

# Northeast Florida Regional Council

# NEWSLETTER



Regional Leadership Academy in Nassau County



**Bringing Communities Together  
Since 1977**

JUNE 2024

## Are You Prepared This Hurricane Season?

As we enter the hurricane season, our commitment to the safety and resilience of our communities remains stronger than ever. We are dedicated to ensuring that every resident of Northeast Florida is prepared for the challenges that hurricanes may bring. Our partnerships with local governments and organizations have enabled us to implement comprehensive hurricane preparedness plans that prioritize the well-being of our citizens.

We encourage all residents to stay informed and take proactive steps to prepare for the hurricane season. This includes creating an emergency kit, developing a family communication plan, and staying updated on local weather advisories. Our collective efforts in preparedness not only protect our homes and families but also strengthen the resilience of our entire region. Thank you for your continued vigilance and cooperation as we work together to keep Northeast Florida safe and resilient.

# A Message From Our CEO



As we find ourselves halfway through the year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the incredible partnerships we have established with our local communities. I would like to take some time to provide you with an overview of some of the amazing things we have accomplished this year so far. One of our significant undertakings has been the visioning work with the City of Palatka as they prepare to update their Comprehensive Plan. We have also been providing planning technical assistance to the City of Flagler Beach, and have worked closely with the Jacksonville City Council's Special Committee on JSO Facilities. These initiatives reflect our commitment to helping our communities thrive and achieve their goals.

Our continued focus on resiliency efforts across Northeast Florida remains a top priority. Resilient First Coast, our regional resiliency collaborative, is making tremendous progress as we near the completion of phase 1 of the Regional Resiliency Action Plan. This plan is crucial for ensuring that our region can withstand and recover from various challenges, making Northeast Florida a safer and more resilient place to live.

As we enter hurricane season, our hurricane preparedness efforts are more important than ever. We are proud to work with St. Johns County, JEA, and the City of Jacksonville to foster these efforts and ensure that our communities are well-prepared for any potential storms.

The opportunities we get each season to collaborate across the Region are invaluable. These collaborations bring our region together, allowing us to learn from each other and understand how coordinated efforts best serve the citizens of Northeast Florida. We are honored to have built strong partnerships and to work together on longstanding projects, but we also relish the ability to meet new challenges and take on new projects with our communities.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of this journey. Together, we are making Northeast Florida a better, more resilient place for all.

Warm regards,

Elizabeth Payne, AICP  
Chief Executive Officer

# ST. JOHNS COUNTY 2024 HURRICANE EXERCISE



In the past few years, St. Johns County Emergency Management has been actively preparing and responding to hurricanes, such as Hurricane Matthew in 2016, Hurricane Irma in 2017, Hurricane Dorian in 2019, and Hurricane Isaias in 2020.

Even as they have become seasoned in handling hurricane-related challenges, the team recently decided to switch gears and test their communication and coordination capabilities in response to a different hazard. During the 2024 hurricane exercise, what began as a typical simulation for hurricane response swiftly transformed into an intricate scenario involving a train derailment and hazardous materials incident in St. Augustine, Florida. This shift allowed the team to practice their emergency response skills in a new and unexpected context.

The Northeast Florida Regional Council staff played a crucial role in supporting St. Johns County Emergency Management throughout the planning and execution of their annual hurricane exercise. This collaboration has not only strengthened the County's preparedness and response activities but has also broadened the team's capacity to handle diverse and complex emergency scenarios. By continuously honing their skills through exercises like this, St. Johns County Emergency Management remains dedicated to ensuring the safety and resilience of their community, no matter what challenges may arise.



## 2024-2025 CIVICSPARK HOST

NEFRC is excited to serve as a CivicSpark host for the 2024-25 service year. CivicSpark is an Americorps program dedicated to building capacity for local organizations to address community resilience challenges. The project for this fellowship aims to help fill the need for affordable, resilient housing in Northeast Florida. This project complements the overall mission of Resilient First Coast (a program of NEFRC) by not only addressing the affordability of housing, but also the resilience and sustainability of housing for the future that can thrive in the face of acute shocks and chronic stresses. Some objectives of the fellowship include researching existing examples where this has been accomplished, conducting a cost-benefit analysis, selecting potential pilot projects for implementation, gathering stakeholder input, and contributing to the Regional Resiliency Action Plan.

[LEARN MORE](#)



## **LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE: HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EXERCISE**

In the spring of 2024, the Local Emergency Planning Committee staff of the Northeast Florida Regional Council orchestrated a collaborative and constructive event that brought together key stakeholders in the Jacksonville community. The Resident EHS Manager from Anheuser Busch Jacksonville Brewery, in coordination with the Hazardous Materials Team of Jacksonville Fire and Rescue, engaged in a simulated hazardous chemical release exercise known as *Operation: Angry Leprechaun*.

This strategic tabletop exercise served as a platform for open dialogue, fostering critical discussions and a unified approach to emergency preparedness. Among the primary objectives set for achievement during this exercise were the establishment and seamless integration of an incident command structure, the identification and thorough discussion of evacuation procedures, and the careful determination and illustration of any shelter-in-place or evacuation zones deemed necessary for effective emergency response.

Such collaborative exercises play an essential role in fortifying the safety and resilience of our local community. The Local Emergency Planning Committee takes immense pride in its ongoing commitment to nurturing these invaluable partnerships and ensuring that all necessary preparations are firmly in place.

## **FLORIDA PLANNING AND ZONING ASSOCIATION SPRING LUNCHEON**

Our Regional Council staff had the distinct honor of speaking at the Florida Planning and Zoning Association (FPZA) Spring Luncheon in Jacksonville on April 19th. The spotlight was on our trails and ecotourism initiative. During the presentation, our team highlighted recent trail initiatives in the news, discussed the economic benefit of trails, provided an overview of trails and conservation legislation, and ongoing efforts working with National Parks Service - Rivers, Trails, and Conservation assistance program. Over the next year, the Regional Council will turn focus to seven primary areas of work. They are developing consensus on future trail locations, trail signage standards and best practices, GIS mapping and storyboard development, regional branding, FDEP Trail Town designations, youth stewardship program development, and identification of funding opportunities. It was an exciting opportunity to share our progress and plans with the esteemed members of the FPZA, and we are eager to continue making positive strides in the field of trails and ecotourism. Stay tuned for more updates as we embark on this promising journey.

# EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF GEORGIA CONFERENCE



The Region 3 Healthcare Coalition (HCC), a program of the NEFRC, sponsored 23 of its members to attend the Emergency Management Association of Georgia (EMAG) conference in Savannah, Georgia, in April. The conference, which focuses on the intersection of emergency management and healthcare, offered a variety of learning opportunities. With participation from partners in Florida and across the other states in FEMA Region 4, HCC members had the opportunity to engage with a diverse group of professionals. Participating members represented varying disciplines, including public health, emergency management, emergency medical services, hospitals, dialysis facilities, and long-term care. At the conference, HCC members were able to network and attend courses related to resilience, cybersecurity, mitigation techniques for all hazards, and other preparedness-related topics.

## BAKER COUNTY POINT OF DISPENSING FULL-SCALE EXERCISE

NEFRC staff and personnel from the Florida Department of Health recently organized and executed a Full-Scale Point of Dispensing (POD) exercise for Baker County. The exercise involved setting up and running a POD station to simulate a real-life health emergency. Before the exercise, participants received just-in-time training covering the setup, operations, and demobilization of the POD. Emphasis was placed on dispensing strategies and the configuration of four primary stations: Intake, Screening, Dispensing, and Exit. The participants did a great job setting up and running the POD, with some acting as workers and others simulating members of the public needing medications. The success of this exercise can be attributed to the dedication and collaboration of all involved community partners. The seamless coordination and execution of the exercise stands as a testament to the community's preparedness and ability to respond to public health crises. We extend our gratitude to all the community partners whose invaluable support contributed to the achievement of this vital goal.

# EVENTS GALLERY

## LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE: HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EXERCISE



## FLORIDA PLANNING AND ZONING ASSOCIATION SPRING LUNCHEON

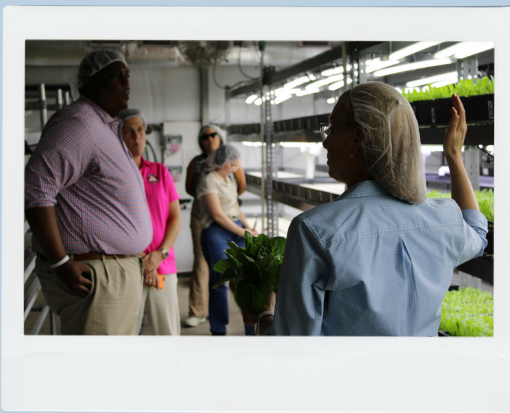




# BAKER COUNTY POINT OF DISPENSING FULL-SCALE EXERCISE



## REGIONAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



## WE'RE MOVING!

We are happy to announce that on August 1, 2024, the Council will begin operating in its new location on the third floor of the Jessie Ball DuPont Building, 40 E. Adams, Street, Jacksonville FL, 32202.

## NEW INTERN

The Council also welcomes a new student intern, Corie Benton, from Jacksonville University. She will be assisting with our Regional Trails & Ecotourism Initiatives.



Thank you for reading this newsletter. We hope you found it informative and useful. Please share it with others, and don't forget to subscribe to stay up-to-date with all the exciting developments happening in the Northeast Florida Region. Together, we can continue to make the Region a better place for everyone.