



*Charging  
Toward  
Preparedness*

**Energizing the Whole Community**



**Chatham County  
Hurricane Conference  
April 16, 2024**

# AGENDA

**7:30-8:30**

**REGISTRATION**

\*Refreshments Available

**8:30-8:45**

**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Call to Order-

Dennis Jones, Director, CEMA

Invocation and National Anthem-

Pastor J. Michael Culbreth, ConneXion Church

Opening Statements-

Michael Kaigler, County Manager, Chatham County Government

Chris Stallings, Director, GEMA

Van Johnson, Mayor, City of Savannah

Sheriff John Wilcher, Chatham County Sheriff's Office

Chester A. Ellis, Chairman, Chatham County Board of Commissioners

**8:45-9:45**

**MORNING KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**

The Challenges of Forecasting Idalia and Preparing for and Recovering from the Impacts - Timing is Everything!

**9:45-10:00**

**BREAK**

**10:00-11:00**

**BREAKOUT SESSION 1**

**11:00-11:15**

**BREAK**

**11:15-12:15**

**BREAKOUT SESSION 2**

**12:15-1:45**

**LUNCH KEYNOTE PRESENTATION**

Chatham County's Future Multi-Agency Public Safety Facility

**2:00-3:00**

**BREAKOUT SESSION 3**

**3:00-3:15**

**BREAK**

\*Refreshments Available

**3:15-4:15**

**BREAKOUT SESSION 4**

**4:15**

**ADJOURN**

# MORNING KEYNOTE

## **THE CHALLENGES OF FORECASTING IDALIA AND PREPARING FOR AND RECOVERING FROM THE IMPACTS - TIMING IS EVERYTHING!**

The forecast challenges will be given through the eyes of the National Weather Service in Charleston, SC and the discussion of the resulting impacts will be given from the perspective of Charleston County, SC Emergency Management.

### **Presenters:**

Ron Morales - National Weather Service, Charleston  
Joe Coates - Charleston County Emergency Operations Center

# LUNCH KEYNOTE

## **CHATHAM COUNTY'S FUTURE MULTI-AGENCY PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY**

In this session, Chatham County EMA, Chatham County E-911, AECOM/HJR and ADG will discuss the planning, design, and construction of the 83K sq ft. Multi-Agency Public Safety Facility. The ground-breaking for this new facility is set to take place on May 30, 2024. During this session, participants will receive a sneak peak of the design to see what the future home of public safety in Chatham County looks like.

### **Presenters:**

Dennis Jones - Chatham Emergency Management Agency  
Russ Palmer - Chatham County E-911  
John Wright - AECOM/HJR  
Daniel Taylor - ADG

# BREAKOUT SESSION 1

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM

Room	Session Title	Speaker(s)
Room 100-101	Where All the Pieces Fit: Understanding a Hurricane Response in Chatham County *	Randall Mathews
Room 102	Navigating Crisis: Points of Distribution Unveiled	Ellen Pinder
Room 103	Stormy Cyberseas: Navigating the Ripple Effect of Hurricane Related Cyber Incidents	Scott Craig
Room 104	“Y’all Means All” Caring For Our Community’s Unsheltered Friends and Neighbors During Times of Disaster	Jenn Dulong
Room 105	Beyond Resilience: Continuity Planning as an Instrument of Organizational Change	Will Minkoff
Room 200-201	The Chatham County Hurricane Registry and State Medical Support Shelter: A Vital Resource	Dennis Jones, Dr. Chris Rustin and Leah Hoffacker
Room 202	Emergency Sheltering 101: Learn to be the Most Extreme AirBnBHost	Spencer Hawkins
Room 203	Jail Operations During a Hurricane	Chief Deputy Gary Taylor

\*Represents a Repeated Session

Session Descriptions for these workshop sessions can be found on pages 7 and 8.

# BREAKOUT SESSION 2

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Room	Session Title	Speaker(s)
Room 100-101	Where All the Pieces Fit: Understanding a Hurricane Response in Chatham County*	Randall Mathews
Room 102	FEMA's Individual Assistance Program	Eric Nankervis
Room 103	Dispatching During a Storm	Russ Palmer
Room 104	Best Practices for How Decision Makers Can Use NHC and NWS Tropical Products	Ron Morales
Room 105	Chatham County's Hurricane Registry Evacuation Process	Stephen Stanley and Dr. Sierra Peebles
Room 200-201	Evacuating Chatham County and the Macon-Bibb Shelter Planning Process	Dennis Jones, Spencer Hawkins and Joe Barnum
Room 202	The U.S. Coast Guard: Captain of the Port Roles, Authorities, and Actions Throughout a Severe Weather Event	Commander Nathaniel Robinson
Room 203	Georgia Power Storm Preparation and Response	Jason Stott and Ebony Rowell

\*Represents a Repeated Session

Session Descriptions for these workshop sessions can be found on pages 8 and 9.

# BREAKOUT SESSION 3

**2:00 PM - 3:00 PM**

<b>Room</b>	<b>Session Title</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>
Room 100-101	Chatham County Hurricane Re-Entry Operations*	Seth Sawyer
Room 102	Innovative Tools for Building Community Resilience	Dr. Russ Clark and Kait Morano
Room 103	Nourishing Resilience: Strategies for Disaster Feeding	Cindy Puryear
Room 104	Animal House: A Modern Take on Preparing for People and Their Non-Human Family Members in Disasters	Kelly Johnston
Room 105	You have a new Hurricane Evacuation Study - Now What?	Brandon Bolinski
Room 200-201	Chatham County Emergency Operations Center and Islands Towers Project: Improving Communications with Disasters in Mind	Billy Smith and Dennis Jones
Room 202	Innovative Strategies in Emergency Management: Mastering Basecamp Logistics and Disaster Debris	Matt Gierden, Ashley Tye, Gerardo Castillo and Jason Fawcett
Room 203	Educational Institutions, Evacuation Planning and Decision Making	Justin Pratt

\*Represents a Repeated Session

Session Descriptions for these workshop sessions can be found on pages 9 and 10.

Refreshments will be available on the first floor outside of the classrooms immediately following this session!

# BREAKOUT SESSION 4

**3:15 PM - 4:15 PM**

<b>Room</b>	<b>Session Title</b>	<b>Speaker(s)</b>
Room 100-101	Unmanned Aerial Systems Operations Overview	Collin Hopf and Kerry Futch
Room 102	Chatham County Hurricane Re-Entry Operations*	Alli Padgett
Room 103	Empowering Small Businesses	Becky Brownlee
Room 104	How Can I Use My Hurricane Evacuation Study in HURREVAC?	Brandon Bolinski
Room 200-201	Hiccups in History: What to do When Disasters Impact Our Cultural Institutions	Laura Seifert and Dennis Jones
Room 202	The Hitchhiker's Guide to Crisis: Don't Panic!	Catherine Glasby and Abbigail Murphy
Room 203	It Takes A Village to Conduct Animal Decontamination Operations	Venessa Sims

\*Represents a Repeated Session

Session Descriptions for these workshop sessions can be found on page 11.

# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

## Session 1

### Beyond Resilience: Continuity Planning as an Instrument of Organizational Change

What is the single greatest threat to an organization? When the thing you take totally for granted stops working. Continuity planning tries to solve for that threat in the face of any hazard. With frequent record-setting disasters, planning is essential.

## Session 1

### Emergency Sheltering 101: Learn to be the Most Extreme AirBnB Host

Mandatory evacuations, shelter operations, mass care, and re-entry; these are all phrases that can (and do) send chills down the spine of the most seasoned emergency manager. This session will take you through the basics of shelter operations, who should be a part of your team (yes, you will need a team), and what to expect when (not if) this happens in your community. When you finish this session, you will have the framework of a plan that you can use in your community to develop shelter operations. Unfortunately, you will still get the chills, they will just be a little less noticeable.

## Session 1

### Navigating Crisis: Points of Distribution Unveiled

In the face of adversity, distribution of a community's most essential supplies can mean the difference between chaos and recovery. This presentation will discuss emergency response logistics and explore the critical role of Points of Distribution (PODs) in safeguarding communities during times of crisis.

## Session 1

### The Chatham County Hurricane Registry and State Medical Support Shelter: A Vital Resource

This session will cover updates and a discussion regarding the Chatham County Hurricane Registry for Functional Access Needs and Medical Needs, evacuation processes for these individuals, and an overview of the state-managed medical support shelter.

## Session 1

### Where All the Pieces Fit: Understanding a Hurricane Response in Chatham County\*

Hurricane Preparedness and Response is a whole-community effort. In this session, you will learn how numerous agencies, municipalities, and non-governmental organizations come together and support the many efforts involved with hurricane response.

## Session 1

### Stormy Cyberseas: Navigating the Ripple Effect of Hurricane-Related Cyber Incidents

Delve into the turbulent intersection of natural disasters and cyber threats. Explore cases where hurricanes provided cover for criminals to attack critical infrastructure and more. Join us as we navigate the waters and help fortify your defenses.

## Session 1

### "Y'all Means All" Caring for our Community's Unsheltered Friends and Neighbors During Times of Disaster

Learn how our homeless service ecosystem works together providing comprehensive



# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

services, transportation and coordinated communications to our roofless citizens during times of disaster and inclement weather. Learn how we provide effective street outreach to the hard to reach unsheltered and why it's so important for accurate mapping of places where people are living that aren't meant for human habitation. Gain a better understanding of how you can join and support our efforts in providing inclement weather resources, coordination with our local faith leaders, key community stakeholders and nonprofit partners. Lean in to the "lived experience" of the unsheltered to better understand their needs. Learn what our community is doing to address the complex challenges of homelessness and the recent advancements in services. Learn what the "point in time count" is for our community and why these numbers matter. Better data equals better decision making – what the data is saying about our roofless friends and neighbors now. Learn how access to housing opportunities will be vital to reducing homelessness in Chatham/Savannah.

## Session 1

### Jail Operations During a Hurricane

The Chatham County Jail has a population of over 1,000 inmates. Keeping the inmates, the staff, and the facility secure during a hurricane threat is no easy feat. This session will cover how the Chatham County Jail operates.

## Session 2

### Best Practices for how Decision Makers can use NHC and NWS Tropical Products

This workshop will start with a brief overview of the 2023 tropical season, with a focus on Hurricane Idalia. Next there will be a brief summary of the most pertinent changes to the tropical program for 2024. Finally, the workshop will focus not only on what NWS/NHC tropical products you can use, but also when to use them during a Tropical Cyclone/Hurricane event.

## Session 2

### Chatham County's Hurricane Registry Evacuation Process

The Chatham County Health Department manages the Functional Access and Medical Needs patient evacuations in the event of a hurricane. To prepare for this process a year around effort is required to ensure that should the event arise we are ready to evacuate at any time. This requires receiving, vetting, and building our Hurricane Registry as well as reviewing and updating plans. Most importantly it requires putting our plan to practice by having full scale exercises. In this session we will look at our After-Action Report from our most recent exercise held on March 20, 2024. We will discuss what went well, areas we feel that we can improve upon, and some ideas on how to implement changes.

## Session 2

### Dispatching During a Storm

Deputy Director Russ Palmer will discuss how dispatchers will deploy emergency units be it police, fire, or EMS during a storm to render response to an emergency need. It is not always feasible to send out first responders during a storm as it also puts their lives in danger as well. If dispatchers send first responders out in the middle of the storm, they could become victims also. DD Palmer will discuss how it is determined what level of help if any can be sent into harms way to render emergency services.

## Session 2

### Evacuating Chatham County and the Macon-Bibb Shelter Planning Process

In this session, Chatham County EMA, Macon-Bibb EMA and GEMA will discuss the hurricane evacuation section of the new state-wide sheltering plan. Coastal counties have been matched with an inland "host" community to shelter residents with a critical transportation need. We will provide an update on the planning process for Chatham and Macon-Bibb.

# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

## Session 2

### FEMA's Individual Assistance Program

FEMA is amending its regulations governing the Individual Assistance Program to simplify processes, remove barriers to entry, and increase eligibility for certain types of assistance under the program. This will be the first major reform of Individual Assistance regulations in over 20 years and is a key part of the administration and FEMA's efforts to transform and improve the experience of disaster survivors. These changes are a direct result of feedback received from disaster survivors, states, tribes and territories and other stakeholders regarding the challenges disaster survivors experience following disasters. This session will provide a high-level overview of these changes.

## Session 2

### Georgia Power Storm Preparation and Response

Leaders from Georgia Power's Storm Center and Distribution team will discuss how Georgia Power prepares for major weather events, responds to outages to restore power, and engages with customers throughout the restoration process

## Session 2

### The U.S. Coast Guard: Captain of the Port Roles, Authorities, and Actions Throughout a Severe Weather Event

During periods when the port is threatened by hurricanes/severe weather, the U.S. Coast Guard advises the maritime community of the sequence and timing of Captain of the Port decisions and actions. Further, the U.S. Coast Guard COTP provides the maritime community with preparedness guidance and directions to minimize damage and to protect lives and property in the event of severe weather, as well as aid in the restoration of normal maritime operations after a severe weather event.

## Session 2

### Where All the Pieces Fit: Understanding a Hurricane Response in Chatham County\*

Hurricane Preparedness and Response is a whole-community effort. In this session, you will learn how numerous agencies, municipalities, and non-governmental organizations come together and support the many efforts involved with hurricane response.

## Session 3

### Animal House: A Modern Take on Preparing for People and Their Non-Human Family Members in Disasters

In this workshop participants will receive an overview for planning for animals in disaster. After learning more about the participants' roles in disaster management, attendees will work in groups to try to address real-life examples of animal issues that have come up in past disasters. Participants will share ideas and receive input from others in the room and Ms. Johnston will share what was done at the time to address a given issue. There will be time for questions and input and ideally networking and resource sharing so participants will leave eager to look at planning for community animals in disaster anew.

## Session 3

### Chatham County Hurricane Re-Entry Operations\*

This session will address the Chatham County re-entry phases for a post-hurricane event. We will discuss operational priorities, identify critical infrastructure that must be re-established and evaluate re-entry team resources.

# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

## Session 3

### Chatham County Emergency Operations Center and Islands Towers Project: Improving Communications with Disasters in Mind

Motorola Solutions will present an overview of Chatham County Georgia's additional communications towers project and discuss the standards and methods utilized to design reliable communications tower in the worst scenarios. Tornadoes and Hurricanes have proven to be destructive forces to physical structures and it is imperative that public safety communications structures and equipment are designed to withstand some of the worst scenarios and also provide reliable communications before, during and after these catastrophic events. Design standards that are widely accepted and implemented, and proper routine preventative maintenance are key components that allow public safety communications to operate at its best in the moments that matter.

## Session 3

### Educational Institutions, Evacuation Planning and Decision Making

When severe weather occurs, much of the community looks to the decisions made by the Board of Education. It's no secret school closures affect parents, the workforce, and governments. This session takes a deep dive into the timeline of decisions along with how and why they are made.

## Session 3

### Innovative Strategies in Emergency Management: Mastering Basecamp Logistics and Disaster Debris

This session is divided into two sections: Basecamp logistics and disaster debris. In the first section, the focus will be on delving into sophisticated logistics and preemptive strategies for efficient basecamp

operations in varied scenarios within emergency management. The second half will focus on debris management tactics, streamlined FEMA funding approaches, and essential collaborations for municipal teams.

## Session 3

### Innovative Tools for Building Community Resilience

This session will focus on innovative tools being developed by Georgia Tech's Coastal Equity and Resilience Hub that help communicate information about short and long-term risk while also leveraging community expertise, offering data-driven insights for more collaborative resilience planning.

## Session 3

### Nourishing Resilience: Strategies for Disaster Feeding

The Salvation Army Georgia Division will share how they work with various agencies across the state to provide disaster feeding services during emergencies in Georgia. The workshop underscores the critical role of coordination and collaboration among disaster relief agencies by implementing strategies such as needs assessment, personalized assistance, and effective communication to better serve affected communities. By working together seamlessly, these agencies can maximize their impact and reach more people in need during times of crisis.

## Session 3

### You Have a New Hurricane Evacuation Study - Now What?

The Georgia Coast has a new Hurricane Evacuation Study that has been in the works for years, and it is a lot of information. Learn some of the highlights of the study and how to get what you need out of it to help you plan for the next Hurricane.

# SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

## Session 4

### Chatham County Hurricane Re-Entry Operations\*

This session will address the all Chatham County re-entry phases for a post Hurricane event. We will discuss operational priorities, identify critical infrastructure that must be re-established and evaluate re-entry team resources.

## Session 4

### Empowering Small Businesses: Thriving Through Good and Bad with UGA's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Support

Explore SBDC's pivotal role in fostering small business growth and navigating crises like storms, hurricanes, and COVID. Gain insights into SBDC's comprehensive support system for entrepreneurs, blending general assistance with disaster readiness strategies.

## Session 4

### Hiccups in History: What to do When Disasters Impact our Cultural Institutions

Chatham County's museums and other cultural institutions are critical to our economy and our historic atmosphere that makes Savannah special. How do we protect our irreplaceable cultural and natural resources after a disaster? Only YOU can prevent cultural calamities.

## Session 4

### How Can I Use My Hurricane Evacuation Study in HURREVAC?

The HURREVAC program is geared to support evacuation decision making, but it has uses for other protective actions and planning also. See how to use the latest HES results and other timing tools to help support your agency when facing a hurricane.

## Session 4

### It Takes A Village to Conduct Animal Decontamination Operations

Multi-year planning allowed for the successful implementation of animal decontamination operations commanded by the Georgia Department of Agriculture during VISTA FORGE ATL, a national level exercise, hosted by Atlanta Fulton County EMA and US Northern Command (NORTHCOM). This discussion will walk you through the planning process, operational training, and logistical preparations to successfully conduct animal decontamination operations with a multi-agency staffed Animal Decontamination Branch.

## Session 4

### The Hitchhiker's Guide to Crisis: Don't Panic!

Do you have a crisis plan, or is it merely a mental concept? In the event of a crisis occurring when you are not in the office, can one of your colleagues step in and execute your plan? This interactive session is designed to assist you in initiating the process of documenting your plan. We will discuss essential elements to incorporate into a crisis plan, guide you on formatting your plan, and prepare you for any impending crises.

## Session 4

### Unmanned Aerial Systems Operations Overview

The rapid development of Unmanned Aerial Systems have increased the capabilities of emergency responders in response and recovery. This course covers the use of Unmanned Aerial Systems in emergency situations. Topics discussed include program setup, operations, and disaster applications. Best practices and incident experience will be used in instruction to give an awareness level of this topic.

# PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

## County Chairman Chester A. Ellis

A lifelong resident of Chatham County, Chairman Ellis is committed to investing in this community and its citizens. A proud graduate of Sophronia Tompkins as well as Savannah State College (now University), Chairman Ellis continued his education at Cambridge College where he received a Master's Degree and completed additional doctoral course work through the Fielding Institute. Chairman Ellis has always invested in the lives of others. He began as a teacher, coach and leader with the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System. During his tenure, he served on numerous leadership teams, mentored incoming teachers, and maintained an active presence in the community through service with several organizations and boards. In 2016, Chairman Ellis was honored to be elected as the Commissioner for District 8. As President of the Historic Carver Village Association, Chairman Ellis helped to secure grants and other resources to help improve the lives of residents. He is the Pastor of St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church as well as President of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the Savannah Baptist Union, and the Savannah Emancipation Association. He began his tenure as Chairman of the County Commission on January 4, 2021.

## County Manager Michael A. Kaigler

Michael A. Kaigler is currently employed as County Manager with Chatham County Government. He has over 30 years of local government experience. Michael has also served as Assistant County Manager, Director of Human Resources and Services, Public Works Director and Employee Services Employee Relations Manager with Chatham County. Mr. Kaigler holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Savannah State University. His current and former professional and community services includes The Bank South Savannah Advisory Board of Directors, the International City-County Management Association

Executive Board, Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission, Live Oak Public Library Advisory Board, Memorial Health University Medical Center Board of Directors, State Health Planning Review Board, Board of Trustees for Savannah Business Group (Chairman 2001-2002), Board of Governors for Bethesda Academy, Senior Citizens Board of Directors, The First Tee of Savannah Board of Directors, 100 Black Men of Savannah, Incorporated (Chapter President 2000-2001), Leadership Savannah Board of Directors, United Way of Savannah Executive Board and St. Joseph's/Candler Health System African-American Health Information and Resource Center Advisory Board. He is married to Vanessa Miller-Kaigler and is the father of one daughter, Michaela Kaigler.

## Director Chris Stallings

James C. Stallings was appointed Director of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA/HS) by Governor Brian P. Kemp on September 1, 2020. Director Stallings has brought over 12 years of public safety experience to this position. In his first year as Director, he coordinated the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which included setting up nine mass vaccination sites. Prior to joining GEMA/HS, Stallings served as Director of the Georgia Department of Public Safety's Dignitary Protection Unit. He started his career at the agency in 2008 and was rapidly promoted through the ranks. He was often recognized as a leader among his peers. Director Stallings currently serves on the Board of Homeland Security as the Vice Chairman, the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and the Georgia Cybersecurity Board. Director Stallings resides in Douglas County with his wife, Stephanie, and their three children, Morgan, Carter and Sophia.

## Mayor Van Johnson

Mayor Van R. Johnson II serves as the official head of the City of Savannah. Born and raised in Brooklyn, NY, but with strong Savannah

# PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

roots. Mayor Johnson is a New York City Public School System graduate who has earned undergraduate and graduate degrees from Savannah State University and Georgia Southern University. As a former radio talk show host, political commentator, and former author of local weekly columns, Mayor Johnson has distinguished himself as an independent, thoughtful, and passionate voice on current events. As a nationally certified professional in Human Resources and a Georgia-certified Law Enforcement professional, Mayor Johnson has utilized his unique skill set as a sought-after trainer, speaker, and consultant in these areas. He is a graduate of Leadership Savannah and Leadership Georgia. During his tenure as an Alderman, Mayor Johnson served as Mayor Pro Tem and Vice Chairman of the Council. He consistently used this sacred platform to advocate for the least, the last, and the lost; and promote inclusion and equity for all of Savannah's citizens. Mayor Johnson also demonstrated leadership nationally as a Board member of the National League of Cities, the United States Conference of Mayors, and the African American Mayors Association. Mayor Johnson's dedication to children, youth, and families is evident in our local community.

## Sheriff John Wilcher

A veteran law enforcement officer with 46 years of service with the Chatham County Sheriff's Office, Sheriff John T. Wilcher has served in nearly every capacity of law enforcement. After serving in the United States Navy and the United States Army Reserve for a combined total of six years, Sheriff Wilcher started his career with the Sheriff's Office in 1974 at the old Chatham County Jail on Habersham Street, downtown Savannah. In 2014, he retired at the rank of Colonel from the Sheriff's Office and in April 2016, he won the Chatham County Sheriff special election to replace the late Sheriff Al St. Lawrence. In November 2016, he won the general election to serve a four-year term as Sheriff. Running unopposed in 2020, Wilcher was re-elected for another four-year term.

## Director Dennis Jones

Dennis T. Jones, appointed as Chatham EMA's Director in 2017, is an accomplished emergency manager with extensive experience spanning 28 years of Incident Command and Emergency Response. In an emergency management capacity, Mr. Jones has coordinated response and recovery to a myriad of emergencies and disasters. In addition to his current emergency management responsibilities, Mr. Jones has previously served on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Hurricane Liaison Team which provides guidance and liaison between the National Hurricane Center and Emergency Management Agencies. Mr. Jones is a Nationally Certified Emergency Manager, a Georgia Certified Emergency Manager, and a Certified Professional Emergency Manager. He is a graduate of Saint Leo College and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Throughout his career, Mr. Jones has also developed and delivered numerous training courses, exercises, and programs; including the establishment of procedures dealing with hazardous materials, contractor safety, and regulatory compliance. Mr. Jones has received the President's Award for Meritorious Service from the Emergency Management Association of Georgia and was honored for Exceptional Humanitarian Efforts by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency. He has served as Vice President of the state-level emergency management organization as well as various positions on other boards and committees.

## Joseph Barnum

Joe Barnum began work in Emergency Management in 2016. After graduating college, Joe joined FEMA Corps as a Field Team Leader where he responded to the 2016 Baton Rouge floods and Hurricane Matthew. In 2020, Joe moved to Georgia and was hired as the Assistant Director of Emergency Disaster Services at the Salvation Army Georgia Division. In 2021 Joe graduated with a Master's Degree in Emergency Management. Joe is a member of

# PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

the International Association of Emergency Management (IAEM), where he is working on his Certification in Emergency Management (CEM).

## Brandon Bolinski

Brandon Bolinski is the manager of Regional Hurricane Program and the GIS Resource Center at FEMA Region 4. As a member of FEMA's Hurricane Liaison Team (HLT), he helps provide vital hurricane forecast information to emergency managers to assist with evacuations and other response operations.

## Becky Brownlee

Becky Brownlee is the Area Director in the UGA SBDC Savannah Office. She joined the SBDC in 2014 and specializes in working with businesses to access capital to start and grow. Becky has a BA from UNC Chapel Hill and an MBA from South University.

## Dr. Russell Clark

Dr. Russ Clark is a Sr. Research Scientist at Georgia Tech, where he leads the environmental monitoring activities for the Coastal Equity and Resilience Hub. Dr. Clark received degrees in Mathematics and Computer Science from Vanderbilt University and Georgia Tech.

## Joe Coates

Director Joe Coates has been with Charleston County Emergency Operations Center for 15 years. He has mentored his staff to empower them to provide unsolicited feedback. The EOC has been activated for everything from Domestic Terrorism to Hurricanes.

## Chase Cowart

Chase Cowart is a business consultant at the University of Georgia Small Business Development Center, based in Savannah,

Georgia where he lives with his wife and son. Chase has a BBA in Management Information Systems from the University of Georgia and an MBA from Georgia Southern University.

## Scott Craig

Scott is the Information Security Officer for Chatham County, GA. He has a background in software development and cybersecurity. He also protects digital assets with expertise in hacking, network security, and compliance as well as advocating for privacy and cyber literacy.

## Jenn Dulong

Jenn Dulong is the Executive Director of the Chatham Savannah Authority for the Homeless with 28 years of social service, nonprofit and public service experience. She firmly believes that big hearts along with big thinking and the development of an effective system will ultimately lead to "ensuring homelessness in Chatham/Savannah is brief, rare and non-reoccurring."

## Kerry Futch

Kerry has been in Public Safety for over 30 years and served in many roles. He started out as a Volunteer Firefighter, later began his law enforcement career working with the Evans County Sheriff's Office, Claxton Police Department, and Georgia DNR as a Game Warden. Kerry continued his education and obtained his State and National Certification as an Emergency Medical Technician. He later took a job working overseas in Kabul, Afghanistan at the US Embassy as part of the Security Force and Medical Response team. After serving 3.5 years overseas, He returned home and began working with GEMA/HS as a Homeland Security Coordinator. He has worked several federally declared disasters and many other day-to-day man-made and natural disasters within the state.

# PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

## **Matt Gierden**

Matt offers more than 20 years of accomplishment-laden experience in disaster recovery & emergency response projects, special environmental operations, client development, customer service, and public relations. Over the years, Matt has established a reputation as a decisive leader who skillfully enhances the organization's capabilities. He handles new challenges with his intrinsic knack for innovation, problem-solving, and change management. Equipped with an enthusiastic attitude and exceptional people skills, he successfully maintains a myriad of client relationships throughout Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Before he was appointed Vice President in 2013, Matt started with AshBritt as an entry-level Field Supervisor in 2002, was quickly promoted to Project Supervisor, and later to Regional Manager.

December of 2015, he was appointed as Director of Macon-Bibb County Emergency Management Agency. He has been involved in over 20 disaster activations, with 11 of those being hurricanes or tropical storms. Before coming to Macon-Bibb, he was Vice President of Crisis Management for PNC Bank, spent four and half years working in Washington, DC for the Army and Navy and 10 years working in central Florida for Orange County Emergency Management, Florida Department of Health Emergency Operations, and City of Orlando Emergency Management. He holds a Master's degree in Criminal Justice and a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration. Mr. Hawkins is a Certified Emergency Manager with the International Association of Emergency Managers and the State of Georgia, a graduate of the FEMA National Emergency Management Executive Academy and the FEMA Master Exercise Practitioner Program.

## **Director Catherine Glasby**

Catherine is a 20-year veteran of public communications working with governments, law enforcement, and non-profits over the years. She has been with Chatham County, Government as the Public Information Director for the past 8 years and has had the opportunity to build a department from the ground up. The Chatham County Public Information Office is responsible for media relations, the County TV Station, social media, marketing, branding, and other external communications. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Armstrong Atlantic University (Georgia Southern University) and attended the Art Institute of Charleston to study film and video editing.

## **Collin Hopf**

Collin Hopf is a Field Coordinator with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency – Homeland Security. Collin acts as a liaison between local and State government within the scope of GEMA Area 3 – East Central Georgia. Collin graduated with an undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia at Athens and a Masters in Emergency Management from Jacksonville State University. He has also previously worked for the Georgia Department of Agriculture and GEMA/HS School Safety Unit. Collin has worked over thirteen federally declared disasters, including Hurricanes Matthew, Irma, Michael, 2017 Southwest Georgia Tornado Outbreak and many other day-to-day man-made and natural incidents.

## **Director Spencer Hawkins**

Spencer Hawkins has spent over 20 years as a professional emergency manager. In

## **Kelly Johnston**

Kelly Johnston is a University of Virginia graduate and has spent majority of her career



# PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES

working for animal-related organizations. For more than a decade, Kelly has worked on-the-ground in the wake of natural disasters across the U.S. and around the world to respond to the needs of animals impacted by crises. She has coordinated, supported and/or deployed as part of disaster responses across the country and on multiple continents. Kelly has brought together diverse interested parties to undertake multi-jurisdictional animal resource coordination exercises, and even to develop best practices and provide resources at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether setting up an emergency shelter in the wake of a destructive tornado or helping communities to prepare for future disasters, working effectively across sectors and multiple agencies has been a cornerstone of Kelly's work in the U.S. at IFAW.

## Randall Mathews

Randall Mathews is the Deputy Director for Chatham Emergency Management Agency. He holds a Master's Degree in Public Administration, is a Marine Corps veteran, and has worked with CEMA since 2014. He has supported numerous emergency events over the past 10 years.

## Valerie McElveen

Valerie McElveen, Area Director at UGA Small Business Development Center in Statesboro, GA, aids business growth through no-cost consulting on strategic planning, accounting, and financial analysis. A certified QuickBooks Pro Advisor, she assists with QuickBooks Online navigation.

## Will Minkoff

William "Will" Minkoff serves as the Enterprise Account Executive at BOLDplanning. Mr. Minkoff provides the emergency management community both software platforms and subject matter expert consulting.

## Ron Morales

Ron Morales has served as the Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) at the National Weather Service office in Charleston, South Carolina for nearly 15 years, and has served for more than 31 years in the NWS. Ron's primary duty as a WCM is to make sure his office's partners and customers receive all the weather forecast information they need to make an informed and actionable decision. Prior to becoming a WCM, Ron served for four years as the Science and Operations Officer at the Corpus Christi, Texas office, and as a Lead Forecaster and tropical program manager at the Tampa Bay-Ruskin, Florida office for more than 10 years. Ron's career began right out of graduate school as a Techniques Development Intern and Surface Analyst at the Weather Prediction Center (formally known as the National Meteorological Center) in Camp Springs, Maryland. In addition to his WCM and weather forecast duties, Ron has become a FAA Part 107 certified drone pilot for NOAA, and has been leading the NWS's first UAS/drone team to evaluate the usefulness of UASs for storm damage surveys.

## Kait Morano

Kait Morano is the Resilience Planning Director & Research Scientist II at the Coastal Equity and Resilience Hub at Georgia Tech. She holds degrees in Geography from Virginia Tech and City & Regional Planning from Georgia Tech, where she specialized in GIS.

## Abbigail Murphy

Abby Murphy has a background in public communications spanning six years, coupled with a decade of experience in both government and non-profit sectors. Currently serving as the Public Information Assistant Director for Chatham County for

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the past two years, Abby holds an Advanced Public Information Officer designation from FEMA and has recently earned the Certified Public Communicator designation.

## Eric Nankervis

Eric Nankervis is the FEMA Region 4 Voluntary Agency Liaison – Mass Care Group Lead. In this role he leads a team of emergency management specialist that help establish, foster, and maintain relationships among government, voluntary, faith-based, and community partners to strengthen capabilities and support the delivery of inclusive, equitable services by empowering communities to address disaster-related unmet needs. Prior to his career with FEMA, Eric served as a disaster manager at Points of Light and the CDC Foundation. He has also held various leadership positions with the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster and the Georgia VOAD.

## Alli Padgett

Alli Padgett is currently the Assistant Director with Chatham Emergency Management Agency and has extensive experience in emergency management and military operations. Alli started out as an Emergency Manager Specialist Senior at the Alabama Emergency Management Agency and worked her way up to an Emergency Manager Program Coordinator.

## Russ Palmer

Currently serving as Deputy Director at Chatham 911 Communications Services, Russ brings 15 years of experience in Emergency Communications and 17 years in Public Safety to his role. Prior to joining Chatham 911, he served as the Director of Laurens County 911 for nearly five years. Russ holds a Master's in Public Safety Leadership and a Bachelor's in Homeland Security from Mercer University. In his most recent project, Russ helped lead the implementation of a centralized CAD system in

Chatham County, uniting 28 agencies for more efficient emergency response—a historic achievement for the county. Recognized for his leadership and problem-solving skills, Russ thrives in dynamic environments, aiming to exceed expectations and drive positive change. Looking ahead, Russ remains committed to making a lasting impact in public safety and emergency communications, ensuring community security for years to come.

## Dr. Sierra Peebles

Dr. Sierra Peebles is the Nurse Manager of the Chatham County Health Department. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, she began her nursing career as a medical-surgical nurse before transitioning into the public health field in 2015. After discovering a passion for pediatric health, Dr. Peebles continued her education by pursuing a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of South Alabama. She then went on to obtain a certification to become a nurse practitioner with an emphasis in pediatric primary care. Through this certification, Dr. Peebles became the first pediatric nurse practitioner to be hired by the State of Georgia in a public health setting. Through this position, she was able to establish a primary care clinic and write pediatric protocols to be used throughout the Coastal Health District. In 2021, she was promoted to the role of Nurse Manager amid the Covid-19 Pandemic.

## Ellen Pinder

Ellen Pinder is the Emergency Management Coordinator for the Charlotte County Emergency Management Office. She has earned the certification of Florida Professional Emergency Manager and has been awarded Public Safety Employee of the year and Silver Star Award.

## Justin Pratt

Justin Pratt is the Emergency Manager for

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the Board of Education Police Department of the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System (SCCPSS). Justin has spent nearly two decades working in the emergency management field where he began his career with the Georgia Air National Guard. More recently, Justin has focused his efforts on school safety and security where he works collaboratively with the multiple divisions within SCCPSS in new school design, existing school renovation, and innovative ways to enhance a layered school security program.

## Cindy Puryear

Cindy Puryear has an extensive background in disaster services and community support through her work with The Salvation Army. With experience as both a Case Manager Specialist and Assistant Director for Emergency Disaster Services, Cindy has demonstrated her commitment to helping individuals and communities in times of need. Her involvement in long-term recovery efforts and various deployments highlights her versatility and dedication to serving others during challenging times. Additionally, her certification as a ServSafe Manager Trainer underscores her expertise in food safety, further enhancing her ability to support communities during emergencies.

## Commander Nathaniel Robinson

Commander Nathaniel Robinson serves as U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port of Savannah and Brunswick. He is a graduate of the University of West Florida with advanced degrees from Southern New Hampshire University, the University of Notre Dame and the U.S Air Force Command and Staff College.

## Ebony Rowell

Ebony Rowell is currently the Distribution Operations Manager for Georgia Power. In this role, Ebony is responsible for providing

leadership, guidance, and direction for the team and operations in the Savannah Distribution area. Ebony is a native of Savannah, GA and a graduate of Savannah State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electronics Engineering Technology. She loves to volunteer, travel, and spend time with her family. In the community, she previously served as a board member for United Way of South-Central Georgia and currently serves on the Club of Hearts Board of Trustees. She is currently a member of Leadership Savannah Class of 2024.

## Dr. Chris Rustin

With over two decades of state and local public health experience, Dr. Rustin serves in a dual role as the Public Health Director for the Chatham County Health Department and the Deputy Commissioner for the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH). As Deputy Commissioner, he was responsible for coordinating DPH's operational response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Rustin began his career as an intern with Chatham County Mosquito Control, leading to his first public health position as the Environmental Health Specialist for Evans County DPH. From there he managed and directed Environmental Health programs for Effingham and Chatham County DPH. He is a Registered Environmental Health Specialist with the Georgia Board of Registered Environmental Health Professionals, a Fellow with the CDC Public Health Leadership Institute, and the past President of the Georgia Public Health Association.

## Chelsea Sawyer

Chelsea Sawyer is the Emergency Preparedness Manager for Chatham EMA. She has been with the agency for nearly 8 years and serves as one of the lead conference planners for the Hurricane Conference.

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## Seth Sawyer

Seth Sawyer is currently an Emergency Management Coordinator with the Chatham Emergency Management Agency, has served his community in a wide range of fields to include emergency and disaster management, fire, rescue, emergency medical services, behavioral health and wilderness search and rescue.

## Laura Seifert

Laura Seifert has been digging through Savannah's museums and squares since receiving her Master's degree at East Carolina University in 2006. She joined the Fort Pulaski National Monument staff in 2021.

## Vanessa Sims

Venessa A. Sims, MEP, GA-CEM is the Director of Emergency Management and Asst. Food and Feed Rapid Response Team (GA RRT) Program Manager for the Georgia Department of Agriculture. She supports emergency management and homeland security duties for the food and agriculture sector in Georgia. Venessa is the Georgia representative for the Southern Animal and Agriculture Disaster Response Alliance (SAADRA) and served as the Past Board President and a current Board Member for the National Alliance of State Animal and Agriculture Emergency Programs (NASAAEP) and the Heritage Emergency Response Alliance (HERA). Venessa is the Emergency Support Function (ESF) 11 Coordinator for the State of Georgia and coordinates response activities at the State Operations Center (SOC) for ESF 11 during activations, ESF 11 planning, coordination, and exercise support activities, and ESF 11 recovery endeavors.

## Billy Smith

Billy Smith is the Motorola Solutions Southeast Georgia Account Executive and has served in this role within Southeast Georgia for the last three years. He is responsible for public safety state and local government sales for Motorola.

## Stephen Stanley

Stephen Stanley is the Emergency Preparedness and Facilities Manager for the Chatham County Health Department. Stephen began his career in Public Health nearly 13 years ago where he served as an Environmental Health Specialist. While in Environmental Health he served in many roles including being a Certified Pool Operator Instructor, Lead Inspector/Risk Assessor, and Healthy Homes Specialist. Stephen helped respond to several emergencies while in Environmental Health including Hurricanes Matthew, Irma, and Dorian. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, he took on the roll as Emergency Preparedness and Facilities Manager where he worked with partners to setup and manage three fixed annex locations for the Health Department to give vaccines as well as a second testing location in West Chatham.

## Jason Stott

Jason Stott serves as Georgia Power's Storm Center Manager and is responsible for the planning and coordination of the company's response to major outage events, and his background includes leadership roles at Georgia Power in Power Delivery, Customer Solutions, and External Affairs.

## Chief Deputy Gary Taylor

Chief Deputy Gary Taylor brings extensive experience in law enforcement at multiple levels. As a certified instructor, consultant, and

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leader, he places great value on dedication service, and excellence. His unwavering commitment, hard work, and drive to modernize police training and culture resulted in multiple certifications, appointments, and promotions, culminating in a distinguished career in both active policing and command positions at the Chatham County Sheriff's Office. As Chief Deputy, he currently supervises all operations in support of Sheriff John T. Wilcher. Chief Deputy Taylor embraces the belief that excellence is a journey rather than a destination. His unwavering loyalty and dedication are the foundation of his commitment to disseminating these principles and empowering others to achieve greater success.

## Daniel Taylor

Daniel Taylor, Associate AIA, is an Associate Vice President, as well as the Building Information Modeling (BIM) Manager at Architects Design Group. He has over 19 years of experience in his field. In addition, Daniel has extensive expertise in public safety architecture. His experience centers on extreme weather-hardened facilities, building security, systems / equipment integration, and data / communications coordination. As the BIM Manager, Daniel oversees the design and review of projects in a 3-D, parametric environment. Daniel is devoted to designing sophisticated projects that incorporate sustainable practices. Notably, Daniel's academic achievements include a Bachelors of Design in Architecture from the University of Florida graduating Summa Cum Laude. Daniel has served as the Senior Project Manager for the Chatham County Multi-Agency Public Safety Facility since 2012.

## Director Ashley Tye

Ashley Tye is currently the Emergency Management Director for Lowndes County (GA), a position he has held since 2007. When

he was appointed he became the first full time Emergency Management Director in Lowndes County's history. During his tenure, Director Tye has coordinated response and recovery efforts to 5 federally declared disasters in Lowndes County and countless local disasters that didn't result in a formal declaration, including most recently, Hurricane Idalia for which he is currently coordinating the ongoing recovery efforts. He has also responded to assist several other communities during Major Disaster declarations throughout his career.

## John Wright

Mr. Wright has over 25 years of experience in the construction industry and has managed over 250 construction projects totaling more than \$5 billion. His extensive experience includes master planning, design, environment, planning, cost management, engineering, and project management for various market sectors. Mr. Wright serves as the Atlanta Metro Lead, and Vice President for Program and Project Management group for the Southeast Region. Mr. Wright has served in numerous key leadership roles over his more than 25 years of progressive experience in maximizing success through continuous process improvements and driving new initiatives impacting strategic planning, facilities management, design and construction, business services, and technology integration. John Wright is also an AECOM Certified Program Manager with a Bachelor's degree from Baton Rouge's Southern University. John continues to serve as Vice President for AECOM's Southeast Region, Program and Project Management Division.

# **Thank you for attending the 2024 Chatham County Hurricane Conference!**



**Please scan the QR code above with your smart phone camera to complete a brief survey about your experience at this year's conference and provide the Chatham Emergency Management Agency with feedback on how to make the years that follow even better!**

**A certificate will be emailed to you upon completion of the survey.**

# Notes:

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*Thank You  
for Attending!*



**Chatham County  
Hurricane Conference  
April 16, 2024**

