

Florida Emergency Services Coalition

Emergency Services in Florida

Presentation by
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There are approximately 617 paid, volunteer and combination fire departments providing emergency services in Florida. Services are provided from over 2887 fire stations, staffed by over 44,000 firefighters. Our men and women responded to 2,125,902 calls for assistance in 2008. These services are not only provided to protect Florida, but many of our firefighters have been deployed nationally and throughout the world.

Today's emergency service professionals are not just firefighters they are: emergency control specialists, called to any type of situation imaginable when the public cannot manage that situation; providers of emergency and preventative medical care; educators who teach safe living practices to all age groups; problem solvers in situations they encounter which often present unique circumstances; emergency managers in that most local government emergency managers are the staff of fire departments. Firefighters are college educated because firefighting is no longer considered a blue collar job, but requires a college level education to be paramedics, rescue technicians, hazardous material technicians, and supervisors. An international accreditation program has been developed for Chief Officers and Emergency Service Departments.

Emergency Service Accreditation is conferred by the Center for Public Safety Excellence. Florida has 67 accredited Chief Fire Officers, and 14 accredited emergency service departments. Departmental accreditation is a self-improvement model that promotes the process of continuous improvement. Agencies are rated on 10 major categories, 43 criteria, and 258 performance indicators, which include 82 core competencies that must be met as pass/fail criteria. The process is peer driven through the international community and must contain the completion of a Self-Assessment Manual, a current Strategic Plan, and a Standards of Response Coverage document. This is a three year process for initial accreditation. Chief Officer Accreditation is a similar process based on the same 10 major categories and a strong emphasis on continuous community involvement.

Executive Fire Officer Designation is a four year program with Master's Level courses provided by the National Fire Academy. Florida is a leader in the percentage nationwide with over 350 Executive Fire Officers.

Emergency services in Florida are the only service that truly tries to put themselves out of business. We understand that every time our crews respond to an emergency someone is either being physically, emotionally, or financially hurt. Our goal is to make Florida the safest state in which to live, work and play. We do that through public education starting with elementary school children and continuing through to senior citizens. We inspect occupancies and use code enforcement to try to prevent emergencies from occurring and we review new construction plans so that they meet our stated goals.

When our prevention efforts are not enough we are prepared to respond. Emergency service departments staff and equip for responding to fires. In 2008 we responded to 58,040 fires with an estimated \$531 million in real dollar losses. In contrast, we protect over \$1.6 trillion of property in the State. Last year firefighters responded to \$8 billion worth of property involved in fire and they saved \$7.5 billion. That is a save rate of 93%. This means that on average in the State, firefighters responded to a property involved in fire and saved 93% percent of that property's value through their actions. Even with this success rate, Florida still had 3 firefighter fatalities and 325 injuries. Even worse, 176 residents and visitors lost their lives to fire and another 796 were injured. Because these losses and injuries occur during the course of a year they do not get recognized as a single impact. When in reality more residents die from, and property is destroyed, by fire then all natural disasters combined.

Firefighters responded to 1,518,084 calls for medical emergencies. They provide paramedic, EMT and first responder medical services. Fire Departments are the primary source of ambulance transportation services in the urbanized counties of Florida. We also are a lead agency in providing preventative care through vaccination, education and defibrillator programs to cite a few examples.

Emergency Services are the primary response agencies for the State's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. We are responsible for Emergency Support Functions 4 Firefighting, 9 Search & Rescue, 10 Hazardous Materials and a major provider of ESF 8 Medical. Local level Emergency Management is a function of emergency service departments. Many Fire Chiefs also serve as local Emergency Managers. Emergency service chief officers are critical members of the State's Incident Management Teams, as well as the Regional Domestic Security Task Forces. We also are the primary source of instructors in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS). The fire service developed the Incident Command System and has been using it for over 25 years.

Fire Departments throughout the State have redefined the roles they play in their communities as community risks evolve. Up until the 1960's fire departments were just that and then they expanded into the role of emergency medical providers. In the 1980's the expansion was to respond and manage hazardous material spills and releases. Then in the 1990's technical rescue skills were required for confined space, elevated, and water rescues. In 2000 all of these skills, as well as search and rescue teams, were developed to

deal with the terrorism threat and a record numbers of natural disasters. We are not your father's fire department any longer.

Florida's emergency services protect over 15 million residents, millions of visitors, and 1.6 trillion dollars of property every day. Our professional services have been recognized nationally as model programs for others to aspire to. To continue at this level of customer service departments must be able to meet defined nationally recognized standards.

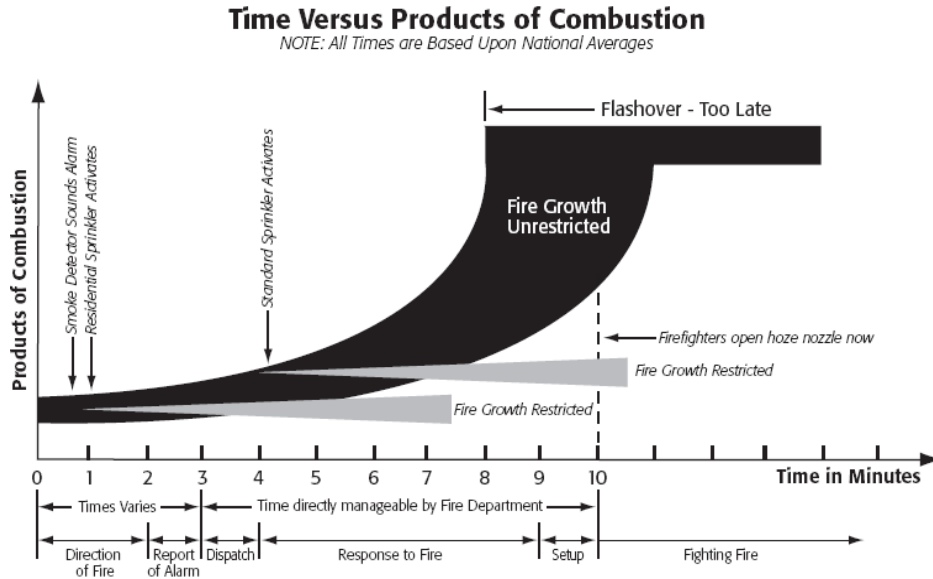
To be successful there must be adequate staffing of fire companies and there must be enough companies so that they can respond quickly. The national goal for urbanized and suburban communities is a 4 minute drive time response, with a crew of at least 4 personnel for fires and medical emergencies. Response to a typical single family home fire requires that teams of appropriate apparatus and 14-15 firefighters are on scene in less than 8 minutes. In communities protected by volunteer fire departments and rural environments the response time is from 9 to 14 minutes and 6 to 15 firefighters based on community risks and the department's ability to provide protection.

The effectiveness of fire apparatus operations based on the number of personnel assigned to each has been examined by the International City/County Managers' Association. Their study has defined a 5 person crew as 100% effective, a 4 person crew as 65% and a 3 person crew as 38% effective. There are certain tasks that must be accomplished to successfully extinguish a fire. These tasks require definitive coordination and must be provided in a certain order. If a department has 3 person crews they will need to send more apparatus to accomplish the required tasks.

The list below identifies the required personnel and tasks that must be completed at a moderate risk structure fire:

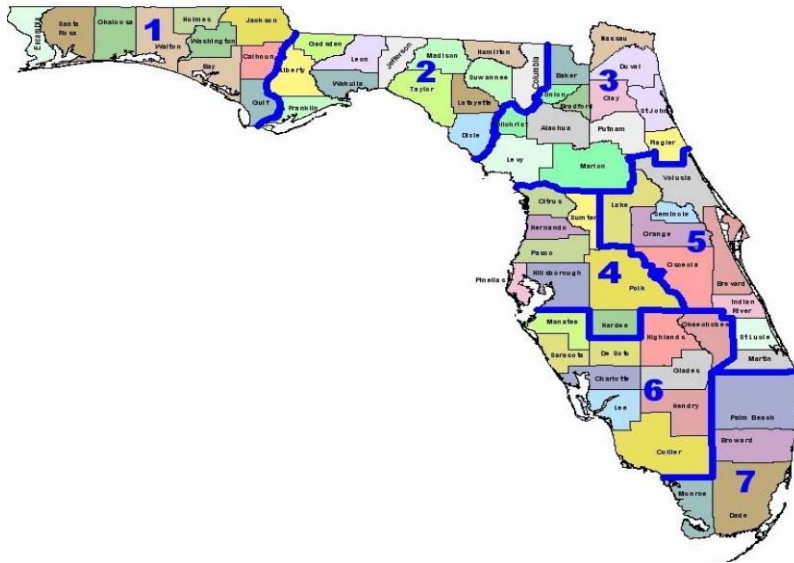
- 2 personnel are needed for the attack line
- 2 for search and rescue
- 2 to ventilate the building which is required to make conditions safe for entry
- 2 for a back up attack line
- 2 for the safety team (2 out as required by state law)
- 1 for safety tasks
- 1 for water supply
- 1 to operate the fire pump
- 1 to operate the ladder truck
- 1 Incident Commander.

The 4 minute response drive time is required because the best chance for successfully saving lives and minimizing the damage from the fire is to keep the fire from spreading from the room of origin. The chart denotes time verses products of combustion. It demonstrates from the start of a fire to flashover where all contents have become fully involved in fire. It is essential that a coordinated fire attack occur between a 4 and 10 minute time frame from the start of the fire. As the time goes beyond that period damage rapidly increases and chances of successful outcomes are reduced.

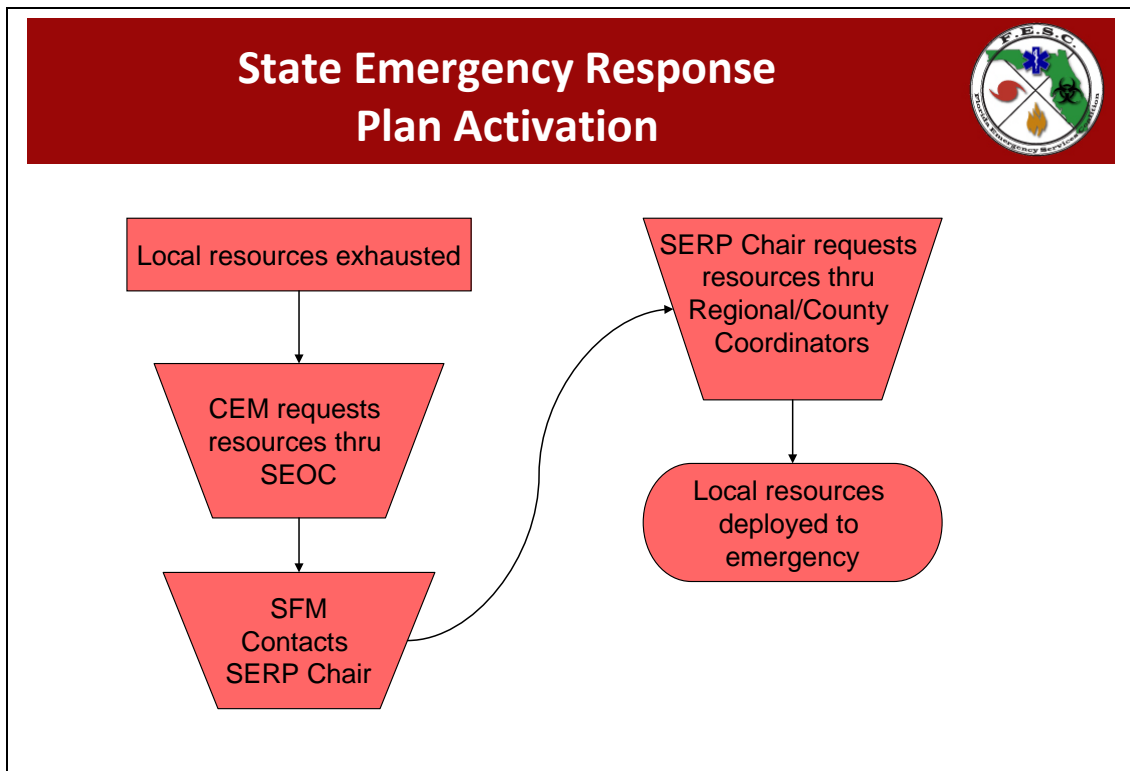


However, there is a solution to reducing loss of lives and property to fire. It is requiring fire sprinkler systems in all new buildings, including homes. Eighty percent of all fire deaths occur in homes, sixty-two percent of firefighter fatalities occur in homes and the survival time to exit a fire in a residential structure has dropped from seventeen minutes in the 1960's to just three minutes today. Fire sprinkler systems basically place a firefighter on-duty at every building in every room 24/7. Ninety percent of fires are contained by a single sprinkler head. There is an eighty percent chance of surviving a fire in a building equipped with an automatic sprinkler system. Finally, requiring sprinkler systems will aid fire departments to be able to better manage growth in their communities.

The State Emergency Response Plan was developed by the Fire Chiefs' Association after Hurricane Andrew. It was created to provide coordinated Statewide mutual aid coverage for fires, wildfires, hurricanes, tornados, flooding and mass evacuations. The plan was codified in the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. SERP deploys resources ESF 4, 9, 10 and 8. The plan has 7 regions and is capable of moving apparatus to and from anywhere in the State.



The plan is activated when local resources have been exhausted and the County Emergency Management requests assistance through the State Emergency Operations Center. The State Fire Marshal contacts the SERP chairperson who then requests resources through regional and county coordinators. Those local resources are then deployed to the emergency.



Florida's SERP has been selected as one of four anchor plans to assist with Interstate Mutual Aid Systems. It is the most chosen plan by other states. We provide technical advisors nationwide to assist states and tribal nations in developing their plans. SERP has been recognized as a mature proven plan. Between May 5 and 10, 2007, the plan moved 449 personnel and 110 apparatus during the wildfires.

Deployment Examples
Wildfires May 5-10, 2007
449 Personnel 110 Apparatus
13 Engine Strike Teams
10 Task Forces
1 Brush Strike Team
11 Single Resources

Funding for SERP is currently based on local governments providing all of the resources. In comparison with California, which has a similar system, Florida has a part-time coordinator and all staff functions as firefighters in local departments while California has a full time staff. SERP funding is provided at the local level for personnel equipment and initial cost. California has state funding which includes 168 million dollars for operations and 48 million dollars for apparatus purchase and maintenance. We have 96 million dollars in funding for the Department of Forestry, but no funding for apparatus which is all provided by local departments.

SERP is in jeopardy. It has been adversely impacted by a lack of defined funding and budget cuts. Local departments can no longer cover costs for deployments. Less apparatus and personnel are available, which increases response times to emergencies. The reduction in local budgets has decreased a community's ability to cover costs that are not reimbursable.

Despite all of the services provided by the modern fire service, the condition of today's emergency services in Florida is not good due to reduced funding. Three years ago Amendment One was promoted as a tax saving system that would not hurt public safety. This is the furthest thing from the truth. Since that amendment was passed:

49% of departments have cut their budgets
73% will be cutting their budgets for 2010
37% reduced their capital budgets
46% had hiring restrictions
33% have eliminated positions
20% have laid off firefighters

All of these conditions have increased the risk to local communities as departments are forced to do more with less. In some services doing more with less redefines that service and the final impact can be positive. That is not so in emergency

services. Doing more with less increases response times, decreases available personnel and results in higher deaths, injuries and fire loss amounts.

Continued reductions will reduce emergency services' ability to respond, reduce the SERP's capability to provide aid throughout the State, increase unemployment and negativity impact the State's economy through multiple sectors and industries

Emergency services provide a statewide economic impact that includes 35,030 jobs, with a combined payroll amounting to \$2.2 billion in earnings. On average emergency services support another 4 jobs per position across other industries. One dollar in paid wages to emergency services supports \$.65 in wages for other workers which equates to another \$1.4 billion into Florida's economy. Emergency Services' operating budgets support \$341 million in direct and indirect tax revenues.

It is essential to the future of Florida's emergency services to receive adequate funding by having no additional reduction to current funding sources, support for new revenue opportunities, and implementation of a statewide requirement for installation of fire sprinkler systems in all new construction, regardless of the type of building.

Local, State, and Federal assistance is required to assure that we can meet our goal of making Florida the safest state in which to live, work and play.