



North Carolina Association  
of County Commissioners

# 100 COUNTIES PREPARED

## Emergency Preparedness Training for Elected Officials

### Vision Statement

All 100 counties have well-trained county commissioners who can be effective leaders during an emergency to support and enhance the work of the county staff.

# Overview & The Task Force

## Overview

On August 14, 2021, NCACC President Frank Williams announced his presidential initiative, “100 Counties Prepared.” Drawing on his experience as Chair of the Brunswick County Board of Commissioners during Hurricanes Florence, Dorian, and Isaias, President Williams will incorporate several lessons learned as part of his initiative. The 100 Counties Prepared initiative is focused on equipping county commissioners with the tools they need to lead effectively during emergency situations. After months of meetings and reviewing presentations from subject matter experts, the task force created a one-day training for county commissioners focused on the essential information they need as they prepare to lead in emergencies. The training hinges on three components: education, communication, and relationships. This effort is supported by the NC Emergency Management Division and a training for county commissioners will be offered annually.

## The Work of the Task Force

Through task force meetings, the group behind the initiative met with subject matter experts on emergency preparedness, response and recovery. The first meeting gave the task force an opportunity to discuss the vision, mission and goals they'd like to see from their efforts. They also discussed the various aspects of emergencies that county commissioners should be trained in. In a series of thorough discussions, the task force decided to focus their efforts on delivering a one day training for county commissioners that focused on three main subject areas: education, communication, and relationships.



The December task force meeting was held at the North Carolina Emergency Operations Center and featured a keynote from NC Emergency Management Director Will Ray. Director Ray was supportive of the efforts to the task force and shared his vision and strategic goals for the department going forward. The task force also heard from the North Carolina Emergency Management Training Division to learn about what educational courses exist. This information helped the task force develop a training that is complimentary to existing resources and could be an additional course offered in the future. The December meeting also featured a presentation from emergency management expert Norma Houston, who has a wealth of experience delivering training to local government on emergency preparedness and response.

The next meeting was focused on communication and featured a presentation from crisis communication expert Mark Weaver. He presented on the principles of effective communication, what makes a credible spokesperson, and how to create an effective communication strategy table. The task force agreed that one of the most important things commissioners can do is be credible spokespeople on behalf of their counties, when the opportunity is appropriate. New Hanover County Chief Communications Officer Jessica Loeper presented on how the county has developed a joint communications center to develop effective and credible communication to their key stakeholders and constituents throughout an event.

The task force also held a meeting to focus on key relationships that county commissioners can help cultivate, including relationships with their government leaders, FEMA coordinators, and nonprofit sector leaders, including the Red Cross. The task force developed a list of relationships commissioners should help develop and strengthen before emergencies so that they are already in place before an emergency occurs. Transylvania County Manager Jaime Laughter presented on the importance of intergovernmental and multi-sector relationships, drawing on the lessons she learned with Tropical Storm Fred.

The task force met one final time to hear from private sector leaders AT&T and Duke Energy about how they work with local governments to deliver services in emergencies. After reviewing all of the information from presentations and collecting feedback from commissioners, the task force finalized the curriculum for the training along with a list of resources to accompany the training.

The NCACC 100 Counties Prepared Training: Emergency Management for Elected Officials will be hosted on August 11 in Cabarrus County for the first time. It will feature expert presentations on education, communication and relationships. The feature presentations at the event will include crisis communication expert Julie Parker, former NC Emergency Management Director Mike Sprayberry and former FEMA Director Brock Long. The training will culminate in a keynote from current NC Emergency Management Director Will Ray along with a graduation and presentation of the certificate of training completion.

NCACC is working with the NCEM Training Division to create an opportunity for the 100 Counties Prepared training to potentially be involved in the regular courses offered by the training division and NCACC will continue to offer the training on an annual basis for county commissioners.



*Commissioner Frank Williams (right) and NC Emergency Management Director Will Ray at the December 2021 meeting of the 100 Counties Prepared Task Force*



## 100 Counties Prepared Task Force

Frank Williams, NCACC President, Brunswick County Commissioner  
Tracey Johnson, NCACC President-Elect, Washington County Commissioner  
Kay Cashion, Task Force Co-Chair, Guilford County Commissioner  
Randy Thompson, Task Force Co-Chair, Brunswick County Commissioner  
Glenn Adams, Cumberland County Commissioner  
Kitty Barnes, Catawba County Commissioner  
Kevin Gordon, Cleveland County Commissioner  
Maria Cervania, Wake County Commissioner  
Hope Haywood, Randolph County Commissioner  
Ann Keyes, Washington County Commissioner  
Teresa McCall, Transylvania County Commissioner  
Linda Rouse Sutton, Lenoir County Commissioner  
Gordon Wilder, Vance County Commissioner  
Kris Noble, Hyde County Manager  
Marche Pittman, Polk County Manager  
Robin Caldwell, Cherokee County Emergency Services Director &  
President of the North Carolina Emergency Management Association



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For more information on "100 Counties Prepared,"  
visit [www.100countiesprepared.com](http://www.100countiesprepared.com).