

# MAY 07 CHAPTER MEETING RECAP

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## **Emergency Planning in Advance....Why it is so important to develop an emergency plan prior to crisis.**

Joshua Creighton, with the Wake County Emergency Management Office, gave a very interesting and eye opening presentation at our May NC SGMP meeting. He began his talk by giving us an overview of exactly what Emergency Management does, and this could not be a brief overview, based on all that Emergency Management encompasses. I had no idea how many people were watching, but I'll get back to that in a minute! We learned that the State of North Carolina mandates that each county have an Emergency Management department, and the size varies from county to county. Since Joshua is based in Wake County, he used his office as an example. He mentioned that Wake County has one of the larger offices. In some counties, it's a person, not a department. Wake County's Emergency Management Office is a division of the Public Safety Department, and it is responsible for ensuring protective actions for the public through an organized effort to prepare for, and respond to, and recover from natural and technological emergencies (such as hurricanes, tornadoes, ice or snow storms or nuclear disasters). With a nuclear power plant located in Wake County, Joshua talked quite a bit about some of the procedures they handle for Shearon Harris, such as mailing a yearly information sheet to all residences located within a 10 mile radius of the plant, and the alarms they have located in the 5 mile radius around the plant.

Joshua also talked about how Emergency Management was involved in the explosion that occurred at EQ in Apex last October. Joshua actually testified before the Governor, gave four suggestions regarding the facility and the situation, and the Governor actually used two of his four suggestions to improve safety in the future.

We learned that NCSU was considering installing emergency sirens after the tragedy that occurred recently at Virginia Tech. It's likely this won't occur due to all of the residences that surround NCSU, but it's being discussed.

It was also very interesting to learn that there are cameras located in various areas across the county, and that those cameras are linked to Law Enforcement Officers, but Wake County Emergency Management oversees those cameras, hence my earlier comment that people are watching!

As fascinating as all of this information is, how does all of this relate to meeting planning? It was very interesting how Joshua related this to our industry, and his presentation sparked many questions, and made many of us think of things we likely don't often consider when choosing a meeting venue.

It's very important to be aware of your surrounding areas when placing a meeting. Not just knowing evacuation routes when you are holding a meeting on the coast (though that is VERY important to know, and incidentally, coastal hotels are given helpful handouts from Emergency Management to distribute to all of their guests, especially during hurricane season.) Know if there is a chemical plant, or hazardous waste facility within a 10 mile radius. Know if there is any planned road construction nearby. How many people might be late to your event because of this? Emergency Management conducts studies based on how many cars per day travel over a certain section of highway, and how the commute time may increase due to construction. Know where the nearest hospital is, and the type or quality of the hospital, just in case one of your attendees need urgent care.

Gathering information about the community in which you will be meeting can be so beneficial to you in the event of an emergency. You hope you never have to use such a plan, but it is ALWAYS best to be prepared!

For information on checklists and other helpful suggestions, please visit [www.readync.org](http://www.readync.org).

See you in June....where we'll be Lounging at the Lake!