidents can block roads, create medical emergencies, disrupt utilities, and release hazardous materials into the environment. These incidents can occur with little warning and may affect a large geographic area causing public safety agencies to become overwhelmed.

In the spring of 2011, several counties in North and Central Georgia experienced a series of violent tornadoes that damaged several hundred homes and injured dozens of citizens. Due to the combined efforts of several agencies utilizing mutual aid, the immediate needs of the jurisdictions where met in a timely manner. Having a plan in place can help Georgia Fire Departments mitigate, prepare, respond, and recover more effectively from incidents such as these. Following the guidelines from your Municipal Emergency Operations Plan (M.E.O.P.) and creating standard operating guidelines (S.O.G.) for dealing with severe weather incidents is the first step to improving the response to events of this scale.

Preparing for events of this magnitude begins far in advance of the inclement weather. Fire departments should have real time weather information available from the National Weather Service. Fire Chiefs can coordinate with planning boards and inspections departments to minimize damage to structures. Fire departments can preplan or perform **hazard analysis** on vital facilities to better understand the impact of severe weather on facilities such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes and industrial sites. Departments should distribute **pamphlets and information** to the public regarding what do before and after a disaster. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has many useful resources to help inform the public. Fire officials can coordinate with the Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other agencies to determine what shelters are available in your area. Severe weather response guidelines are created to be utilized, updated, and trained on routinely.



Severe Weather Response S.O.G.

1. Purpose

- It is the purpose of this document to provide guidelines for the prevention, preparation, and mitigation of severe weather events in Georgia.

2. Responsibilities

- Search and Rescue Activities
- Medical Triage, Treatment, and Transport
- Control of Hazardous Situations
- Fire Control and Property Conservation

3. Policies

- Assistant Chief on duty is to determine if the weather is an immediate threat to the responders and delay response accordingly.
- Assistant Chief on duty is authorized to re-call personnel.
- Command shall call additional resources early if necessary.

4. Guidelines

4.1 Assessment

- Size up the scene.
- First arriving unit shall take command of the scene.
- Assign a safety officer.
- Assess current weather conditions every 15 minutes.
- Consider evacuations early if necessary.
- Determine resources needed.
- Report conditions to chief of department.



4.2 Safety Considerations

- Downed energized power-lines
- Automobiles, buildings, debris, and trees blocking roadway.
- High water, contaminated flood water, hazardous weather.
- Escaping hazardous materials

4.3 Responder Checklist



- Stabilize existing incidents found during a response and dispatch another unit to called response.
- Maintain supplies and resources. Notify command when additional resources are required.
- Report all hazardous conditions to command.
- Assess conditions at scene and report to command.
- Stabilize conditions that affect large numbers of people.
- Triage, treat, and transport injured people.
- Search all damaged and fringe areas for injured people.
- Rescue, extricate, treat, and transport injured people.
- Report, and secure all fatally injured people.

4.4 Command Checklist



- Establish Incident Command and Command Post.
- Determine the boundary of the affected area.
- Deploy necessary resources to save life and property.
- Evacuate effected areas if necessary.
- Establish traffic control and security with law enforcement.
- Establish communications from utility providers.
- Establish communications with responding agencies.
- Establish communications with National Weather Service.
- Coordinate with the Red Cross if shelter is required.
- Appoint a Public Information officer (PIO).
- Provide response forces with up to date information.
- Develop a 12 hour Incident Action Plan.
- Consider 12 hour shifts to relieve crews.
- Perform an after action review of the incident.



5. Fire Department Administrative Checklist

- Perform Geographic Hazard Assessment for your jurisdiction.
- Coordinate with the local planning board and inspection departments to minimize damage to structures in the future.
- Perform hazard analysis on schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and industrial sites.
- Procure and Distribute information pamphlets to public regarding procedures before and after disaster strikes available from FEMA.
- Coordinate with the Local EMA, Red Cross, Salvation Army, and other relief organizations to determine what shelters are available.
- Create or adapt Standard Operating Procedures for responding to severe weather emergencies.
- Conduct a quarterly training sessions annually including one live exercise.



Training and Resource Links

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Website: fema.gov

Address: P.O. Box 10055 Hyattsville, MD 20782-8055

Phone: 1-800-621-FEMA

Georgia Emergency Management Agency

Website: gema.state.ga.us

Address: P.O. Box 18055 Atlanta, GA 30316

Phone: 1-800-try-GEMA

Georgia Public Safety Training Center

Fire Academy Division

Website: gpstc.org

Address: 1000 Indian Springs Drive, Forsyth, GA

Phone: 478-993-4670

International Association of Fire Chiefs

Website: iafc.org

Address: 4025 Fair Ridge Drive Fairfax, VA 22033

Phone: 703-273-0911

National Weather Service

Website: weather.gov

Address: 1325 East West Highway Silver Spring, MD 20910

