

I have been attending many meetings lately regarding county emergency services. There are three entities that direct emergency services in Fulton County. First is the **Emergency Management Agency**. Its purpose is to provide all aspects of a comprehensive emergency management program. The program, originally known as Civil Defense, is a function of government that coordinates the entire county's effort to minimize the impact of a disaster before it occurs. Plans are in place to coordinate the county's response to a disaster as well as rapid and complete recovery from the effects of a disaster. This includes hazmat spills, which there have been several in the past few weeks. The Director is Heather Kost, and she is new to the position since last October. She is working diligently to make the agency as complete and efficient as possible. One representative of all townships and municipalities serve on the general board, then seven from the general board are elected to serve as the executive board, with a member at large, Todd Grisier, serving as Chairman of the Executive Board. The Executive Board meets once per month. The full board meets as needed.

Second is **Emergency Medical Services**. This service is headed by Rod Cheney and provides 24/7 advanced life support pre-hospital emergency care for a over 40,000 citizens in a 406 square mile area with an annual emergency and non-emergency call volume of 4,000 responses. Fulton County EMS has four advanced life support stations in Archbold, Delta, Swanton, and Wauseon that are staffed 24/7 and three Basic Life Support stations in Fayette, Lyons, and Metamora that are staffed during daytime hours with units available 24/7 for non emergency transfers.

In 1986 the federal government mandated planning specifically for hazardous spills response. States expanded duties under the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) requiring plans that became more broad-based to cover environment and natural resources, emergency management, public health, occupational safety, and transportation. SERC then designated local emergency planning districts and appointed **Local Emergency Planning Committees** for each district which must include state and local elected officials, police, fire, and emergency officials, public health, environmental, hospital, and transportation officials, representatives of facilities that produce, store, or use hazardous materials, and community groups who have an interest in emergency services. Fulton County's Local Emergency Planning Committee Director is Kelvin Davis, and his committee is currently planning a full scale exercise for later this spring.

Working with these groups over that past year has opened my eyes to yet another aspect of county government. The committees and directors mentioned here are detail oriented, highly skilled and trained professionals, that work tirelessly to provide the best emergency services possible. Their planning is essential in the case that we are faced with a terrible disaster which we all know happens at some time and place in the world. They are committed to their responsibilities and deserve recognition and respect for their dedication to keeping us all safe.