



2025

ANNUAL REPORT



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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FROM THE DIRECTOR: JON KOCHIS

Dear Friends and Partners,

As we reflect on 2025, I'm proud of the collaboration and commitment that continue to strengthen emergency preparedness across Fairfield County. This year reinforced a simple truth: emergencies can happen quickly and close to home, and preparation and communication make a real difference.

The July flooding was a clear reminder of that reality. Because of strong partnerships and the dedication of our first responders, our community was better positioned to respond, coordinate, and recover.

Throughout the year, we expanded preparedness through trainings, exercises, and direct community engagement. We also provided command support and expertise at numerous events and worked closely with our first responders, including Fairfield County's Dive Team and HazMat Team.

Looking ahead to 2026, our focus remains on strengthening readiness, improving communication, and building long-term resilience. We continue to encourage residents to stay informed, make a plan, and take simple steps to be prepared, because a safer community starts with each of us.

Thank you to our community partners, first responders, and residents for being part of this shared mission. Together, we've made meaningful progress in advancing safety and resilience across Fairfield County.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Kochis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jon" and last name "Kochis" clearly legible.

Jon P. Kochis
Director



2025 Budget Breakdown

The following charts illustrate the distribution of expenditures for the past year. The first chart represents General Operations, covering essential day-to-day functions and maintenance. The second chart highlights Special Projects and Teams, which include targeted initiatives and specialized response capabilities.

GENERAL OPERATIONS

2025 Commissioners General Fund Allocation

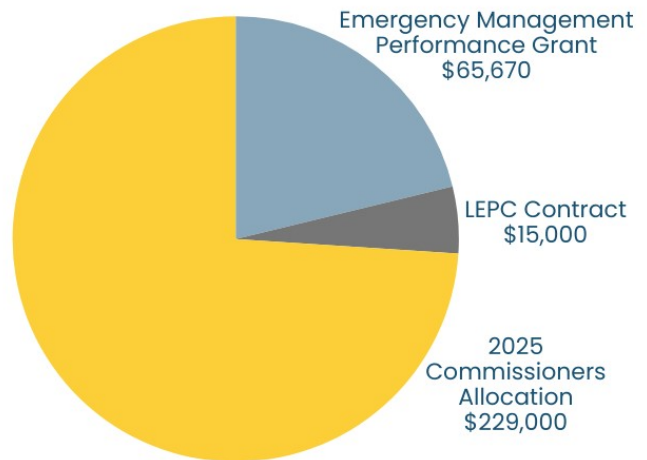
The Fairfield County Commissioners provide matching funds for the EMPG grant and additional local support for the EMA's daily operations.

Emergency Management Performance Grant

Provides resources to help agencies build and sustain core capabilities across all mission areas in support of the National Preparedness Goal.

Local Emergency Planning Committee Contract Services

The Fairfield County Local Emergency Planning Committee contracts with the EMA to carry out the LEPC's day-to-day duties and responsibilities.



SPECIALTY PROJECTS & TEAMS

NiSource Charitable Foundation

Grant funding was awarded to the Water Rescue Team to support training for new members.

Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant

Funds provided to purchase critical equipment for the Fairfield County Hazmat Team.

Hazardous Materials Emergency Planning Grant

Grant funding supported updates to the Fairfield County Hazardous Materials Plan and six hazardous materials training classes for county fire departments.

Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

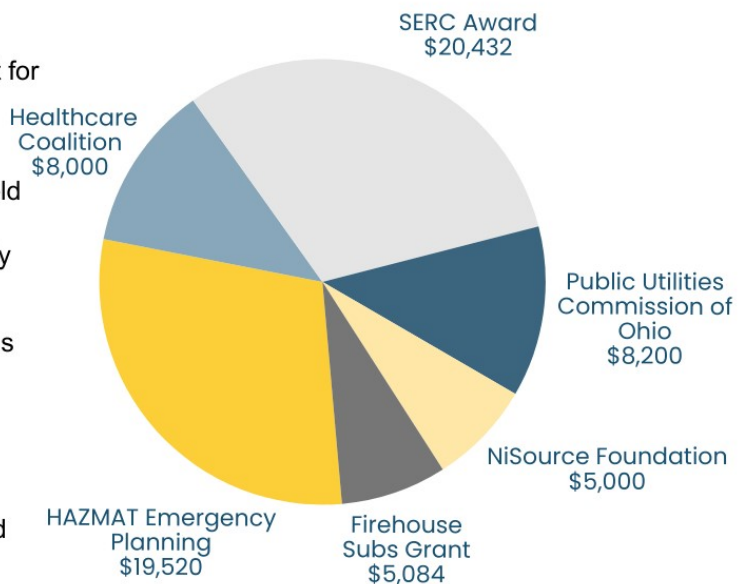
Grant funding supported a hazardous materials disaster response course for public safety dispatchers across Fairfield County.

Regional Healthcare Coalition

Grant funding supported the Fairfield County Healthcare Coalition's strategic initiatives, including mass casualty incident response and first responder training.

State Emergency Response Commissioner (SERC) Award

Funding from hazardous materials facility reporting fees supports LEPC operations, including EMA-contracted services and public safety training initiatives.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This year, our goal was to take emergency preparedness out into the community and make it hands-on. *With over 21 different outreach activities, we nearly doubled our community engagement from 2024.*

One standout moment was giving residents an up-close look at a working outdoor warning siren, so people could see and hear how these systems alert them during severe weather.

We also met neighbors where they already were: farmers markets, school visits, holiday events, health fairs - the list goes on. By showing up and keeping it interactive, we helped make preparedness feel approachable, practical, and relevant for all ages.



STOP THE BLEED

We brought "Stop the Bleed" Training to hundreds in our community!

Students, teachers, and others were taught lifesaving skills about tourniquets, pressure techniques, and much more.

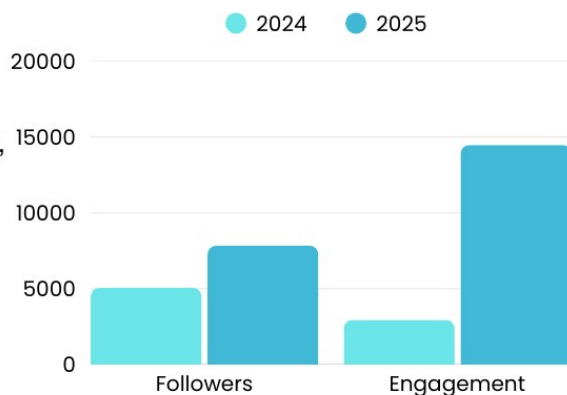
Participants learned how to act fast when every second counts, turning preparedness into action.



BEYOND THE SCROLL: OUR SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT

Through intentional, strategic effort, our social media presence grew significantly this year, with followers up 55% and engagement up 392% from 2024.

That work means more people are seeing, sharing, and acting on critical preparedness and safety information when it matters most.



RESPONSE & SUPPORT

OVERVIEW



15 SUPPORTED SCENES

- **Emergency Response**
Train derailments, floods, dam damage, damage assessments, scene safety
- **Event Support**
Mobile Command Posts, security cameras, volunteer coordination, action plans, event mapping
- **Technical Support**
Radio communications, resource tracking
- **Resource Support**
Generators, AEDs, response vehicles, etc.
- **Information Support**
Public updates, after-action reviews



3 HAZMAT TEAM RESPONSES

- Scene safety & containment
- Air monitoring & sampling
- Technical reference & guidance
- Resource coordination & logistics
- Decontamination support
- Public information & notifications
- After-action documentation



4 DIVE RESPONSES

- Underwater search & recovery operations
- Scene safety & perimeter control
- Equipment transport & setup
- Resource coordination & logistics



OUTDOOR WARNING SIRENS

EMA continues to support jurisdictions in the maintenance of 47 outdoor warning sirens countywide, providing annual service and extra help when requested.





JULY FLASH FLOODING

Between July 26–27, 2025, Fairfield County was hit with 4–7 inches of rain, nearly two months' worth in just 48 hours. Flash flooding followed across multiple communities, each impacted in different ways. The following is but a small sample of what occurred in areas across the region.



Carroll and surrounding areas received 4–6 inches of rain over the two-day span. This caused intense runoff that caused severe damage and collapsed culverts, leaving roads impassable.

Canal Winchester saw some of the heaviest rain in the county — up to 6.5 inches, much of it on July 26th. The Scioto Watershed rapidly overflowed, causing low-lying areas to flood quickly, even in places that rarely see high water.

Lancaster city received less rain than some nearby areas, but the heaviest rainfall was north of town in the Feters Run watershed. Flooding on July 26 in this watershed primed the system for overload on the 27th, when local runoff combined with upstream flows rushed through town, pushing drainage systems far beyond capacity. The places most affected were low-lying neighborhoods near and downstream of the watershed, including Kroger East Main and surrounding areas.

FESTIVAL EVACUATION

Following our recommendation triggered by lightning within five miles, the Lancaster Festival evacuated all 5,000 attendees before floodwaters overtopped the pedestrian and vehicle bridges, the only exits from the grounds. Advance planning and rapid coordination ensured everyone was safely relocated.



115

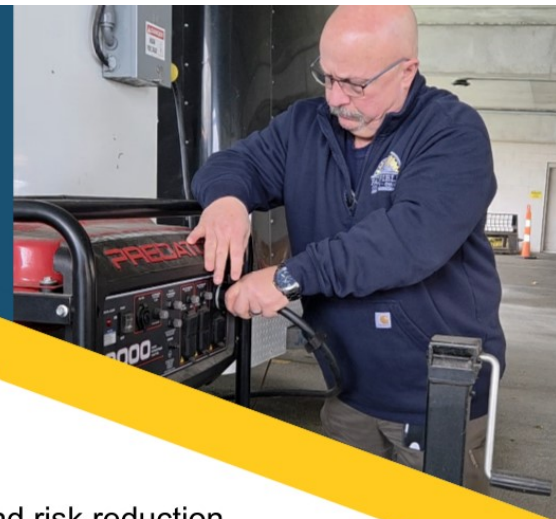
Public Storm Damage
Reports Made

RECOVERY

Fairfield County EMA's Deputy Director, Garrett Blevins, spearheaded the efforts in working with the Small Business Administration (SBA) to secure disaster loans and resources, supporting residents and businesses as they continue to recover.



PREPAREDNESS & MITIGATION



Fairfield County builds resilience through proactive planning and risk reduction. These efforts strengthen readiness, reduce vulnerabilities, and ensure rapid response when emergencies occur. Below are a few highlights of the many initiatives protecting lives, property, and our communities.

MAKING PUBLIC SPACES SAFER



As part of our initiative to create safer public spaces, we maintain four Citizen Aid Stations equipped with Stop the Bleed supplies:

- Fairfield County Fairgrounds
- Downtown Lancaster (supported by Destination Downtown Lancaster, Fairfield Federal Bank, and Visit Fairfield County)
- Two mobile kits that rotate throughout the county during large scale events

These stations provide lifesaving resources where they are needed most.



REGISTRATIONS
UP 35%

2025 has been a successful year for expanding access to fast, location-specific emergency alerts.

FAIRFIELD BEACH DOME SHELTER

Walnut Township proudly opened a new dome-style shelter at Fairfield Beach Sports Park in 2025, a safe haven for residents and visitors during severe weather. Built to FEMA P-361 and ICC 500 standards, the 70-foot steel-reinforced structure can withstand EF-5 tornado winds and hold 733 people in emergencies.

Beyond safety, this space will host educational programs and community events, strengthening resilience and connection.

Project Snapshot:

- Budget: \$1.64M (Federal 75%, State 12.5%, Local 12.5%)
- Contractors: Schorr Architects & Modern Builders
- Purpose: Tornado shelter + community hub

This mitigation project reduces risk in a historically tornado-prone area and marks a major step toward community preparedness.



TRAINING & EXERCISE



342.25 TRAINING HOURS



345 TRAINING PARTICIPANTS



117 COMMUNITY PARTNER EXERCISE PARTICIPANTS

LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

The 2025 Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) exercise evaluated the community's preparedness and response capabilities for a hazardous materials incident. The exercise tested coordination among emergency services, public health, and local agencies, as required under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).

Key objectives included assessing communication procedures, resource deployment, and public information processes. Findings from the exercise will be incorporated into future planning efforts to strengthen overall emergency response capabilities.



COMMUNITY HAZARD FOOTPRINT

78

REPORTING FACILITIES

38

EXTREMELY HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

181

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

41

LEPC PARTNER AGENCIES

