

## Great Game Huddle Notes

October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017

Larry Woods, Greene County Director of Emergency Management, gave us a synopsis of his recent assignment to Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico to assist hurricane victims. Larry serves as a planning section chief for one of two Incident Response Coordination Teams under the direction of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The Secretary of the DHHS answers directly to the President of the United States. Larry was deployed to help the citizens of Houston, Texas following Hurricane Harvey. When Hurricanes Irma and Maria hit, Larry was tasked with setting up healthcare operations in those affected areas as well.

Larry is one of a half dozen planning section chiefs in the United States, who operate with 5,000 members and 80 teams. His task is to coordinate resources for the area(s) he has been assigned to. Resources include both people and equipment to facilitate the disaster. The DHHS operates in conjunction with the Department of Defense, who provide transportation to areas otherwise unreachable. The DHHS also works with Emergency Support Function (ESF) #13 which encompasses all Federal departments and agencies possessing a public safety and security capability and is overseen by the Department of Justice. Security forces include the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) and ATF (The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.)

During the recent outbreak of hurricanes, Larry was tasked with planning coordination for 1200 people and an estimated 15 million dollars in equipment. This task is very complicated as teams are comprised of many resources from the medical field, veterinary field, mortuary services and many others. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control) is on-site, along with specialists in logistics, accounting and equipment moving. Everything and everyone has to be tracked, so that the commanders can reach out to each employee when necessary.

Although the critical phases of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma are over, there are still 1700 DHHS employees working in Puerto Rico recovering from Hurricane Maria. The devastation is ongoing, and it will take many years to rebuild. Due to a lack of water, for example, 480 dialysis patients have been moved to Florida to receive treatment.

Most of us don't even stop to think of the amount of planning, coordination, skill and hard work involved in providing life-saving assistance during a time of disaster. Greene County, its' employees and citizens should be very proud to have Larry Woods as our Director of Emergency Management and a planning section chief for the Department of Health and Human Services.