



GUILFORD COUNTY
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

FY 2027-2031

GUILFORD COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION
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About Guilford County

A Brief History

Guilford County has a rich history dating to the colonial era, prior to the American Revolutionary War. Before European settlement, the area was inhabited by Native American tribes, including the Saura and Keyauwee peoples. During the 18th century, European settlers, many of whom migrated from the northern British colonies, established communities throughout the region.

Following the Regulator Movement, colonial officials approved the creation of a new county from portions of Rowan and Orange Counties. The legislation establishing the county was enacted on December 5, 1770, and Guilford County was officially formed on January 26, 1771. The county was named in honor of Francis North, 1st Earl of Guilford, whose father, Frederick North, Lord North, served as British Prime Minister during that period.

During the Revolutionary War, Guilford County was the site of the Battle of Guilford Court House on March 15, 1781. Although British forces under General Cornwallis won the battle tactically, they sustained significant losses. The heavy casualties weakened British forces and contributed to Cornwallis's eventual surrender at Yorktown later that year, a decisive event that effectively ended major military operations in the war.



Population and Characteristics

Guilford County is located in central North Carolina within the Piedmont Triad region. The county borders Rockingham, Alamance, Randolph, Davidson, and Forsyth Counties.



With a population of more than 558,000 residents, Guilford County is among the most populous counties in North Carolina. The county encompasses approximately 649 square miles of land and about 8 square miles of water.

Guilford County includes the cities of Greensboro, High Point, and Burlington along with the towns of Gibsonville, Jamestown, Oak Ridge, Pleasant Garden, Sedalia, Stokesdale, Summerfield, and Whitsett. The county is home to several colleges and universities, as well as numerous recreational, cultural, and entertainment venues. One of the county's most historically significant landmarks is the

Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, which preserves the site of the Battle of Guilford Court House. In addition to the national military park, Guilford County maintains seven regional parks and eleven nature preserves that provide outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities for residents and visitors.

Guilford County is a major transportation and logistics hub within central North Carolina and the Piedmont Triad region. Several major interstate highways traverse the county, including Interstates 40, 73, 74, 85, and 840. Interstates 40 and 85 merge through portions of Greensboro, creating one of the region's most significant transportation corridors for passenger and commercial traffic.

The county is also home to Piedmont Triad International Airport, which serves as a critical center for passenger travel, air cargo operations, and economic development. The airport supports major commercial and freight operations and plays an important role in regional and national supply chain networks.



Rail transportation infrastructure within Guilford County includes service from the Norfolk Southern and the North Carolina Railroad Company. These rail corridors support the movement of commercial goods and industrial materials throughout the region. Rail operations, particularly freight transportation, include the routine movement of hazardous materials through the county, requiring continued coordination among emergency management, fire services, law enforcement, and transportation partners to support preparedness, response, and risk mitigation efforts.

Climate

Guilford County experiences a humid subtropical climate characterized by four distinct seasons. The county generally experiences moderate temperatures during the spring and fall, warm and humid summers, and relatively mild winters.

Average annual precipitation is approximately 44 inches, with average annual snowfall generally ranging from 6 to 8 inches depending on seasonal weather patterns. The county experiences measurable precipitation on approximately 100 days each year. Severe weather hazards affecting the county may include thunderstorms, flooding, winter storms, tornadoes, extreme heat, drought conditions, and occasional impacts from tropical systems.

Form of Government



Guilford County operates under the Board-Manager form of government, which was adopted in 1926. Under this structure, the Board of Commissioners serves as the county's governing and policy-making body. The Board consists of nine commissioners, including eight elected from districts and one elected at-large countywide.

The Board of Commissioners is responsible for establishing county policies, adopting the annual budget, enacting local ordinances, and appointing the County Manager and other key officials. The County Manager serves as the chief administrative officer for Guilford County and is responsible for overseeing daily county operations, implementing Board policies, coordinating county departments and services, managing organizational resources, and providing strategic recommendations to support county priorities and objectives.

Guilford County Purpose

Empower **Successful People** to thrive in a **Strong Community** supported by **Quality Government**.

Guilford County Core Values

- Transparency and Communication
- Equity and Inclusion
- Our People Matter
- Accountability
- Service and Outcome Excellence



Organizational Overview

Program Overview and Structure

The Guilford County Emergency Management Program was established in its current structure on July 1, 2003, following action by the Guilford County Board of Commissioners to transition from the previously consolidated city-county emergency management model to a county-led program. Since that time, the program has evolved into a comprehensive, all-hazards emergency management program focused on preparedness, prevention, mitigation, response, recovery, and resilience.



From its inception, the program has emphasized collaboration with local, regional, state, federal, nonprofit, and private-sector partners while utilizing nationally recognized best practices, including principles outlined in NFPA 1660 and the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) standards.

Initially staffed by two full-time emergency management professionals within Guilford County Emergency Services, the program focused on rebuilding partnerships, strengthening coordination capabilities, and developing a comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan and supporting annexes. Since 2003, the Emergency Management Division has expanded to include five full-time emergency management professionals and various part-time emergency management staff who support planning, training, exercises, response coordination, public preparedness, and Emergency Operations Center functions.

Today, the program coordinates with approximately 100 partner agencies and organizations across multiple disciplines to support a unified and integrated approach to emergency management throughout



Guilford County. The program utilizes a framework of advisory committees, working groups, interagency partnerships, and whole-community collaboration to strengthen coordination, enhance operational readiness, and support the county's ability to effectively prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.

Emergency Management Vision and Mission

The vision of the Guilford County Emergency Management Program is:

A community resilient from all threats and hazards.

The mission of the Guilford County Emergency Management Program is:

To promote a whole community that is resilient and sustainable from all threats and hazards. This will be met through a proactive and professional Emergency Management Program that fosters partnerships within the community to create a model of excellence for preventing, protecting against, responding to, mitigating, and recovering from emergencies and disasters.

Strategic Planning Process



The development of this Strategic Plan was informed by a comprehensive review of operational data, stakeholder input, and community trends gathered over the previous five years. The planning process included analysis of incidents, emergency activations, training activities, exercises, after-action reports, corrective actions, and stakeholder feedback to identify organizational strengths, capability gaps, and emerging priorities.

Additional data and planning considerations were obtained through collaboration with County Administration and partner agencies, including projected population growth, demographic trends, infrastructure development, service delivery challenges, and emerging risks that may impact Guilford County's emergency management capabilities.

During 2025 and early 2026, Guilford County completed significant updates to both the Hazard Mitigation Plan and the triennial update to the Emergency Operations Plan. These revisions incorporated extensive stakeholder participation and helped identify current threats, hazards, operational challenges, and opportunities for program improvement.

To further support the strategic planning process, a gap analysis survey was distributed to stakeholders in early 2026 to assess preparedness capabilities, coordination needs, training priorities, and resource gaps across the emergency management program. Information collected through these efforts was

evaluated and incorporated into the development of the strategic goals, objectives, and priorities outlined in this plan.

The resulting Strategic Plan was reviewed in coordination with the Emergency Management Advisory Committee to ensure alignment with community needs, stakeholder expectations, and nationally recognized emergency management best practices.

Program Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 - Preparedness & Community Engagement		
Increase the overall preparedness and resilience of Guilford County residents, businesses, and partner organizations by strengthening inclusive, equitable, and sustained community engagement.		
Participate in a minimum of five (5) community outreach events annually, prioritizing engagement in economically disadvantaged, historically underserved communities and vulnerable populations of Guilford County.	Expand the availability and accessibility of multilingual emergency alerts, warnings, and preparedness materials to better serve Guilford County's diverse population.	Conduct or participate in at least one (1) annual exercise in coordination with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) to evaluate chemical hazard preparedness, interagency coordination, and information sharing processes.

Goal 2 - Prevention & Critical Infrastructure		
Enhance Guilford County's ability to identify, assess, and prevent threats through improved information sharing, cyber resilience, and sustained partnerships with critical infrastructure stakeholders.		
Support and coordinate efforts to strengthen the resilience of county and partner cyber infrastructure by promoting preparedness planning, incident reporting protocols, training, exercises, and continuity strategies related to cyber incidents.	Enhance mechanisms for sharing threat, hazard, and intelligence information among local, state, and federal partners to support early identification and prevention of potential incidents through law enforcement focused exercises, training, and information sharing meetings.	Establish new and expand sustained relationships with critical infrastructure partners through regular communication, targeted training opportunities, and joint exercises.

Goal 3 - Response Capability

Strengthen the county's ability to effectively manage incidents of all sizes through improved staffing depth, modernized systems, updated operational guidance, resilient facilities, and coordinated mass care operations.

Develop and implement a formal Emergency Operations Center (EOC) position-specific credentialing matrix that serves the operational needs of the division.

Modernize crisis management software to enhance situational awareness, resource management, documentation, and interagency coordination.

Conduct a comprehensive review and revision of all Emergency Management Division policies, procedures, and guidelines to ensure alignment with current hazards, operational realities, legal authorities, accreditation, and industry best practices.

Goal 4 - Recovery & Continuity

Strengthen Guilford County's ability to support timely, equitable, and sustainable recovery following disasters by formalizing partnerships, improving coordination, enhancing continuity of operations and leveraging whole-community resources.

Establish and institutionalize a Community Safety Network that formally connects houses of worship, non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, and other community-based organizations to Emergency Management to support all-hazards preparedness, response, and recovery efforts.

Design and implement a comprehensive countywide sheltering framework that clearly defines roles, responsibilities, coordination mechanisms, and decision making among Emergency Management, local governments, non-profit organizations, healthcare partners, and other key stakeholders.

Coordinate and strengthen countywide Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning, training, and exercises to ensure essential government services can continue during and after operational disruptions.

Goal 5 - Hazard Mitigation

Reduce the long-term risk to life, property, and critical infrastructure by using data driven mitigation planning, coordinated implementation, and sustained partner engagement.

Leverage hazard mitigation data, including hazard risk assessments, loss estimates, historical incident data, and climate trends, to develop and prioritize mitigation strategies and plans with clear, actionable, and measurable efforts.

Develop and implement an Extreme Temperature Action Plan/Framework in coordination with stakeholders, including defined response actions, partner roles, and public messaging protocols.

Coordinate with municipalities to assess the need for a joint flood response plan, including defined roles, resource coordination procedures, and activation protocols.

Method for Implementation

The Guilford County Emergency Management Division will integrate the goals, objectives, and priorities identified in this Strategic Plan into annual work plans, program initiatives, and operational planning efforts. Implementation of strategic objectives will be coordinated with appropriate committees, partner agencies, stakeholders, and county departments to support a collaborative, whole-community approach to emergency management.

Where additional resources, funding, staffing, technology, or executive support are necessary to accomplish strategic objectives, the Emergency Management Division will develop and submit proposals through the county's annual budget and planning process for consideration by County Administration and the Board of Commissioners.

Progress toward strategic goals and objectives will be monitored on an ongoing basis through performance measures, project tracking, stakeholder engagement, after-action improvement processes, and periodic program evaluations. Updates on implementation efforts and accomplishments will be documented within the division's internal Program and Project Management System and incorporated into annual reports to support accountability, transparency, and continuous program improvement.

Plan Maintenance, Evaluation, and Revision

The Guilford County Emergency Management Division will conduct an annual review of this Strategic Plan to evaluate progress toward established goals, objectives, and performance measures. The Strategic Plan will be formally updated at least every five years, or more frequently as needed, to ensure continued alignment with emerging threats, operational priorities, community needs, stakeholder expectations, and changes within the jurisdiction.



The review and evaluation process will incorporate input from program stakeholders across all applicable disciplines and partner organizations to support a collaborative, whole-community approach to strategic planning and continuous program improvement.