



EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS EP NEWS & VIEWS



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BLAST FROM THE PAST



COMMUNITY EVENTS



Intern Shadowing Day 3/17/26 | District Office

UGA Masters student, Bridget Osas shadowed EP team members to learn about various aspects of emergency preparedness and risk communication to support her studies in Health Communications. The Hall County Health Department provided a wonderful tour of the Health Department and shared insight about services. The Inventory Management and Administrative Specialist, Marius Brown gave a tour of the EP trailers, concluding a meaningful, memorable day.

Internship and Career Connection 3/18/26 | University of Georgia

Representatives from District 2 EP and Epidemiology, along with other community partners, took part in an Internship and Career Connection Event moderated by Dr. Nina Cleveland at the UGA College of Public Health. Students were introduced to the partners present, and then engaged with each community partner in a round-robin tabling event. In a closing networking session, each student was provided the opportunity to have additional questions addressed.



Career Fair 3/20/26 | Banks County High School

Students from 9th-12th grades explored various career paths and programs at District 2 Public Health. Adolescent Health, Emergency Preparedness, and the Community Outreach Liaison coordinated to provide information and answer questions for students, making the event a successful collaborative effort.

Intern Presentations and Street Exit Tour 3/26/26 | District Office

Two outstanding interns presented their internship progress. Crystal Spears, who interned with the EP Program shared impactful strides she accomplished at the organization, Unity Project which included creating a framework for the unhoused population. Natalie Cann shared about food-borne illnesses and influenza using the cases she diligently worked on. Following the presentations was an engaging tour of the Unity Project.





Gainesville City Wellness and Safety Fair

4/1/26 | Civic Center

The Lead Program and EP Program collaborated to share preparedness flyers, lead exposure information, and vegetable seeds to employees of Gainesville city. We appreciate all Gainesville employees for their hard work to help our community thrive, and we enjoyed connecting with all participants.

Chamber of Commerce Career Fair

4/2/26 | Civic Center

Current career opportunities at District 2 and valuable preparedness tips were shared by the EP team and the Human Resources team. Participants learned about the wide range of services offered throughout the 13 counties of District 2, as well as seasonal preparedness tips.



State Communications Training

4/8/26 | Macon District Office

During the annual State Communications meeting, Public Information Officer, Christina Joseph presented an EP survey regarding the experiences and stories of District 2 staff during Ice Storm Fern. Staff's amazing preparedness efforts were highlighted, along with the pro-active use of the survey to prepare for Winter Storm Gianna. Personal preparedness stories and ways to track personal impact during local emergencies were discussed across Districts.

STI Walk and Community Resource Fair

4/16/26 | Butler Park Pavillion

In recognition of STI Awareness Week, a prevention walk and resource fair were hosted with various vendors, refreshments, and raffles that created a fun atmosphere. The event centered on the importance of STI screenings and nonjudgmental education on STI prevention. The EP team shared guidance on how to create an emergency kit at home.



State Medical Reserve Corps Meeting

4/21/26- 4/24/26 | Great Wolf Lodge

The state Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) conference was an opportunity for unit leaders to come together and share ideas and best practices for their units. Representing the Northeast Georgia Mountains MRC Unit, Katie Jenkins presented on her work with HOSA students through the HOSA/MRC partnership, and Mark Palen presented on Ethics in Healthcare Using Volunteers.

PIEDMONT UNIVERSITY EXERCISE



Piedmont University hosts an annual full-scale exercise that brings together several community organizations to strengthen coordination and response for emergencies. The scenario this year involved an intoxicated driver crashing into the amphitheatre during a student event, as seen on the left.

Set-up included moulage, where nursing students portrayed victims using makeup to emulate fake wounds and injuries.

During the exercise, senior nursing students responded by triaging, providing care, and transporting those needing further care to hospitals. They were supported by EMS in Habersham and Stephens counties, as well as by the fire department, law enforcement agencies, and other emergency personnel on scene.



The Habersham County Health Department and EP team have been long-standing partners of the Piedmont University Exercise, providing support in planning meetings, moulage, the mock media conference, exercise evaluation, and the response operations at Stephens County Hospital where survivors were simulated to arrive in critical conditions.

Overall, the exercise is an excellent opportunity for collaboration among community partners and helps the community be better prepared for unexpected emergencies!



WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

In April 2026, wildfire risk in Georgia reached an alarming level, changing the way wildfire risk is viewed in the state. A State of Emergency and burn ban were issued in 91 counties in South Georgia due to dangerous wildfire conditions.

Several factors existed to create harmful wildfire conditions, including a prolonged drought, unusually warm temperatures, low humidity, and strong winds. Dry soil and vegetation meant that even a single spark could ignite a fire, with strong winds intensifying the flames.

Multiple wildfires broke out across South Georgia, leading to evacuations, property damage, and the opening of shelters for displaced residents.

The largest fires included the Pineland Road Fire in Clinch and Echols counties and the Highway 82 Fire in Brantley County. We thank every responder who worked tirelessly to protect Georgians. We recognize the resilience of those impacted by the devastating wildfires.

The Highway 82 Fire required about 3,880 people to evacuate and resulted in nearly \$14 million in incident costs. The Pineland Road Fire led to about 140 evacuations, with incident costs approaching almost \$7 million.

It is important to be aware of red flag warnings to be safe. About 85% of wildfires are caused by humans (NPS.gov) See ways below to protect your household and how to prevent wildfires from Ready.gov.

Do's

- ✓ If you need to go outside when there's wildfire smoke or haze, wear a mask.
- ✓ At least 30 feet from your home, keep a fire resistant zone without leaves, debris, or other flammable materials. (FEMA)
- ✓ Prepare a go-kit with essentials to take during an emergency, including documents in a fire-safe folder.
- ✓ Have a dual-sensor smoke alarm on each level of your home, and test it monthly.
- ✓ Have a portable air cleaner ready.

Don't's

- ✗ If you see or smell wildfire smoke, limit time outdoors.
- ✗ To maintain a clean room from wildfire smoke, avoid burning candles inside or cooking in the room. Run fans and AC to recirculate.
- ✗ Do not litter cigarettes because they can spark a fire on dry vegetation.
- ✗ Avoid leaving campfire and outdoor fires unattended
- ✗ Burn barrels should not have holes larger than 3/4 of an inch., and they must be covered with a weighted metal cover.

Be Informed about Red Flag Warnings

WHAT IS A RED FLAG WARNING?

A warning issued when **critical fire weather conditions** are happening or about to happen.

It does not necessarily mean there is a fire, but that conditions will be very dry and windy. If a fire is present, it can become extreme!

Avoid activities that could spark a wildfire!

Take Action!

- ✓ Make your wildfire plan, with at least 2 evacuation routes
- ✓ Maintain your go kit
- ✓ Follow fire prevention tips and regulations
- ✓ Listen to local officials for updates and evacuation orders

weather.gov

https://www.weather.gov/wrn/wildfire_infographicst

Wildfire Smoke

Wildfire smoke is a combination of gases and small particles from burning trees and other materials. It can travel far beyond a wildfire itself, as seen by the haze and smoky conditions across Georgia during the South Georgia wildfires. Wildfire smoke risks everyone's health. Children, pregnant individuals, and individuals with chronic conditions such as asthma, heart disease, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease are more at risk of becoming ill (CDC). To check the air quality in your area, simply type in your zip code at: <https://www.airnow.gov/>