



Shower & Power Station County of Prince George

June 2012

VACo Achievement Awards

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2012 Achievement Awards

ATTN: 2012 Achievement Awards Program
Virginia Association of Counties
1207 East Main Street, Suite 300
Richmond, Va. 23219-3627

Call for Entries



2012 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 1, 2012

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. Deadline: June 1, 2012.

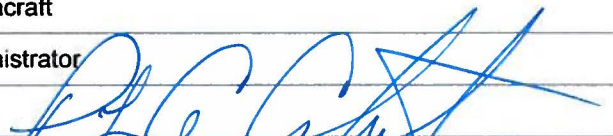
Program Information

Locality Prince George County
Program Title Shower & Power Station
Program Category Health & Human Services
Population Category (3) 30,001-50,000

Contact Information

Name Shel Bolyard-Douglas
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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name Percy C. Ashcraft
Title County Administrator
Signature* 

*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY
SHOWER & POWER CENTER
PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program created and implemented in August 2011 in response to Hurricane Irene. Program offered residents the services they needed - "shower & power" without making them dependent on the local government to offer full shelter services. Specific functions of shelter allowed it to operate with fewer resources and staff, making the overall County storm response more effective and efficient. Program idea was shared with neighboring locality that implemented the program also, providing uniformity of services across the region. Program received an overwhelming positive response from users – in today's world they felt that cell phone, computer and electronic device charging stations along with shower facilities were their necessities for the eight days it took for power to be restored to the entire County.

COMMUNITY BACKGROUND

Prince George County is centrally located in south central Virginia next to Hopewell, Petersburg, Colonial Heights, Fort Lee, Sussex County, Surry County, the James River and the Appomattox River. With a population of over 39,000, Prince George County spans 266 square miles of suburban and rural terrain and has more than eight major transportation routes including interstates 95 and 295. These transportation routes encounter significant traffic, including various hazardous materials shipments, which results in many emergency situations. The location also makes the County vulnerable to natural disasters such as hurricanes and tornadoes.

Prince George County Emergency Management (EM) is not an independent agency within county government but consists of a multi-disciplined group of individuals from various departments. This multi-discipline group serves to enhance EM operations in Prince George much like the unified command structure of NIMS/ICS.

At present the organizational structure consists of; EM Director – County Administrator, EM Coordinator – Deputy Fire/EMS Director, Deputy EM Coordinator – Director of Social Services, Deputy EM Coordinator – Chief of Police. The primary EM Command Group consists of; Deputy County Administrator, Shelter Manager, School Division Administration, Health Department, Finance Department, Director and Deputy Director of Fire and EMS, Planning Department, Building Official, Human Resource Department, and General Services. By county policy all employees of the county, including school division employees, serve a role in emergency management. Prince George also has an active LEPC that meets monthly with oversight from the EM Coordinator. Emergency Management is also actively involved in regional exercises as well as the Central Virginia Urban Area Security Initiative.

PROBLEM

Due to limited resources, full scale sheltering operations can overwhelm Prince George County. The most effective way to provide human services is to keep people in their homes and provide the items they are lacking. If a full service shelter is opened and staff, it can be difficult to get residents to transition back to their homes. This problem creates a long-term drain on staff and resources. Staffing is also an issue since county employees provide the shelter staffing and many of them are dealing with the impacts from the hurricane at their home with their families.

Hurricane Irene hit the Commonwealth of Virginia and Prince George County on Saturday, August 27, 2011. The County immediately went dark. The two power companies serving our locality – Virginia Dominion and Prince George Electric Cooperative, reported that only six (6) homes in the County never lost power. Approximately half of the County's 13,000 homes had power restored within four days, with all homes finally having power restored eight days after the storm.

SOLUTION

In order to maximize the resources available for all emergency management operations, the decision was made to open a middle school as a "Shower & Power" shelter only. The station would be open for four hours a day, have an area designated as an electronics charging station and shower facilities available. The idea was quickly embraced by all staff and put into place. The school system found multiple power strips and placed them in the electronics room, allowing for many citizens to charge devices at once. The Sheriff's Department provided security at the site, and would watch someone's devices when it was their turn for a shower. The setup required minimal staffing each day, and those staff could then be sent to other areas of the County to assist in other emergency efforts (such as water distribution). The solution was discussed with the City of Hopewell, who elected to provide the same services to their citizens.

The program fulfilled the awards criteria in several respects. The "Shower & Power" shelter was an innovative solution for the delivery of services. This program allowed the County to provide more emergency services with the few resources available. The program promoted intergovernmental cooperation with the City of Hopewell. The goal is to talk with all localities in our region and have this as an option for future events that can be conducted region-wide. The "Shower & Power" station is a model that other local governments may learn from, the County zeroed in on the services needed and provided ONLY those services.

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

The program was held in the middle school that is already designated for use as shelter, so all use agreements were already in place with the school system. The school system provided the power strips for additional charging ability. The county employees and deputies that ran the facility were paid time and a half for their hours worked in accordance with FSLA and County policy, which was later reimbursed through FEMA and VDEM. The service was offered four hours a day for eight days. Notice was sent out via a Press Release, website update, reverse notification system call, flyers distributed at other sites, and word of mouth. A day's notice was given when the operation would be discontinued. The Press Release and related documents for the services are attached as supplemental information.

PROGRAM RESULTS

The program resulted in the efficient and effective use of resources to provide much needed services to our residents recovering from the hurricane. The County set up a feedback email to receive citizen input on storm response and received multiple positive comments on the "Shower & Power" station. Providing people only the services they need, and not services that are unnecessary is a common sense idea that is innovative at the same time.

COUNTY OF PRINCE GEORGE, VIRGINIA



Percy C. Ashcraft
County Administrator

Phone: (804) 722-8600
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PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 28, 2011

PIO Contact:
Pamela Thompson, Deputy County Administrator
(804) 731-7973

PRINCE GEORGE COUNTY OPENS CONVENIENCE SHELTER

"Shower and Power Only", that is the message from Director of Social Services Shel Douglas. Prince George County is opening a convenience shelter for residents without power to charge electronic and medical devices and shower as needed. Residents need to bring their own toiletries and electrical outlets will be made available.

The shelter is located at JEJ Moore Middle School, located at 11455 Prince George Drive. The shelter will be open on Sunday, August 28, 2011 from 1:00pm – 5:00pm and open weekdays from 9:00am-12noon until further notice.

For additional information, please contact (804) 733-2773.

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