

# **Okaloosa County News Release**

**7/16/2007**

Contact: Kathy Newby, 850.651.7515 or [knewby@co.okaloosa.fl.us](mailto:knewby@co.okaloosa.fl.us)  
P07-143

## **Public Safety Gets Okaloosa (Storm) Ready *Grants are Being Utilized to Assist with Ready Okaloosa***

Okaloosa County is a designated "Storm Ready" county by the National Weather Service; and the Department of Public Safety, consisting of 911 Communications, Emergency Management, EMS (Emergency Medical Services) and Beach Safety, continues to improve education programs, software and all aspects to make its residents "ready" for a catastrophic event. "Ready Okaloosa" is the newest Public Safety program that allows residents to register with the county, find out if they are in a flood or evacuation zone, and receive a FREE Ready Okaloosa packet. The packet contains a hurricane shopping list and other necessary information easily accessed at home or when traveling.

Public Safety is reaching out to the citizenry, as well as assisting hospitals, nursing homes, and local businesses with planning, training and exercises. Okaloosa County employees have been through training and exercises, to include a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) web-based program that will improve efficiency and communication with organizations during an emergency.

Also contributing immensely to public safety is the Okaloosa County School District and approximately 30 volunteer drivers who will be trained to drive school buses. The County has recently entered into an agreement with the School District to utilize over 100 school buses for transportation assistance in the event of a storm.

FEMA and Federal grants make these programs work, and there is more –  
**Public Safety Grants are providing for the following:**

-More-

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- The purchase of a **Mobile Incident Command Post** unit that will serve as an EOC that can be used throughout Okaloosa County, and will travel to assist other counties or states in emergencies. The unit will be equipped with satellite communications and emergency equipment, and will be powered by a generator.
- Adding **hurricane windows** to retrofit shelters at Baker, Choctawhatchee High School and Laurel Hill.
- **Training of Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT)** – Okaloosa County now has 423 CERT volunteers, which is double the amount of volunteers last year. CERT members are trained in basic disaster response skills, and can assist in their own neighborhoods and wherever needed, which equates to less victims and increased safety.

More free training opportunities exist through the Okaloosa County Department of Public Safety, such as Hazmat, Incident Command System (ICS) training and more. For more information, and to receive a FREE Ready Okaloosa Packet, contact 850-651-7150.

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***The Florida Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Products Safety Commission*** wants consumers to know that generators are very useful; however can be hazardous. **Hazards include: Carbon Monoxide, Electrical & Fire Hazards.**  
*Never run generators indoors, including garages, basements, crawlspaces & sheds. Get fresh air right away if you start to feel dizzy or weak.*  
**For details, visit [Hwww.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or call 800-638-2772**