



LAKELAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lakeland Responders Prepare for Disaster Management

Lakeland, FL – Lakeland's First Responders are preparing for future disasters at the Emergency Management Institute in Emmitsburg, Maryland this week, gaining valuable knowledge in disaster management strategies. Representatives from the City of Lakeland include the Lakeland Fire Department's Assistant Chief of Operations, Douglas Riley, Battalion Chiefs John Maddox and Mike Williams, Lakeland Police Department Captains Steve Walker and Hans Lehman, and the Lakeland Center's Brandon Flynn.

The Integrated Emergency Management Courses (IEMCs) are a four and half day exercise-based training activity that places Emergency Operations Center (EOC) personnel under realistic crisis situations within a structured learning environment.

Lakeland's First Responders are working alongside 68 colleagues representing all facets of Polk County government including the municipalities of Auburndale, Winter Haven, and Haines City to manage a hurricane scenario directly impacting Polk County. This scenario attempts to build awareness and skills needed to develop and implement policies, plans, and procedures in an EOC to protect life and property through applications of sound emergency management principles. This learning opportunity comes at a great value as travel, lodging, and transportation is paid for entirely by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Ideally these skills will never be fully utilized, however natural and man-made disasters like hurricanes pose a serious threat to the State of Florida every year so it is prudent that Lakeland and greater Polk County Emergency Response agencies be prepared for the worst to protect its citizens. The Integrated Emergency Management Course serves to build upon lessons learned from Hurricanes Charlie, Francis, and Jean from 2004, making our community a safer place in which to live. The fictional "Hurricane Penny" is the focus of this course exercise.

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Gary Ballard, Fire Chief

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