

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR IN REVIEW



**ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

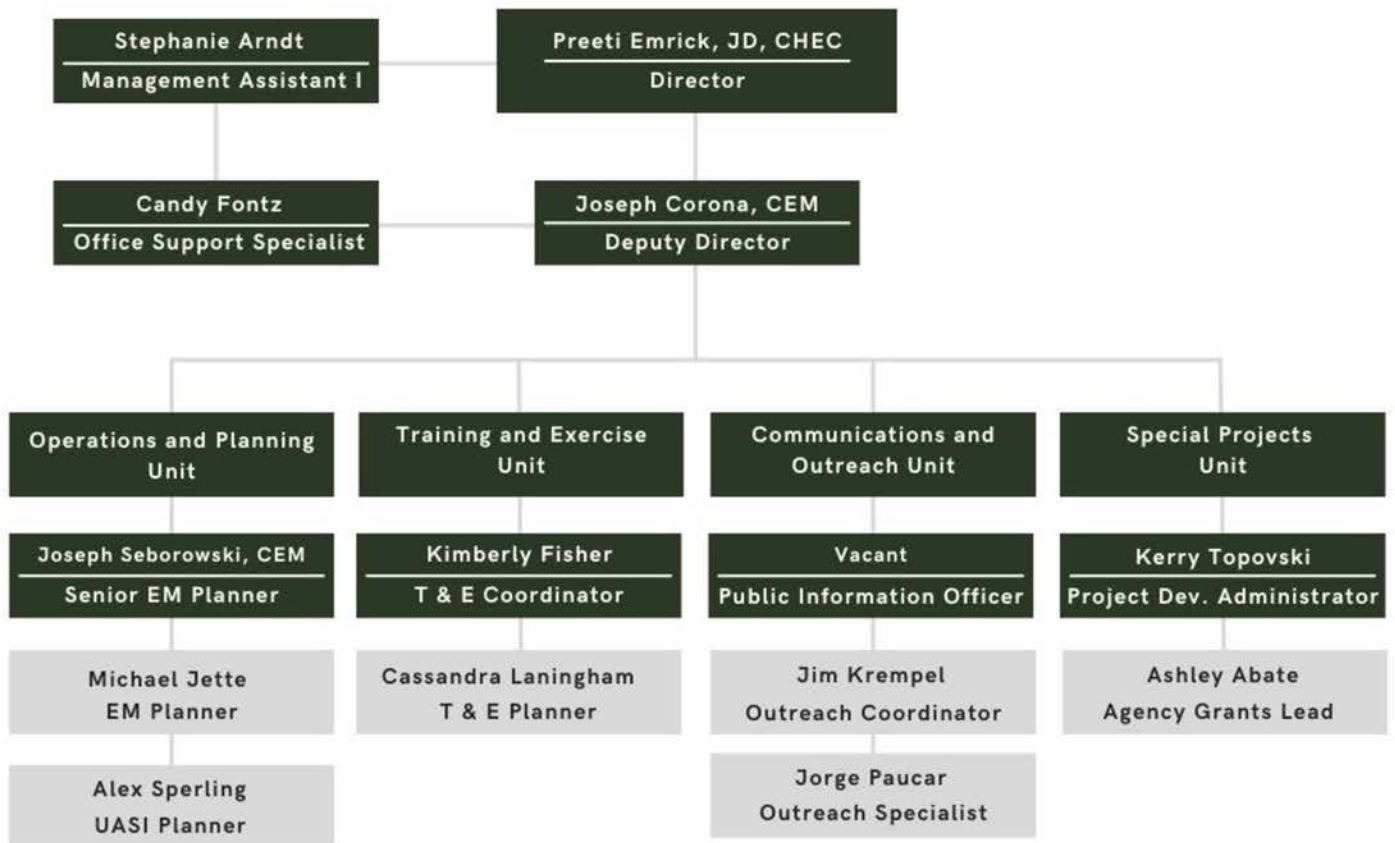
ABOUT US

MISSION

The Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) was established in 2006 to coordinate the County's response to major emergencies. Our mission is to help our County agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses, and residents prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.

UNITS

OEM is comprised of four units: Operations and Planning, Training and Exercise, Communications and Outreach, and Special Projects. The organizational chart below depicts the positions and names of staff members under each unit.



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Preeti Emrick, JD, CHEC

Disasters can rarely be handled by one person or one group. It takes a variety of skills and knowledge to support the community during extreme hardships. This is a core principle of emergency management, and we strive to bring together a diverse array of partners and foster communication in order to provide the best possible outcomes for our community.

As we present this 2024 Annual Report, a recurring theme across our office's accomplishments is the strength of these partnerships and the importance of collaboration. By uniting public, private, and community organizations, we enhance our ability to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

This year, our office achieved significant milestones that highlight the power of these partnerships. From obtaining StormReady Certification, which underscores our commitment to weather preparedness, to collaborating with State partners to develop the State Disaster Recovery Fund, our initiatives strengthen our resilience and our ability to bring resources to those affected by disasters. Through innovative public-private partnerships, we launched the Hydronet network in Anne Arundel to enhance real-time flood monitoring and prediction.

Our development of and participation in exercises and drills have demonstrated the importance of coordinated action and our dedication to continued improvement. Additionally, our continued work with the consolidated 911 Center is setting the foundation for improved emergency communications that will benefit every resident in Anne Arundel County.

Looking ahead, we invite all community members to support our efforts by getting involved. Whether by volunteering in community groups, providing feedback on improving our plans, attending Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meetings, or simply registering for emergency notifications, your engagement is vital. Community participation not only strengthens our preparedness but also ensures that our plans and initiatives reflect the needs and priorities of those we serve. Together, we can build a safer, stronger, and more resilient Anne Arundel County. Thank you for your continued support and partnership as we work to protect and empower our community.

OPERATIONS AND PLANNING

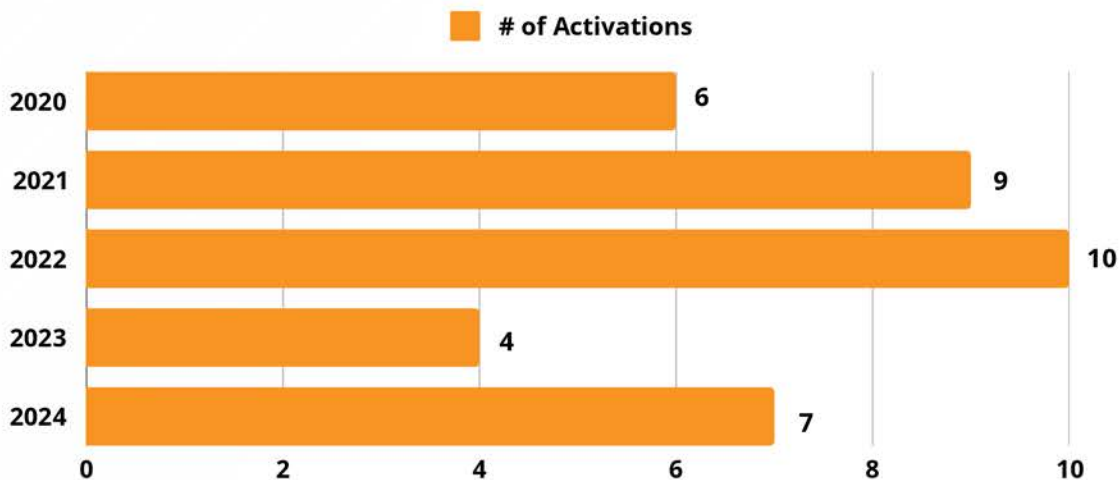
The Operations and Planning Unit ensures plans, policies, and procedures reflect the County's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters. This unit also manages Alert Anne Arundel, the County's mass notification system, and coordinates special events planning with public safety agencies.

STORMREADY CERTIFICATION

Anne Arundel is proud to be recertified as a StormReady community in 2024. StormReady is a nationwide program that helps jurisdictions protect their residents during severe weather by improving communications and preparedness. The program encourages a proactive approach to improving local hazardous weather operations by using public alert systems, ensuring continuous monitoring through 911 dispatch and the Emergency Operations Center, and providing education through training on public readiness.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC) ACTIVATIONS

In 2024, we activated for 7 different events including five severe weather events, one man-made incident, and one special event.



WELLNESS CHECKS FOR AT-RISK RESIDENTS

During a June heatwave, 254 units at a Laurel Park apartment complex lost air conditioning. OEM, in a joint effort with Crisis Response, the Department of Aging and Disabilities (DoAD), Anne Arundel Annapolis Community Emergency Response Team (AAACERT), and the Office of Community Engagement and Constituent Services (CECS), and elected officials conducted wellness checks on the affected residents. The team provided cooling relief resources and informed residents of symptoms of heat-related illness. We continued to monitor the situation until it was resolved.



Participating agencies conducting wellness checks at the Laurel Park Apartments June 2024

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY BRIDGE RESPONSE

Our staff played a critical role in the Key Bridge response by establishing Disaster Recovery Centers to aid affected residents. Our Public Information Officer, Kasey Thomas, supported the Joint Information Center, ensuring timely and accurate information dissemination to the public. Additionally, we facilitated coordination calls with county partners to address unmet needs and streamline response efforts.



Kasey Thomas with Coast
Guard External Affairs Officers
Francis Scott Key Bridge
May 2024



Edgewater, MD Flooding
August 2024

TROPICAL STORM DEBBY RESPONSE

On August 9th, Tropical Storm Debby brought heavy rain, flooding, and strong winds to Anne Arundel and the surrounding area. We activated the Emergency Operations Center to monitor potential impacts and coordinate with County agencies and partners supporting the County's response. Post-storm, OEM shifted to damage assessment and focused on recovery efforts. Thankfully, the County experienced minimal damage.

HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN UPDATE

Following a kick-off meeting with Federal, State, and local partners, we conducted eight public meetings across the County to provide information on the Hazard Mitigation Plan update. Additionally, we created surveys that allow residents to submit their concerns about the hazards affecting their communities. We continue to welcome public input as we continue through the planning process. For any other questions or concerns, email hazardmitigationupdate2025@aacounty.org. The next step in the Plan update is to share the information with our partners and discuss possible mitigation projects and solutions. Visit [our website](#) to learn more about mitigating the effects of natural disasters and other emergencies.

SPECIAL EVENTS PERMIT PROCESS

As part of legislation for [Bill 13-23](#), OEM has begun to facilitate the special events permitting process in coordination with several of our public safety partners. This year we received 114 total applications, which resulted in 97 licensed special events across the County. For more info about the permit process, visit the [County website](#).



River Days at Quiet Waters
Park
August 2024

PLANNING FOR PREAKNESS

We had the pleasure of touring the Pimlico and Laurel Race Track facilities to begin preparing for Preakness and other upcoming special events. The Maryland Jockey Club has invited support and partnership from local agencies as it works to ensure a smooth and successful leg of the prestigious Triple Crown experience at Laurel. Laurel Park will also host the Preakness in 2026, requiring coordination with numerous agencies.



OEM staff at the Pimlico Race
Track
May 2024



OEM staff with winning horse at
the Laurel Race Track
November 2024

BOARD OF EDUCATION CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN (COOP) POLICY

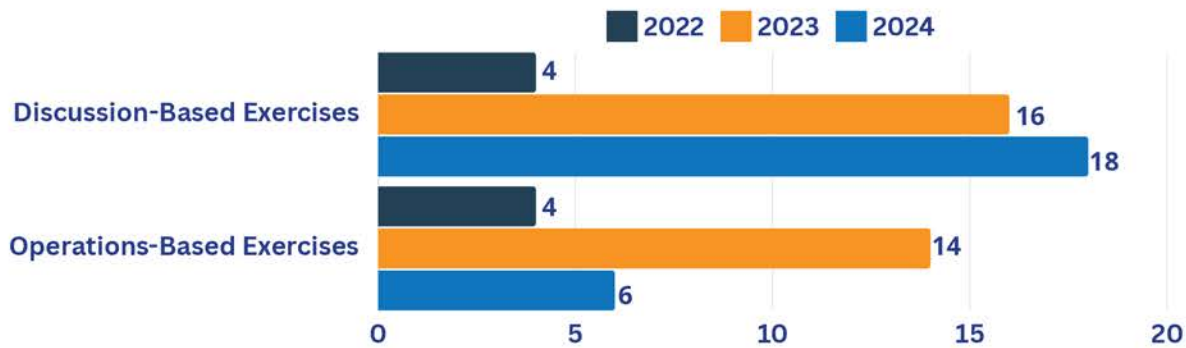
Following the events of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Anne Arundel County Board of Education (Board) recognized the need to establish procedures for adopting and implementing a COOP policy to ensure the continuation of essential functions of the Board during a state of local, regional, or national emergency. To assist in creating this policy, the Board coordinated with OEM to identify the core duties and responsibilities of the Board and what was needed to ensure continuity during emergencies. This COOP policy is one of the first in the nation specifically developed for an Education Board. OEM and the Board hope this can be used as a best practice for other Boards of Education across the nation to establish their continuity of operations plans moving forward.

TRAINING AND EXERCISE

The Training and Exercise Unit maintains and facilitates a comprehensive training program for the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and its partnering agencies. This unit works with participating County, State, and non-governmental agencies to coordinate regular training and exercises to develop the knowledge, skills, and capabilities to effectively prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from potential emergencies and disasters that may affect County residents, businesses, and visitors.

BREAKDOWN OF EXERCISES

This year, we focused on conducting our full-scale exercise to familiarize our partners with their roles and responsibilities during Family Information Center and Joint Information Center Operations. We also conducted 18 discussion-based exercises to continue improving our plans.



NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD (NTSB) TRAINING

We hosted a Family Assistance Operations workshop with the NTSB. Representatives from 30 agencies learned to address the reunification and notification needs of families and friends of mass casualty or fatality incidents.



Participants at OEM
April, 2024



OEM Director welcoming
participants
June, 2024

OPIOID OVERDOSE SPIKE WORKSHOP

We facilitated an Opioid Overdose Spike workshop with partners across the State. This was a valuable opportunity for public safety and public health professionals to learn about the impacts of opioids, identify best practices, access information on overdose spikes, and discuss how to coordinate a response to potential spikes in our area.

FOOD NETWORK(ING)

In August, we hosted a discussion-based exercise to improve plans for providing meals during the initial 24 hours of mass-care shelter operations. In addition to participants sharing resources, we learned about new capabilities available through Food4MD, an organization dedicated to reducing and eliminating food insecurity. Food4MD kindly provided participants with lunch to demonstrate what their on-demand services could do.

FULL-SCALE EXERCISE

We conducted a full-scale exercise for 18 different county agencies and partner organizations. The exercise tested the County's response to an active shooter scenario where first responders had to transport patients, set up a Family Information Center (FIC), conduct reunification and death notification operations, and communicate public safety information and updates. Over 220 people participated in this wide-ranging exercise to help improve the County's response and coordination.



Exercise participants gathered outside Pascal Senior Center November, 2024



Exercise participants in the Emergency Operations Center December, 2024

"GRINCH X"

We hosted a holiday-themed exercise testing our staff and partners' abilities to respond to multiple events simultaneously. Players had to work together to stop the Grinch from stealing Christmas in Anne Arundel County during a major snowstorm. Using this creative scenario, partners were able to practice and train on actual skills that are used during emergencies and disasters.

CYBER READY GAME

This year, our team facilitated two different sessions of the Cyber Ready game, which is a board game designed to help players improve and understand their roles in cybersecurity preparedness. Our staff and partners from the Maryland Department of Information Technology, the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM), and the Prince George's County Office of Emergency Management got to test out this new training tool, and discover how partnerships supported a community's ability to respond to a cybersecurity event.



MDEM and OEM staff playing Cyber Ready July, 2024



EXTREME EVENT

Our team facilitated four Extreme Event games for students, volunteers, and County partners. Extreme Event is an in-person role-playing game that simulates a community's response to a natural disaster. Players take on roles within the community and work together to address the impacts of the disaster.

INCREASED TRAINING

We have continued our efforts to increase the number of fully-trained County agency Emergency Operations Center (EOC) representatives (Reps). To remain compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), a fully-trained EOC Rep must complete six Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Independent Study (IS) courses providing the foundation of emergency management. Since 2020, we have seen a substantial increase in compliance improving our preparedness for activations. By delivering multiple sessions of the required trainings again in 2025, we expect this percentage to continue to improve.



OEM FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Since starting our internship program in 2022, we have enhanced it by turning it into a paid fellowship program for college students and recent graduates. Matthew and Kayla made incredible additions to our team, assisting us with communications, planning, exercise, and legislative projects. This hands-on experience gave them a broad understanding of the field of emergency management and helped them develop valuable skills. Matthew has since accepted a full-time emergency management position in Indiana, and Kayla will continue her fellowship through the spring of 2025.

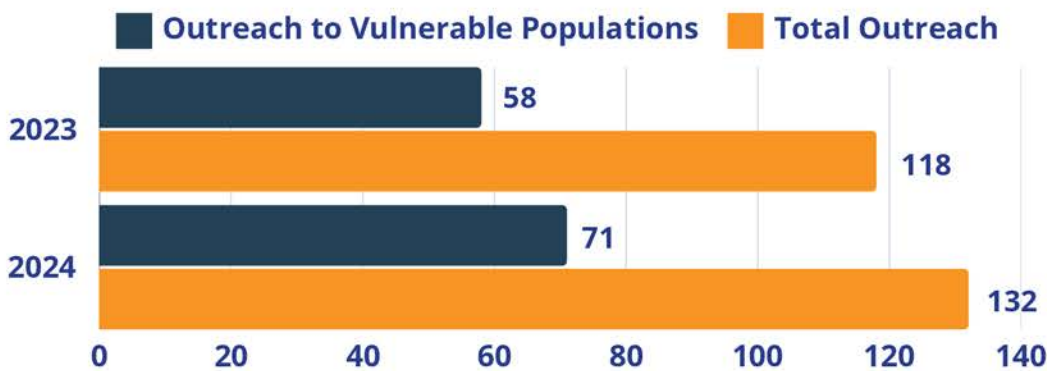


COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

The Communications and Outreach Unit ensures that timely and accurate information is shared with the public and County agencies before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. This unit increases public awareness and education through social media, traditional media, presentations, and attendance at community events.

INCREASED PUBLIC OUTREACH

We have continued our efforts to increase the number of outreach events focusing on vulnerable populations, including English as a Second Language, high-hazard coastal communities, socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, elderly populations, unhoused populations, individuals with access/functional needs, and children. In 2024, we reached over 8,700 individuals through these training opportunities.



ANNUAL HOUSES OF WORSHIP SEMINAR

The 2024 Protecting Our Houses of Worship Seminar series concluded in May with a Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) in-person training. An exercise was then conducted with an evolving active assailant scenario, which allowed the participating houses of worship to assess and improve their emergency action plans. FEMA has recognized our seminar series as a best practice that effectively increased faith-based organizations' awareness of available resources, hazard mitigation, resilience, and opportunities to collaborate.



ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY HOMELESS COALITION

Our office supports the Anne Arundel County Homeless Coalition as part of the Coalition Training Subcommittee. In June, we offered a "Surviving the Weather" presentation to the Arundel House of Hope Resource Center clients and staff. This was an opportunity to engage in an emergency preparedness discussion with Anne Arundel County residents experiencing homelessness.

LENDING A HELPING HAND

Our Public Information Officer, Kasey Thomas, deployed to North Carolina's State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to assist with Hurricane Helene recovery. She worked to help combat misinformation and inform impacted residents of available recovery resources. Her participation in deployments not only helps the affected jurisdictions, but brings valuable information back to support Anne Arundel during our emergencies.



SHADOW DAY CONTEST

Crofton High School Signature Program students participated in an emergency preparedness Public Service Announcement (PSA) video contest, with winners spending a day shadowing our Director. They toured the Emergency Operations Center, learned more about emergency preparedness, and simulated responding to a disaster.



HERricane

In coordination with Anne Arundel Community College (AACC), the City of Annapolis OEM, and the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management (I-DIEM), OEM hosted a free summer camp program called HERricane. The week-long camp encouraged young women in high school and college to explore careers in emergency management and public safety. This unique program offered participants the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities, interactive workshops, and field trips led by industry professionals. The program will be modified in 2025 to include completely new interactive public safety activities, tours, and training. For information on the new 2025 program, HERoes on the HERizon, please email oem-camp@aacounty.org.



COMMUNITY SAFETY AWARD

Outreach Specialist Jim Krempel received the Community Public Safety Award from the Northern Anne Arundel Chamber of Commerce for innovative emergency preparedness programs and for facilitating the Protecting Our Houses of Worship seminar series. The seminar series has been nationally recognized by FEMA as a best practice for engaging faith-based and community organizations.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

The Special Projects Unit organizes, leads, and helps execute projects that may fall outside the scope of regular duties. This unit assists with grant management, oversees public assistance reimbursement after disasters, and supports the operational readiness of the Emergency Operations Center. The Special Projects Unit also manages our emergency call center during emergencies and coordinates logistics for mass care sheltering supplies.

GRANT MANAGEMENT

The FEMA-funded grants that we manage allow us to financially support projects, initiatives, and programs for the County OEM, the Fire Department, and the Police Department. The grants get more competitive each year, furthering the need for our grants management team to track spending and ensure that the use of funds follows local and Federal purchasing guidelines. This fiscal year, the County was awarded \$793,751 across multiple grants to fund identified emergency management and public safety projects.



CPR MANIKINS

To further enhance our outreach capabilities, we used grant funding to purchase additional gender-inclusive CPR manikins, featuring anatomically correct female manikins. This initiative aims to address the disparity in bystander CPR rates between men and women, as highlighted by the American Heart Association (AHA). According to the AHA, only 39% of women receive CPR from bystanders in public compared to 45% of men. This underscores the critical need for gender-inclusive CPR training to ensure that every individual receives the most effective and equitable lifesaving care.



Male, female, and child CPR manikin

GENERATORS

Using grant funding, the Region III Health and Medical Coalition purchased six generators for use during emergencies. These generators, located at Anne Arundel County fire stations, provide crucial backup power for life-sustaining medical equipment in homes. This capability proved invaluable during a flooding event, preventing a family with a critically ill infant from needing emergency hospital care.

LONG-RANGE ACOUSTIC DEVICE

A Long-Range Acoustic Device (LRAD) was purchased through grant funding to support our Special Operations Law Enforcement Department. The LRAD is an amplified loudspeaker system that attaches to one of our existing Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) vehicles and is designed to transmit verbal instructions effectively during law enforcement incidents. This technology allows officers to communicate clearly with personnel, citizens, and suspects at greater distances and through various obstacles, such as closed windows, concrete barriers, and even enclosed vehicles.



LRAD attached to the top of a SWAT vehicle



Stop the Bleed Training Kits

STOP THE BLEED KITS

OEM purchased 'Stop the Bleed' training kits through State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) funding to support the County's Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). These kits provide essential training on recognizing and controlling life-threatening bleeding.

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS PLAN (COOP)

OEM is under contract with the University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security (CHHS) to develop a COOP program that implements best practices and standards across County government and focuses on ensuring that essential functions, resource requirements, human capital needs, and contingency solutions can continue in the aftermath of a natural or manmade emergency.

MASS CARE SHELTER IMPROVEMENTS

Inspired by architect Shigeru Ban's innovative cardboard shelters for Ukrainian refugees in France, we used grant funding to develop a reusable mass-care shelter system. Utilizing sturdy PVC pipes for durability, the prototype features six cubicles designed to provide privacy in spaces like gyms. This project enhances the County's emergency preparedness and sheltering capabilities for residents during disasters.



Prototype of dividers created with PVC pipe

SENSORY KITS

Our staff assembled sensory kits that were added to all 35 County ambulances, our shelter supplies, and Family Information Center supplies. These grant-funded kits include sunglasses, headphones, fidget toys, a small stuffed animal, and other items designed to stimulate and engage the senses. The items help reduce stress, improve processing skills, and provide alternative forms of communication.



Assembled sensory kits



Local Emergency Managers at the State Capitol
March 2024

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ADVOCACY AT THE CAPITOL

We partnered with the Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) and other local emergency managers to bring attention to bills related to emergency management. Meeting with House Representatives and Senators, emergency managers discussed the importance of the State Disaster Recovery Fund and other public safety bills.

HYDRONET

In partnership with the University of Maryland and the [Resilience Authority](#), we supported the deployment of Maryland Hydronet. Hydronet is a series of low-cost, solar powered water-level sensors across the Chesapeake Bay and tributaries. These sensors, with current installations in Annapolis, Edgewater, and Deale, provide real-time flood data to help Anne Arundel predict and respond to flooding risks. Future plans include expanding the network throughout Anne Arundel County.



Hydronet Press Conference
June 2024

LOOKING AHEAD

OEM remains dedicated to ensuring Anne Arundel County is prepared to respond effectively to emergencies, creating a safer and more resilient community.

A key initiative next year is leading the development of a consolidated 911 and Emergency Management Center. This facility will enhance coordination and response capabilities to better serve our community, integrating services, streamlining communications, and positioning our County as a leader in emergency preparedness and resilience.

The first public meeting to discuss plans for a joint 911 Emergency Management Center was held in December 2024. The facility will combine the Fire and Police Department call centers' operations and include the Office of Emergency Management's functions. Residents attended to ask questions and learn more from the project team and County representatives. The design process is ongoing and expected to finish by spring 2025.



Sample rendering of the new facility

We are also committed to promoting inclusion and diversity by strengthening connections with community groups and creating opportunities for youth to explore careers in emergency management. Programs like our public safety summer camp and focused outreach efforts will inspire the next generation of leaders and ensure that all voices are heard when shaping emergency plans and policies.

To strengthen our community further, we will expand training opportunities and collaborative planning efforts. By bringing together County agencies, partners, businesses, nonprofits, and residents, we aim to foster a united approach to preparedness and response.

These priorities reaffirm our mission to ensure our County agencies, organizations, businesses, and residents prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.

Anne Arundel County Office of Emergency Management

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