

Message from the Directors and Officers

Dear Conference Attendee,

The Governor's Hurricane Conference (GHC), since its inception in 1987 and incorporation as a not-for-profit organization in 1994, has undergone organizational and financial changes to meet its established goal of providing a quality program to its attendees while maintaining registration fees that are affordable for all target audiences. The low registration fee and associated costs have allowed even the smallest counties and cities in Florida to send multiple attendees to receive the necessary training to prepare and protect their communities from a hurricane threat. This has resulted in the GHC becoming the largest hurricane conference in the United States.

In 2008, for the first time since its beginning, the conference had a significant drop in attendance. As we all know, the primary cause for this reduction was the impact of reduced budgets of all levels of government, not-for-profits and businesses which directly affected travel and training. However, hurricanes are not controlled by our budgets and their continued threat will not lessen or go away because we have less money to prepare. As this message is written Florida has received an Emergency Declaration from the President as a result of the flooding rains and severe weather caused by Tropical Storm Fay. Nearly all of our 67 counties have been impacted, requiring a massive response by the emergency management community. We are proud to say that a large number of those participating in the response are better prepared because they attended our past conferences. Training and education are essential to our ability to respond to tropical storms and hurricanes and must remain a priority within the constraints of lower budgets. For the sake of our citizens we must continue to move forward and maintain Florida's position of having the premier emergency response capability in the nation.

The GHC Members of the Board of Directors and Officers, who represent our four sponsoring agencies, understand the situation and its potential impact on attendance for the next several years. We have looked at ways to assist our attendees in receiving the necessary hurricane related training at the same or lower cost than in 2008. To date, the GHC has taken the following actions:

- There will be no increase to training or conference registration fees in 2009. It should be noted that there has been no increase in registration fees since 2004, even though expenses have increased;
- Training has been expanded to three full days to accommodate more certificated courses at the same registration fee as 2½ days in past years;
- Negotiations with hotels have resulted in some hotels keeping the same room rates as in 2008 and others reducing theirs from their original 2009 contracts. We thank those hotels for their understanding and cooperation.
- Our Housing Bureau will be providing an option to match potential roommates for cost savings on hotel expenses.

The Board of Directors will continue to look for ways to reduce attendee costs for the 2009 conference and will make every effort in maintaining a cost structure that will not only provide more training for the same dollar spent, but also continue with a quality venue that allows the opportunity for the response community to receive the training necessary to protect the citizens of Florida.

We appreciate your past support and feel confident that together we can continue to ensure that the high level of training and education for all responders is maintained and that it does not stagnate due to a lack of foresight and funds. Please mark your calendar and plan to attend the 23rd Annual Governor's Hurricane Conference in Fort Lauderdale.

Sincerely,



Sherman "Tony" Carper
GHC President