

SEPTEMBER 2015



Scotland County, NC

A newsletter for the Scotland County community

Regional Response Team showcases its capabilities

In smaller municipalities and rural areas, the capability to respond to hazardous materials incidents is almost non-existent. That's why Scotland County depends on a Regional Response Team (RRT) for assistance. Scotland County's RRT is based in Fayetteville.

"It's a better use of money. Having a hazardous materials team is expensive and it's a very expensive process to provide on your own," explained Battalion Chief Calvin Bishop of the Fayetteville Fire Department and head of the Fayetteville Regional Response Team.

Bishop was the guest speaker at the September 3 meeting of the newly reactivated Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) meeting. Bishop is at the helm of RRT 3 that includes Scotland County as well as Bladen, Cumberland, Harnett, Hoke, Lee, Moore, Richmond, Robeson, Sampson and Wayne counties. The program for a regional response concept to hazardous materials incidents was established by the State. RRTs are available 24/7.

"We cover a pretty large area split up in a way as to who can get there in a reasonable time frame," Bishop explained. "We try to look at our response time, somewhere within an hour to hour and a half depending on where you are."

Although RRT 3 and all seven RRTs throughout the State work closely with the locals who need emergency assistance, everything has to go through State Emergency Management first. "You have to contact your local emergency management to go through the State to get all the correct information. The name and phone number of the person requesting State assistance is essential," Bishop said.

Who is on the scene, contact numbers, names, VIPER radio channel, name of a facility or shipper involved in the incident are all critical to the type of response. However, Bishop said, "If it's a simple phone consultation where you've got a 55-gallon drum of something spilled you may call us on the phone directly for information."

Bishop said Scotland County has a number of issues it might have to deal with because of rail traffic through the

[see RRT3 page 4](#)

Education seen as best investment

Staying in school and continuing education is the best investment. Four community leaders shared that sentiment during the State of Education event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce.

Scotland County Schools Superintendent Ron Hargrave, RCC President Dale McInnis, St. Andrews University President Paul Baldasare and UNC-Pembroke Chancellor Robin Cummings provided updates on activities at the schools they represent.

"We had a smooth transition with the closing of Pate Gardner and Washington Park and bringing the two schools together," said Hargrave.

The graduation rate at 81.8 percent this year is at an all-time high. "This is a celebration at the high school, but that takes place way before the children get to the high school. Elementary schools contribute to the graduation rate and the dropout rate going down," said Hargrave. "This is a celebration across the district and a celebration we in the community can be proud of."

Teacher turnover rate over the past two years continued to decline. Hargrave said if the schools, through a level of support, can keep new teachers for two years, there is a greater chance the teachers will stay for a

longer period of time. "We're focused on supporting our new teachers and making them feel at home in Scotland County so they will continue to teach here."

[see Education page 3](#)

Definition of waters questioned

County Manager Kevin Patterson and Commissioners Guy McCook and Carol McCall were among 15 community members who spent two days in Washington, D.C., advocating on behalf of the County.

The event is hosted annually by the North Carolina Congressional membership and coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce.

"It was a very busy two days," Patterson said. The group met personally with Representative Richard Hudson and met with staff from the offices of Senator Tom Tillis and Senator Richard Burr.

Issues discussed included the proposed Definition of the Waters of the United States that would expand the range of waters that fall under federal jurisdiction.

"The federal government currently has domain over navigable waterways," Patterson said. "They are looking at changing it from navigable waterways to flowing waterways."

"If you have water that moves from one end to another and you take a very strict interpretation, if you have water that flows through a ditch into a river or stream, that means the ditch could be considered a federal waterway," Patterson explained.

"There could be significant expansion of the definition of federal waters, which could significantly add to federal regulations especially in agricultural areas."

[see D.C., page 2](#)



Members of the Local Emergency Planning Committee tour the specially equipped Regional Response vehicle that is based in Fayetteville.

Retirement law expanded for public safety employees

There's a recent change to federal law as it relates to public safety employees, according to the North Carolina Retirement Systems Division.

On June 29, 2015, President Obama signed into law Defending Public Safety Employees' Retirement Act. The new law expands the exemption from the 10 percent penalty tax on early distributions from 401(k) plans to certain qualified public safety employees.

This means that public safety employees, as defined by the IRS, are no longer subject to the 10 percent penalty upon separation of service at or after age 50, effective January 1, 2016.

Employees who are considering retiring prior to January 1, 2016, should be aware of this new law as it has considerable tax implications regarding the withdrawal of 401(k) funds saved for retirement.

More information can be found on the GovTrack.us site. As a reminder, employees separating from service can also leave their money in their 401(k) plan and opt for a full or monthly distribution at a later time.

Employees who have additional questions about options for supplemental retirement savings plans can contact customer service for the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans at 866-627-5267 (866-NCPLANS), or the NC 403(b) Program at 800-842-2776.

Post Scripts

The following individuals joined Scotland County departments between July 16 and August 15, 2015: **Kimberly Locklear**, E911 Center; **Michirena Lowry**, Health; **Joanna Martin** and **Mitchell Woods**, Jail; **Amanda Reagan** and **Maxwell Taylor**, Sheriff; **Kai Pickett**, **Mia Armstrong** and **Nancy Reza** (DSS); **Chocajuana Oxendine**, Wagram Recreation Center; and **Darleaner Deese** part-time with Transportation.

Our condolences to ...

Tessie Cousar, Health retiree, on the August 29 passing of her husband, Bobby Cousar; **Debbie Maske**, Health, on the September 10 passing of her mother, Betty Horne; **Crystal Norton**, Register of Deeds, on the September 27 passing of her grandmother, Betty Russell.

D.C. trip an advocacy tool

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Patterson said as part of the annual trip to the nation's Capitol there is always discussion about any changes that could financially impact local governments.

Patterson explained, "When there is talk about passing down new programs without administrative funding or if funding is cut on certain benefits and the benefits don't necessarily change that much, then the states keep the administrative dollars as much as they can."

"The administrative dollars that we have to fund the programs are generally cut twice," Patterson said. "It makes it much harder on a local level to provide those federal programs."

Patterson said Rep. Hudson indicated his interest in working in a non-partisan manner because it's the only way of getting anything done right now. "When you get into the party dynamics, you just can't get anything accomplished in Washington, D.C."

News of Note

McCall achieves Mentor level in academy

Commissioner Carol McCall was recognized by the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) for meeting requirements for the Mentor level in the Local Elected Leaders Academy (LELA). A Mentor has completed a minimum of 82 credits (18 orientation credits, 42 focused in-depth credits, 24 elective credits). The Local Elected Leaders Academy, a partnership with the UNC School of Government, the NCACC and League of Municipalities, offers local elected officials the knowledge and skills needed to lead and govern their communities. County commissioners are recognized for their participation in both educational programs and service to the Association. The starting place for earning credits is the orientation program, the Essentials of County Government. As commissioners increase education and service, they earn credits toward recognition at three levels: Practitioner, Master and Mentor. "LELA recognizes county commissioners who have dedicated themselves to becoming effective local leaders for their communities," said NCACC Executive Director Kevin Leonard. "The roles and responsibilities of county commissioners are constantly changing, and the LELA program helps them keep up with the latest information."

Keep work and personal email separate

A few months ago government workers nationwide and in North Carolina were identified as clients of Ashley Madison, the website for people looking for extramarital affairs. That's because they used their business rather than their personal email addresses to register on the site. When Ashley Madison was hacked, the government workers were outed. "Personal emails from your workplace need to be limited," said Human Resources Manager Susan Butler. "Don't put very personal information on the County email system because it is subject to public disclosure." As for using your County email to register on a website for personal reasons. "That would not be appropriate," Butler said. "You need to use your personal email for things like that. When you're using your business email, it needs to be for business-related organizations as part of your job and position. I would limit it to that."

Fall Litter Sweep brings in 1,231 pounds of trash

The Fall Litter Sweep, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce Green Team, ended the weeklong clean up on County roads with 1,231 pounds of litter collected. Five teams and a total of 105 participants picked up litter September 14 to 19. "There is now no longer 1,231 pounds of litter on our highways," said Solid Waste Enforcement Officer J.R. Horne. The success of the Fall Litter Sweep did not match the 2,448 pounds collected the same time last year or the 1,723 pounds collected in the spring.

Author reads to foster kids and families

The Child Protective Services unit sponsored a book reading September 9 that promoted shared-parenting and Life Books for foster children. The event was also a recruitment tool for new foster parents. Donna Foster, author of the book series *Shelby and Me*, visited DSS with her Golden Retriever, Shelby, on whom the series is based. Foster read the book with the agency's kids and foster parents. Foster advocates the importance of fostering.



Education positively impacts economy locally and in the region

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The Superintendent said there also are challenges and opportunities, which includes getting C students to become A and B students. "We're constantly working to get our students to a higher performing category."

Hargrave said about 80 students dropped out last year. "There was not enough in our school system to keep them engaged and be a part of it. I feel that when students leave us, we failed them." Hargrave said the school system has to study what it needs to do to correct that. "If one child drops out, that's one too many."

At RCC, McInnis boasted a record enrollment of more than 2,600. Six years ago, 1,700 students attended credit classes at RCC. This fall, 777 Scotland County students are enrolled in credit classes at RCC.

McInnis credited RCC's partnership with St. Andrews University and the Scotland County School System with offering opportunities where an increasing number of students take pre-college classes. In 2010, 14 students took pre-college classes and this fall there are 135 students at the high school taking pre-college classes.

Nearly 3,000 people who live in Scotland County took advantage of courses offered at RCC. McInnis said RCC had a record graduation this past year where, for the first time ever, graduation took place in two sessions.

A partnership with UNC-Pembroke on the RCC campus allows students to earn a four-year degree in nine different areas. McInnis said he is excited about the future where, for the first time this fall, RCC will offer truck driver training in partnership with Caldwell Technical Community College. "This will meet an overwhelming demand."

Baldasare focused on the economic impact St. Andrews has on the community and the region.

More than 50 percent of St. Andrews students come here from outside North Carolina, many of whom wind up staying, either living in the region or in North Carolina. "They come from other places. They make an economic impact in our local area."

As an example, Baldasare said, the 675 students and 200 full and part-time employees currently at St. Andrews, has a ripple effect through the community as they spend money. It is the equivalent of creating 230 jobs in the region.

St. Andrews student spending generates about \$1.6 million

each year, the equivalent of 30-plus jobs. "That's what's created from the additional revenue off student spending."

St. Andrews attracts more than 15,000 people to the community who come for all manner of reasons, even for just a day, which creates the equivalency of 20 jobs.

"We have a significant number of alums who come to St. Andrews to go to school and wind up staying in North Carolina and particularly this region," Baldasare said. That has an impact over the long term of an equivalent of 200 jobs.

The total impact on an annual basis just from St. Andrews is more than \$26 million. Baldasare said multiplying that by the three other institutions spending their operating dollars throughout the community makes a huge impact on the quality of life and the revenues that the County and City wind up collecting.

"There are wonderful things going on across all our campuses," Baldasare said. "Do not lose sight of the fact of the economic impact, which is incredibly powerful for our City, our County and our region."

Baldasare concluded, "There is a great level of cooperation among all four educational institutions in service of programs and the different ways we work together. It is an incredible relationship, and I don't want to lose sight of that. What education does is powerful, but let's remember it is a huge economic engine for this area and North Carolina."

Cummings said all the schools work together. "We are not in competition. It's all about education and changing lives through education. Get as much education as you can. It's valuable. It's a great investment."

In the summer of 2016, UNC-P will start its Doctor of Physical Therapy Program as part of a partnership with East Carolina University and a veterinarian program in partnership with other universities. In many of its clinical programs, most students have a job before graduation.

Cummings said the economic impact of UNC-P is \$200 million a year and the equivalent of adding 5,200 jobs to the nine county region.

240 UNC-P students of the estimated 6,400 students come from Scotland County. 98 employees, which is about 12 percent of the UNC-P workforce, come from Scotland County. UNC-P admitted its largest freshman class, 1,233 students total, in its 128-year history.

Orchard of fruit trees planted for the community to enjoy

Nearly 200 fruit bearing trees were planted in the Washington Park area during the September 11 United Way Day of Caring.

Purchase of the trees was made possible through a \$4,000 ElectriCities beautification project grant awarded to the City of Laurinburg.

"We wanted to do a fruit orchard somewhere in the community," said Laurinburg City Community Development Director Teddy Warner.

The orchard is on McDougald Avenue in the Washington Park area on City and County property. The City will irrigate, cut the grass and mulch the area. The orchard will be maintained year round as part of the City's beautification budget.

The trees have apples, pears and figs on them now and there will be plenty of fruit in the spring for the community to pick and enjoy. "If this is a success, we would like to do more projects like this and partner with the County on beautification," Warner said.



Some 20 volunteers from across the County planted fruit trees on McDougald Avenue as part of the United Way Day of Caring. Photo by Kevin Patterson

the October birthday list

1 Jeremy Peele (Public Buildings); 2 Beth Hobbs (Administration); 3 Shannon Newton (Parks and Recreation); 4 Angela Belcher (DSS) and Tim Haggans (Public Works); 5 Priscilla Bryant (Health); 7 Michael Sanders (EMS); 8 Michirena Lowry (Health), William Grant (Sheriff) and Bobby Lowery (DSS); 11 Linda Gibson (Health) and Roy Chavis (EMS); 13 April Harley (Health), Jamie Hunt (Parks and Recreation), Anne Griffin (Sheriff) and Kim Brayboy (Tax); 16 Kisha Locklear (Health); 18 Steven Wilburn (EMS); 20 Michelle Locklear (DSS); 21 Adam Long (EMS), William McIlwain (Sheriff) and Frances McLean (DSS); 22 Rachel Beach (Tax); 23 Sharon Maag (Inspections); 24 Joshua Outlaw (Parks and Recreation); 25 Debra Maske (Health); 26 Dana Bethea (Jail); 28 Veronica Locklear (Tax); 29 Thomas Milligan (Inspections); 30 Kristie Johnson (DSS); and Antonia Rainer (DSS).

Area gets support from RRT3

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community and the standard problems with highway and fixed facilities based on the types of chemical processes industries use. "We need all that information. Is it a leaking tanker? Is it a train derailment? Is it a fixed facility? Is there any water contamination? What kinds of incident conditions are there? Is this a leak, a spill, a vapor cloud? Is it on fire? There's a lot of steps involved in this, so having the information about the nature of the incident becomes a really big deal for us."

Having the most complete information possible about an incident is like gold to the RRT, according to Bishop. "That's why the LEPC group is so important. We need as much information as we can get to give us an idea of what we're coming to."

Bishop said it also is important to know if this is a rescue situation or if people are contaminated. "If so, what type of injuries are we dealing with." Bishop said hospitals and public health agencies are critical in providing this information. "There's no magic bullet. When we deal with unknowns, we have to be very cautious at first. When it comes to hazardous material, this is not a fast response. This is a slow, measured response so we can keep the folks we need to safe, including our own folks."

It's also important to know the medical capabilities locally. What actions have been taken up to this point for calling the RRT because it has different response capabilities that include telephone consultation, a two person on-site analysis, up to an eight person team for incident mitigation and up to 12 hazardous materials technicians for large incident mitigation.

On some occasions multiple RRTs are called on to respond. "We're here to help you, but we've got to have help in return, too, because our guys can't do everything." Bishop said water must be supplied to the hazmat team and staffing must be available to assist in non-hazardous materials functions.

"If you've ever heard, 'We're the government, we're here to help,' we really are. We're there to help with the initial mitigation of original incidents. We're only a phone call away."

He added, "We work hand in hand. I'm seeing less and less where borders and county lines make a difference. State emergency management has tried to expand those boundaries because it isn't about whether you're here or there, it's about whether you need the help. That's what we're here for."

Emergency Action Plans readied

New signs at Covington Street offices point to 'Internal Safe Zones' and identify where there are fire evacuation horns. It's all part of an effort for departments countywide to have emergency plans at the ready for a major weather event or for an emergency evacuation.

"Given the age of the building at Covington Street, we don't have a system to inform people of an emergency and evacuate the building or what to do in a severe weather situation when you hunker down in a safe spot inside the building," said Safety Coordinator Lori Parks.

Parks and a team of volunteers who work at Covington Street discussed the various emergency situations and devised a plan that involves external evacuation. "The air horn is a valid tool we can use to sound off inside the building," said Parks. "It's very loud so people will know they need to get out and go across the street to the safe area (on the Covington Street side of the former Morgan Rehabilitation Center)."

Parks said as far as the internal safe zone, it will have to rely more on word of mouth to let everybody know that there is a severe weather situation. "We get that information through severe weather radios or

monitoring email about emergency situations going on in our area."

An internal safe zone is an interior area with no windows where employees can come together until the storm passes.

Parks said emergency plans were developed in all County buildings. Staff were asked to look at their locations and identify different types of emergency situations they may encounter and devise a plan.

"Each location has a plan that is unique to them because some of our buildings do have alarms, strobes, flashing lights where other buildings do not," Parks explained.

Staff in all buildings had until August 31 to get their plans in place. "Each department is responsible for training their employees as to what the protocols should be," said Parks.

Flu clinic goes RED for health

The two-day Health Department employee flu clinic attracted 92 employee and 16 retiree participants.

Top photo, Elizabeth Barton, RN, gives the flu shot to Health Educator Kathie Cox. Rebecca Griffin, DSS, bottom photo, helps herself to healthy snacks after receiving the flu shot.

The flu clinic featured the RED Tablecloth Initiative, part of the Active Healthy Living Partnership roll-out, where healthy foods are served on red tablecloths at community and church functions.

Flu clinic staff Tim Martin, Alisa Freeman, Tina Clark, Jennifer Taylor and Debra Kersey helped put the fresh fruits and water out for participants. **Photos by Tina Clark, Health.**



Lori Parks, left, covers her ears while Nancy Hughes, Mapping, sounds the air horn.

