

All-Hazard Responsibility of the State Emergency Response Team

The Florida Division of Emergency Management (FDEM), through Florida Statute 252.35, shall maintain “a comprehensive statewide program of emergency management,” to include the preparation for, mitigation of, response to, and recovery from natural, technological, or manmade emergencies. FDEM is designated by the US Department of Homeland Security as the primary Alert/Warning and coordinating agency for federal assistance during disasters. This all-hazard responsibility of FDEM is outlined in the State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan and the State Hazard Mitigation Plan. FDEM carries out these responsibilities via the State Emergency Response Team (SERT).

Upcoming Events Utilizing SERT Coordination

2020

- Superbowl 54 (February 2 – Miami-Dade)
- Integrated Advanced Mass Migration Exercise (Date TDB – Statewide)
- St. Lucie Nuclear Power Plant Ingestion Pathway Exercise (March – St. Lucie)
- FEMA National Level Exercise: Cyber Security (May - Nationwide)
- Mars 2020 Launch (July 17 – August 5 – Brevard County)
- Annual Statewide Functional Exercise (Date TBD – Statewide)
- Federal and State Elections Support (November – Statewide)

2021

- Superbowl 55 (February 7 – Hillsborough)
- Statewide Continuity of Operations and Government Exercise (May – Statewide)

In addition to the planned events above, the SERT coordinates the state response for any unplanned emergency or disaster that impacts or may impact the State of Florida. These emergencies range in origin, severity, and affected sectors, but they all fall under the auspicious responsibility of the SERT’s all-hazard mission. These hazards are discussed in more detail, but include;

- Severe Weather
- Wildfires
- Terrorism and Active Shooters
- Mass Injury and Mass Fatality
- Radiological Incidents
- Kennedy Space Center Launches
- Cyber Incidents
- Biological Incidents
- Food, Agriculture, and Water Incidents
- Mass Migration
- Repatriation
- Civil Disturbances
- Special Events
- Hazardous Materials
- Infrastructure Outages and Incidents

Severe Weather

The SERT supports counties during extreme weather conditions including flooding, freezing temperatures, tornadoes, and other severe weather systems. Since 2000, the SERT has managed 107 severe weather events. Many resulted in SEOC activations, including Winter Weather responses in 2018 and 2014 to support the clearance of roadways and support agriculture vulnerable to freezing temperatures. The Groundhog Day Tornado Outbreak in 2007 damaged around 1600 homes, killed 21 individuals and injured 76. The SERT prepares year-round with Severe Weather Awareness Week, Community Outreach, and the Tropical and Non-Tropical Severe Weather Annex to the CEMP.

Wildfires

The SERT supports counties during wildfire incidents as outlined in the Wildfire Operations Annex to the State CEMP. In addition to providing coordination support to Emergency and Human Services operations, the SERT coordinates the Fire Mitigation Assistance Grant Program which provides funding assistance to local and state partners for critical life-safety actions. Since 2000, the SERT has directly assisted 11 Wildfire Incidents, including in 2017. This number does not include the hundreds of wildfires the SERT monitors and coordinates information annually.

Terrorism and Active Shooters

The Terrorism Incident Response Annex to the State CEMP details how the SERT coordinates partner response to a terrorism-related incident, including federal coordination, support for mass care and social services, and logistical support. In the past few years, the SERT has coordinated responses for three terrorism or active shooter incidents; the Pulse Night Club Incident, the Fort Lauderdale Airport Incident, and the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Incident.

Mass Injury and Mass Fatality

Counties responding to a mass causality incident can request support from the SERT. This includes the activation of the National Ambulance Contract, Mortuary Assistance, and Patient Transfer. In 2016, the SERT assisted Wakulla County with a migrant bus crash that resulted in 4 fatalities and 25 injuries. In this event, and others like it, the SERT assisted in coordinating emergency shelters, family reunification, and coordination with public safety and health agencies.

Radiological Incidents

The SERT leads the coordination and planning for Radiological Emergency Preparedness for the three nuclear powerplants located in Florida; Turkey Point, St. Lucie, and Farley (located in Alabama). Detailed in the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Annex of the State CEMP, the SERT also coordinates radiological planning with Kennedy Space Center, King's Bay Nuclear Submarine Base in Georgia, and other facilities. The SERT hosts several exercises annually and has responded to real-world incidents, including an emergency alert from Farley Nuclear Power Plant in 2016.

Kennedy Space Center Launches

The SERT has representation at the majority of launches that occur at the Kennedy Space Center. Coordinating with NASA, Brevard County, and other federal, state, and local agencies, the SERT fosters discussion and preparedness activities on a variety of concerns discussed in the Kennedy Space Center Launches Chapter of the State CEMP, in the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Annex. In the event an anomaly does occur, the SERT coordinates the state response. The SERT is currently coordinating with NASA, the Department of Energy, and others in preparation for the Mars 2020 Mission that will include a launch with Radioactive Material in the payload.

Cyber Incidents

The SERT is a primary stakeholder in the Cyber Security initiatives of the State of Florida, and the lead agency of the Cyber Disruption Unit in the SEOC, which brings together liaisons from FDLE, DMS, FLNG, and other partners. While the SEOC has not yet responded to a large-scale cyber incident, it has participated in exercises, incorporated cyber-security procedures into the Terrorism and Emergency Communication Annexes of the State CEMP, and integrated Cyber Security into the SERT structure.

Biological Incidents

Biological Incidents are planned for in the Biological Incident Annex of the State CEMP. In recent years, the SERT has assisted with five biological pandemic incidents, primarily in the sharing of information and ensuring a unified line-of-effort by state and local governments coordinating response and monitoring. The SERT played an active coordination role in recent incidents involving the Zika Virus, Ebola, Measle, Swine Flu, and Meningitis.

Food, Agricultural, and Public Water Incidents

The SERT's Food Emergency Response Plan is an annex to the State CEMP that lays out the processes and procedures the State would follow in the event of a crisis impacting food, water, and agricultural sectors. The SERT has responded to incidents such as the Citrus Canker in 2000, and concerns raised by the Mediterranean Fruit Fly that threatened the agriculture industry.

Public Water Systems are vulnerable to a variety of hazards. The SERT notifies partners on boil water notices, as well as issues with infrastructure. Since January 2018, the SERT has issued 102 alerts on drinking water facilities. In July of 2019, the SERT provided direct support to Broward County during the Water Main Break that caused water outage for the City of Fort Lauderdale and surrounding areas.

Mass Migration Incidents

The SERT coordinates directly with the US Department of Defense's Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) in the event of an influx of migrants to the state. Procedures are included in the Mass Migration Annex of the State CEMP and involve coordination with local counties, non-profits, federal military, and non-military. This plan is tested on an annual basis during exercises with SOUTHCOM and was executed real-world during Operation Haiti Relief.

Repatriation Incidents

Repatriation involves the return of American Nationals back into the United States after evacuation from a foreign nation. The State of Florida is designated as a Port of Entry, and the Emergency Repatriation Annex to the State CEMP outlines how the SERT would coordinate an SEOC response, such as during Operation Haiti Relief.

Civil Disturbance

Since 2011, the SERT has monitored and provided alerting on 25 civil disturbances in the State of Florida. During such events, the SERT remains in contact with county emergency management agencies in case counties request support. The State assists in facilitating mutual aid of law enforcement, including coordinating food and water needs for responders, and provide emergency communication.

Special Events (Super Bowls, National Conventions, and International Conventions)

Special events in Florida require a range of state and federal support, including law enforcement mutual aid, civil support teams from the Florida National Guard, and Biological Shield Detection equipment for viral threats. These resources are coordinated through the SERT, with the host county, other state agencies, and federal partners to ensure the hosts and participants are safe. The SERT also augments staffing and coordinates with the Department of Law Enforcement for both state and national inauguration ceremonies.

Hazardous Materials

In 2018, the SERT provided notification on 4,956 Hazardous Materials Incidents. FDEM coordinates specialized response capabilities in the event counties require assistance. Further, in the event of a widespread incident, the SERT assists in coordinating protective actions, including efforts with the National Weather Service for plume modeling, coordinating the deployment of decontamination resources, assisting with mutual aid processing, and aiding with evacuations and mass care services. The most notable event with direct SERT engagement is the Deep-Water Horizon Oil Spill.

Infrastructure Outages and Incidents

The US Department of Homeland Security designates the SERT as the central coordination point for emergency interoperability networks in the state. The Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (an FDEM employee) ensures counties, state agencies, and non-profit partners are working towards a secure communications network with redundancies. The SERT also actively prepares for the potential of a long-term utility outage through annual exercises. SERT staff monitor power status daily and are alerted to industry load concerns. Other infrastructure-related incidents the SERT has responded to includes parking garage collapses, bridge issues, and road closures that impact the ability for emergency services to respond.