

# BEST PRACTICE: DSA FIRST RESPONDERS REGISTRATION INTAKE

---

**Release Date: November 16, 2018**

It's not always a lightbulb that goes off when a great idea arrives. Sometimes it's a siren.

That's what a FEMA Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) team heard in late October as they canvassed a Mitchell County, Ga., neighborhood that had been devastated by Hurricane Michael. It's also how FEMA's new First Responders Registration Intake was born.

Some county residents had missed reports that FEMA would be working in the area, so when they saw two unknown young men approaching evacuees' damaged homes, they called the police. Sheriff's Deputy Aaron Wilson responded to the call and found Gregory Conway and Dan Andrews, the DSA team, knocking on doors.

"The dispatch didn't know that the Sheriff had already given approval for field outreach," explained Cheryl Catchings, DSA Branch Director. "They'd met in his office and gave their names, phone numbers, car registration, car color, license plate, everything... and DSA went right to the area the Sheriff told them to go."

The confusion was cleared up by a quick phone call to the Sheriff. But as Deputy Wilson headed back to his cruiser, the team asked him a simple question: "Were you impacted by the hurricane?"

When Wilson said that his home had, indeed, sustained damage, the DSA team replied, "Then we need to register you! That's exactly what we're doing out here in the community!" They sat down and completed Deputy Wilson's registration.

"First responders are also impacted by disasters, but they're often so busy helping others that they can't take care of their own situations," said Catchings. So, with



**FEMA**

Page 1 of 2

the support of Federal Coordinating Officer Manny Toro, she developed the First Responders Registration Intake, disaster assistance registration events that let First Responders – firefighters, police officers, EMTs, and medical professionals – register for assistance when their work schedules allow.

“It seemed like such an obvious solution to a real problem,” Catchings continued. “DSA will come to the station or hospital or wherever is most convenient. If they want to do it Sunday at shift change, early morning, late evening, whenever, we’ll do it specifically for them. To be honest, we were all asking why we’d never thought of this before as a best practice.”

FEMA’s First Responders Registration Intake promises to ease the minds of first responders following all types of disasters. Sometimes, those sworn to help the public need a little help, themselves.

For more information on FEMA’s Disaster Survivor Assistance Program, please visit [www.fema.gov/disaster-survivor-assistance-program](http://www.fema.gov/disaster-survivor-assistance-program).

###

*FEMA’s mission: Helping people before, during, and after disasters*



**FEMA**

Page 2 of 2