



# THE mEMO



*A joint publication between N.C. Emergency Management and the N.C. Emergency Management Association*

## University Initiative Helps Bridge Cultural Gap for Emergency Management

*By Jordan Rink, Wake County EM and David Marsee, Durham County EM*

Urban and rural counties alike in North Carolina have seen increases in the Hispanic population in recent years and trends have shown that this is unlikely to slow anytime soon. In 2011, when a tornado struck a mostly Hispanic community, Wake County employees found themselves dealing with questions of residency and citizenship in addition to the traditional post-disaster complexities of response, mass care, sheltering and recovery operations.

In April 2012, the UNC Center for International Understanding began assembling teams of local health, medical and policy leaders from across the state for its Latino Health Initiative Program. The center's Latino Initiative is unique in the nation. It provides for North Carolina leaders an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of immigration issues and, as a result, influence local approaches to integrating Latinos into communities. The Latino Initiative Program consists of four teams, one each from Durham, Mecklenburg, Orange and Wake counties. Local emergency managers, David Marsee from Durham County and Jordan Rink from Wake County, were selected to join their county's team. Jordan and David wanted to expand the health, medical and policy focus of the program and look at emergency preparedness and disaster response within the Mexican culture.

Over the summer, teams met to assess their communities and determine actual and perceived needs within Hispanic communities and their service-providing organizations. In October, the four teams, accompanied by center staff, traveled to Mexico for the short-term immersion phase of the program. While in Mexico, the teams saw health care facilities in urban and rural areas, visited with Mexican families and individuals, and toured educational facilities. They also visited several



*Active volcanos are one of the leading threats for emergency managers in Puebla, Mexico.*

*We learned a great deal from our Mexican counterparts .... but the greatest lesson was that their challenges are not that different from ours here in North Carolina.*

*~ Jordan Rink  
Wake County EM*

offices of civil protection as well as the emergency communications center in Puebla, Mexico.

“We learned a great deal from our Mexican counterparts,” explained Rink. “Perhaps the greatest lesson was that their challenges are not that different from ours here in North Carolina.”

The Latino responders and emergency management coordinators also must overcome a variety of hazards, risks and cultures when planning for and responding to an incident. While this area of Mexico has no fear of hurricanes, the volcano on the horizon is a daily reminder of one of their most significant hazards. They, too, are tasked with the complexities of cultural and religious differences, as six different indigenous languages and religions are practiced within the initial evacuation zone of their volcano.

The third phase of the program calls for local leaders to implement policy and procedural changes within their North Carolina communities based on gaps identified in their pre-trip community assessment. Using the knowledge gained from their Mexico trip, the local emergency managers began evaluating strategies to better develop individual and family preparedness in the Hispanic community. They also discussed ways to better communicate to Latino residents about preparedness, response and recovery activities.

In addition to building preparedness and response capacity here at home, the four counties plan to continue building relationships with their Mexican counterparts.

“Employees at the University of Puebla are interested in a type of student exchange between their facility and emergency management staff in North Carolina,” said Marsee. “They want to improve their program and see how we conduct preparedness. In return, some of our EM coordinators could observe their operations and training programs. This is a great opportunity for increased collaboration, distance learning and improved communication with our Mexican neighbors.”

For more information on the UNC Center for International Understanding, visit <http://ciu.northcarolina.edu/>

*Jordan Rink, third from left, and David Marsee, third from right, trained with the Cuautlancingo Proteccion Civil Y Bomberos as part of the UNC Center for International Understanding Latino Initiative Program. The group is the civil protection and fire agency for Puebla, Mexico.*



## Staffing Changes

### Joining the Community

**Brian Falconer**- was selected in early December as NCEM’s new field training supervisor. He joined NCEM last year as an exercise officer.

**Andy Innis** – became the new NCEM Public Assistance manager Dec. 10. Andy has worked as both a grants manager and supervisor in the public assistance section since 2003.

**Chris Letourneau** – became the new risk management program coordinator in late November. Chris has served as an emergency management officer in the NCEM 24-hour center since 2009.

**Callion Maddox** – became the new supervisor for the homeland security grants management program effective Dec. 10. Callion has worked with the NCEM hazard mitigation program since 2007.

**Brenda Morris** – joined NCEM’s Individual Assistance section Dec. 1. She worked previously in the banking industry, but holds a degree in social work and public administration.

### Saying Goodbye

**Christine Brennan** – left NCEM in November to pursue other avenues. She worked in the homeland security program for the past 4.5 years.

**Bill Dowling** – retired from NCEM on Nov. 30. Bill worked in the Public Assistance section as a grants manager for the past seven years.

**Chris Gwin**- is leaving NCEM effective Dec. 28 after three years as Area 1 coordinator. Chris has accepted a position with the Coast Guard.

**Meaghan Honnold** – left NCEM in November after five years in the Hazard Mitigation Branch. Meaghan accepted a position with Wake County.

**Eddie Williams** – resigned Nov. 25 to work with FEMA. He had worked with NCEM for eight years.

## Mark your Calendar

- Jan.3      McGuire Task Force meeting & initial planning conference, *Charlotte*
- Jan.10     Brunswick Task Force, *Southport*
- Jan.15-17 NC HART training, *Badin Lake*
- Jan.16     NCEM Forum *Raleigh*
- Jan.18     State Emergency Response Commission meeting, *Raleigh*
- Jan.23     Harris Ingestion Pathway Zone workshop, *Raleigh*
- Mar.10-13 NCEMA spring conference, *Sunset Beach*
- Mar.20-24 Search & Rescue exercise, *Burke County*

## Seeking Input for Newsletter

The *mEMo* is a joint publication between N.C. Emergency Management division and association for the state’s EM community. Those who work in or with emergency management at the state and local are encouraged to submit articles, photos and information that you think would be of interest to your colleagues. Please submit content to Julia Jarema at [Julia.jarema@ncdps.gov](mailto:Julia.jarema@ncdps.gov).

## NCEM Western Branch Wins SAR Award

The N.C. Search and Rescue Advisory Council in November awarded the 2012 Dave Carter Award to the Western Branch Office of North Carolina Emergency Management. This award is presented annually to individuals/organizations who demonstrate outstanding service to North Carolinians in the area of search and rescue.

Western Branch Manager Mike Cook presented the award to state emergency management director Doug Hoell at the division's annual meeting in December.

"You have led the way in search and rescue planning, training, exercising and capability building," said Hoell. "Thanks for your contribution to North Carolina's search and rescue capabilities. The recognition was well deserved."



*Mike Cook presents the Dave Carter Award to NCEM Director Doug Hoell at the agency's annual meeting.*

## Spotlight on Chris Murray, Pamlico County Emergency Services Director

*By Rebecca Christenberry, Currituck County*

Chris Murray may be relatively new to the position of emergency services director for Pamlico County, but he is no stranger to the field.

Chris has prior experience as a telecommunicator, firefighter and emergency medical technician. He worked as the Pamlico County assistant fire marshal from February 2009 to May 2012, when he took over as the emergency services director. In his new role, Chris also serves as the emergency management coordinator, fire marshal, fire inspector and fire investigator.

Chris's interest in emergency management sparked from a life-long participation in the fire service where he grew up in Minnesott Beach. As he advanced in the fire service, he took a special interest in incident management and more specifically local emergency management. Throughout his career, Chris has had the opportunity to work multiple hurricanes, local search and rescue missions, and other weather-related incidents. Perhaps the most notable incident Chris worked through was Hurricane Irene.



*Pamlico County experienced never seen before water levels and flooding. In certain areas in the southern portion of the county we experienced as much as 12 feet of water above ground.*

*~ Chris Murray  
Pamlico Emergency Services*

Chris served as the operations chief during response to Hurricane Irene and was deployed in the field for the duration of the storm.

He reflected on the hours and days after Irene made landfall saying, "Pamlico County experienced never seen before water levels and flooding. In certain areas in the southern portion of the county we experienced as much as 12 feet of water above ground. The Goose Creek Island communities of Hobucken and Lowland experienced total devastation."

"Out of 200 homes on Goose Creek Island, 195 of them were damaged or flooded with the majority considered a total loss," recalled the former assistant fire marshal. "Even the Goose Creek Island Fire Department had six feet of water inside the fire station and lost all of their equipment including apparatus."

Murray described the first few days after Irene's landfall as "a logistical nightmare." The county shelter was over max capacity. The entire county was without power and generator fuel supplies rapidly diminished. Water plants went off line due to seawater breaches and sewer issues occurred due to all of the above.

In addition to utility failure, Chris said that one of the biggest lessons learned from the response was that all radio systems can fail! Fortunately the VIPER system was back online very quickly and the county was able to rely heavily on VIPER during initial response and into the recovery phase.

Chris said that one of the most helpful assets the county received was the western Incident Management Team.

"These folks worked day in and day out to keep our incident running and our requests flowing," explained Murray. "I would suggest to anyone involved in a large multi-jurisdictional / multi-agency event that will last over a series of days or weeks to utilize an IMT."

Pamlico County has successfully mitigated and continues to mitigate the flood hazards exposed by Hurricane Irene.

"The county is in the process of relocating the Goose Creek Island Fire Department to higher ground out of the flood plain," said Murray. "And with the gracious outpouring of donations and support from across the state, the fire department is up and running at normal operations."

Many property owners who experienced flood damage have elevated or are currently elevating their homes. Chris estimated that since Irene, approximately 320 homes have been elevated, many of which were elevated through the National Flood Insurance Program's Increased Cost Compliance program. Pamlico County is also currently applying for acquisition funding through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.

The challenges presented by Hurricane Irene have certainly made Chris a seasoned emergency management coordinator.

Murray said his favorite thing about his job is the always evolving and changing realm and scope of work. Very seldom, he said, can he predict what the next day will bring in this type of job, but he always enjoys the interaction with different agencies and personnel both locally and statewide.

Chris lives in Arapahoe with his wife, Lauren, and their five-year-old son, Ethan. In his spare time, he enjoys fox hunting. Chris owns a fox hound kennel and, when time allows, he travels and competes across the country.