



Ashe County

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Ashe County Emergency Management's Incident Management Team

Jefferson, NC –

In any public crisis, the most important tool for an organized and appropriate response is communication. Recognizing this fact, Ashe County Emergency Management would like to take this opportunity to let you, the community, know what we've been doing behind the scenes to prepare Ashe County for the growing public health threat posed by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Beginning on March 9th, 2020, officials with Ashe County Emergency Management, led by Coordinator Patty Gambill, began holding regular meetings with AppHealthCare, Ashe Memorial Hospital, the Ashe County Sheriff's Office, Ashe Medics, Ashe County Schools, Ashe Department of Social Services and the town of Lansing and towns and police departments of West Jefferson and Jefferson. These meetings were designed to get all of our community partners in the same room so we could regularly discuss the status of the public health situation and begin to organize our resources and plan our coordinated response.

These Community Partners meetings afforded representatives from the various organizations the ability to share their ideas and learn the latest information about the virus directly from public health experts and emergency management professionals. Ashe County Emergency Management and APPHealthCare also invited local long-term care and assisted living facilities to join in on productive follow up meetings where we were able to hear how these facilities were preparing for the anticipated arrival of the virus and learn what we could do to help their vulnerable residents.

As we watched the public health threat grow, Ashe County Emergency Management officially set up an Incident Management Team to directly address any and all tangible threats posed by COVID-19. This Incident Management Team was set up on March 23rd, weeks before Ashe County's first reported positive case of the novel coronavirus.

The members of the Incident Management Team include: Patty Gambill as Incident Commander, Ashe County Rescue Squad's Robert Poe as Planning Section Chief, N.C. Forest Service's Anthony Farmer as Operations Sections Chief and Ashe County Fire Marshal Jonathan Stansberry as Logistics Section Chief. Also heavily involved are Chief Deputy Danny Houck and Public Information Officer Brian Blanco with the Ashe County Sheriff's Office, Tracie Downer with Department of Social Services, Andy Blethen and Amanda Stroud with AppHealthCare, Travis Birdsell with N.C. Cooperative Extension as Food Coordinator. Kelsey Wagoneer, Andrew Cox and Brian Carson are also important members of the response effort.

Ashe County Emergency Management and the Incident Management Team are also working with other agencies and community partners on a Food Stabilization Plan for Ashe County residents and are helping Ashe Memorial Hospital to support their Surge Plan. As is routine in public health emergencies, in an abundance of caution and preparedness, the Incident Management Team has also been working on a Mass Fatality Plan and has been tracking the Personal Protective Equipment inventory of first responders, EMS and fire departments throughout the Ashe County.

The Incident Management Team is made up of members of this community and are working daily to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 here in Ashe County. Thank you Ashe County for your help in observing the Stay at Home Order and following appropriate social distancing practices to help us in our efforts to combat this public health threat.

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