

Florida Statute 252.38 Emergency management powers of political subdivisions.

252.38 - Safeguarding the life and property of its citizens is an innate responsibility of the governing body of each political subdivision of the state.

(1) COUNTIES.—

(a) In order to provide effective and orderly governmental control and coordination of emergency operations in emergencies within the scope of ss. 252.31-252.90, each county within this state shall be within the jurisdiction of, and served by, the division. Except as otherwise provided in ss. 252.31-252.90, each local emergency management agency shall have jurisdiction over and serve an entire county. Unless part of an interjurisdictional emergency management agreement entered into pursuant to paragraph (3)(b) which is recognized by the Governor by executive order or rule, each county must establish and maintain such an emergency management agency and shall develop a county emergency management plan and program that is coordinated and consistent with the state comprehensive emergency management plan and program. Counties that are part of an interjurisdictional emergency management agreement entered into pursuant to paragraph (3)(b) which is recognized by the Governor by executive order or rule shall cooperatively develop an emergency management plan and program that is coordinated and consistent with the state comprehensive emergency management plan and program.

(b) Each county emergency management agency created and established pursuant to ss. 252.31-252.90 shall have a director. The director must meet the minimum training and education qualifications established in a job description approved by the county. The director shall be appointed by the board of county commissioners or the chief administrative officer of the county, as described in chapter 125 or the county charter, if applicable, to serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority, in conformance with applicable resolutions, ordinances, and laws. A county constitutional officer, or an employee of a county constitutional officer, may be appointed as director following prior notification to the division. Each board of county commissioners shall promptly inform the division of the appointment of the director and other personnel. Each director has direct responsibility for the organization, administration, and operation of the county emergency management agency. The director shall coordinate emergency management activities, services, and programs within the county and shall serve as liaison to the division and other local emergency management agencies and organizations.

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(c) Each county emergency management agency shall perform emergency management functions within the territorial limits of the county within which it is organized and, in addition, shall conduct such activities outside its territorial limits as are required pursuant to ss. 252.31-252.90 and in accordance with state and county emergency management plans and mutual aid agreements. Counties shall serve as liaison for and coordinator of municipalities' requests for state and federal assistance during post disaster emergency operations.

(d) During a declared state or local emergency and upon the request of the director of a local emergency management agency, the district school board or school boards in the affected area shall participate in emergency management by providing facilities and necessary personnel to staff such facilities. Each school board providing transportation assistance in an emergency evacuation shall coordinate the use of its vehicles and personnel with the local emergency management agency.

(e) County emergency management agencies may charge and collect fees for the review of emergency management plans on behalf of external agencies and institutions. Fees must be reasonable and may not exceed the cost of providing a review of emergency management plans in accordance with fee schedules established by the division.

(2) MUNICIPALITIES.—Legally constituted municipalities are authorized and encouraged to create municipal emergency management programs. Municipal emergency management programs shall coordinate their activities with those of the county emergency management agency. Municipalities without emergency management programs shall be served by their respective county agencies. If a municipality elects to establish an emergency management program, it must comply with all laws, rules, and requirements applicable to county emergency management agencies. Each municipal emergency management plan must be consistent with and subject to the applicable county emergency management plan. In addition, each municipality must coordinate requests for state or federal emergency response assistance with its county. This requirement does not apply to requests for reimbursement under federal public disaster assistance programs.

(3) EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT POWERS; POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS.—

(a) In carrying out the provisions of ss. 252.31-252.90, each political subdivision shall have the power and authority:

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1. To appropriate and expend funds; make contracts; obtain and distribute equipment, materials, and supplies for emergency management purposes; provide for the health and safety of persons and property, including emergency assistance to the victims of any emergency; and direct and coordinate the development of emergency management plans and programs in accordance with the policies and plans set by the federal and state emergency management agencies.
2. To appoint, employ, remove, or provide, with or without compensation, coordinators, rescue teams, fire and police personnel, and other emergency management workers.
3. To establish, as necessary, a primary and one or more secondary emergency operating centers to provide continuity of government and direction and control of emergency operations.
4. To assign and make available for duty the offices and agencies of the political subdivision, including the employees, property, or equipment thereof relating to firefighting, engineering, rescue, health, medical and related services, police, transportation, construction, and similar items or services for emergency operation purposes, as the primary emergency management forces of the political subdivision for employment within or outside the political limits of the subdivision.
5. To request state assistance or invoke emergency-related mutual-aid assistance by declaring a state of local emergency in the event of an emergency affecting only one political subdivision. The duration of each state of emergency declared locally is limited to 7 days; it may be extended, as necessary, in 7-day increments. Further, the political subdivision has the power and authority to waive the procedures and formalities otherwise required of the political subdivision by law pertaining to:
 - a. Performance of public work and taking whatever prudent action is necessary to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the community.
 - b. Entering into contracts.
 - c. Incurring obligations.
 - d. Employment of permanent and temporary workers.
 - e. Utilization of volunteer workers.
 - f. Rental of equipment.
 - g. Acquisition and distribution, with or without compensation, of supplies, materials, and facilities.

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h. Appropriation and expenditure of public funds.

(b) Upon the request of two or more adjoining counties, or if the Governor finds that two or more adjoining counties would be better served by an interjurisdictional arrangement than by maintaining separate emergency management agencies and services, the Governor may delineate by executive order or rule an interjurisdictional area adequate to plan for, prevent, mitigate, or respond to emergencies in such area and may direct steps to be taken as necessary, including the creation of an interjurisdictional relationship, a joint emergency plan, a provision for mutual aid, or an area organization for emergency planning and services. A finding of the Governor pursuant to this paragraph shall be based on one or more factors related to the difficulty of maintaining an efficient and effective emergency prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery system on a unijurisdictional basis, such as:

1. Small or sparse population.
2. Limitations on public financial resources severe enough to make maintenance of a separate emergency management agency and services unreasonably burdensome.
3. Unusual vulnerability to emergencies as evidenced by a past history of emergencies, topographical features, drainage characteristics, emergency potential, and presence of emergency-prone facilities or operations.
4. The interrelated character of the counties in a multicounty area.
5. Other relevant conditions or circumstances.