

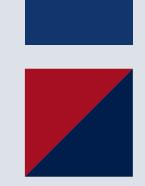


# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security

# **Executive Committee**





The Franklin County Emergency Management & Homeland Security Executive Committee, with 14 representatives from local municipalities, townships, and villages, oversees Agency operations and policies.



#### William F. Vedra, Jr. - CHAIR

Deputy City Administrator City of Grove City



Kevin Boyce

Franklin County Commissioner Alternate: Ken Wilson



Erica C. Crawley

Franklin County Commissioner Alternate: Cheryl Penn



Meghan O'Callaghan

City Manager - City of Dublin

Alternate: Police Chief Justin Paez



Michael Bivens

Mayor - City of Whitehall

Alternate: Fire Chief Preston Moore



Dion Grener

Jefferson Township Trustee

Alternate: Vacant



Dallas Baldwin

Franklin County Sheriff

Alternate: Chief Deputy Jim Gilbert



#### Monica Dupee- VICE CHAIR

City Manager - City of Westerville Alternate: Fire Chief Brian Miller



John O'Grady

Franklin County Commissioner

Alternate: Kris Long



Andrew J. Ginther

Mayor - City of Columbus

Alternate: Elon Simms



Ike Stage

Mayor - City of Grove City

Alternate: William F. Vedra, Jr.



Steve Schoeny

City Manager, City of Upper Arlington

Alertnate: Fire Chief Chris Zimmer



Kate McSweeney-Pishotti

Safety Director - City of Columbus

Alternate: Mike Halloran



**Christian Selch** 

IT/Planning - City of Columbus

Alternate: Vacant

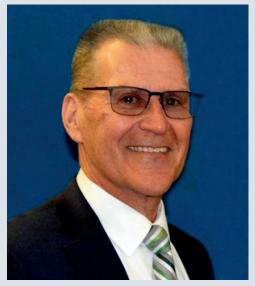


Dr. Mysheika Williams Roberts Health Commissioner - City of Columbus Alternate: Tiffany Krauss

# Letter From The Chairman







William F. Vedra, Jr. Chairman

#### FCEM&HS Annual Report: 2024 accomplishments

I am honored to present the 2024 Annual Report for Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (FCEM&HS) which showcases the Agency's dedication to building disaster-resilient communities and prioritizing resident safety.

Why it matters: FCEM&HS's strategic planning and innovation are vital in adapting to evolving community challenges, ensuring safety and preparedness.

 Initiatives like the Everbridge Mass Notification System empower local jurisdictions to manage communications independently, enhancing emergency and non-emergency messaging.

#### **Key initiatives:**

- A county-wide Debris Management Plan ensures coordinated debris removal in disasters.
- Additionally, the Franklin County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan received FEMA approval, providing a comprehensive risk assessment for all jurisdictions and identifying the most significant threats to the county.

#### What's next for 2025:

- FCEM&HS is updating the Franklin County 911 Plan to transition to Next Generation 911 (NG911), integrating current service levels, latest technological advancements and state requirements.
- 2025 plans include an initiative to coordinate damage assessments across jurisdictions using an Arch GIS
  collection tool. The first step in the creating a countywide team to assist each other during overwhelming
  conditions.

**Gratitude:** The success of FCEM&HS relies on the support and commitment of its staff, partner agencies, volunteers, and residents, fostering a protected and resilient community. I am very proud of the Agency and the Executive Board's leadership.

William F. Vedra, Jr.
FCEM&HS Executive Committee Chairman

# Message From The Director





Jeffrey J. Young
Director

I hope you find this 2024 Annual Report a reflection of the Agency's efforts and accomplishments over the past year in support of our residents and communities. The commitment to serving "Every Resident, Every Day" is evident in the teamwork and dedication of our staff, whose contributions span beyond job titles or individual roles.

Together, they maintain a wide range of programs, including Disaster Planning, Grants Administration, Homeland Security, and 911 Regional Communications. One unique Agency function supported daily by multiple team members is the monitoring of and response to severe weather events.

In 2024, the State of Ohio experienced a record number of tornadoes, with several early-year outbreaks directly impacting Central Ohio and particularly Franklin County. In addition to the increased frequency, the timing of these events continues to be a key trend that is closely monitored.

The adjacent page features a time-lapse of the tornado warnings issued for Franklin County on February 28, 2024. This severe weather event included an EF-1 tornado that initially touched down on the west side of the county, caused damage, then elevated back into the clouds until it re-emerged on the east side and caused damage as an EF-2 tornado.

As severe weather entered the area, multiple on-call staff responded to the FCEM&HS Assessment Center to monitor the severity of the storms. Their efforts included overseeing the activation of the outdoor warning siren system, messaging through our mass notification system, ALERT Franklin County, tracking and receiving damage reports, and documenting the extent of damage for reporting to the State of Ohio and the National Weather Service. This response was a true team effort and exemplifies the collaborative approach our staff brings to every project—many of which are highlighted throughout this year's Annual Report.

As we look ahead to 2025, one thing remains certain: significant events, both natural and man-made, will continue to impact our communities. In response, the staff, in collaboration with trusted partners across Franklin County, will continue to work each and every day with a goal of building prepared and resilient communities.

Jeffrey J. Young FCEM&HS Director

# Tornado Warning Response



February 28, 2024 4:42 am

Tornado Watch Issued For Franklin County

February 28, 2024

FCEM&HS On-Call Staff Immediately Respond to Office

February 28, 2024
5:17 am
Tornado Warning
Issued for
Franklin County
Sirens Activated
ALERT Franklin County
Messages Sent

February 28, 2024
5:44 am
2nd - Tornado Warning
Issued for
Franklin County
Sirens Activated
ALERT Franklin County
Messages Sent

February 28, 2024
FCEM&HS Staff
Begins Tracking,
Receiving, and
Documenting
Storm Damage

**IJ**=

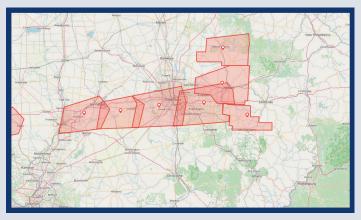
NWS Tornado Warning Polygon Franklin County-5:17 am



NWS Tornado Warning Polygon Franklin County-5:44 am



NWS Tornado Storm Polygon February 28, 2024



# Franklin County Hazards



The Threat, Hazard, Identification & Risk Assessment (THIRA) is a comprehensive analysis of the hazards most likely to affect Franklin County. This assessment helps guide funding, planning, training, and exercise priorities. Below is a list of the top17 hazards that pose the greatest risk to Franklin County.



# Alerting & Warning





As an all-hazards Agency, FCEM&HS continuously evaluates various natural, man-made, and technological hazards that may pose a risk to public safety. When a situation arises or has the potential to become a critical life safety concern, FCEM&HS utilizes multiple methods to alert and warn local jurisdictions, and the public, ensuring timely and appropriate action.

### Franklin County Outdoor Warning Siren System

The Franklin County Outdoor Warning Siren System consists of 198 outdoor warning sirens located throughout more than 40 jurisdictions in Franklin County. The system is divided by four warning zones (NW, NE, SW and SE) to more closely align siren activations with warning polygons issued by the National Weather Service (NWS) or the actual location of tornadic activity in Franklin County. FCEM&HS tests the system each Wednesday at noon (weather permitting) to ensure the system is functioning properly. Results of weekly testing showed an average of a 99% fully operational siren system in 2024.

# Outdoor Warning Sirens Fully Operational

2024 • 99%

FCEM&HS oversees the maintenance, technological enhancements, compliance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations, and strategic planning for the relocation or augmentation of sirens to enhance coverage across the county.

During 2024, FCEM&HS collaborated with local jurisdictions to strategize the relocation, enhancement, replacement, and installation of additional sirens to extend coverage.

In 2024, the City of Hilliard relocated one siren due to park construction, while another had its encasement repaired. The City of Obetz also relocated a siren as part of park renovations.

The City of Columbus moved and upgraded a siren with a solar charging kit to accommodate the construction of a COTA transportation project and FCEM&HS replaced the siren repeater at the Nationwide Building downtown.

Projects scheduled in 2025 include the installation of a new siren and replacement of an existing siren in Jefferson Township as well the replacement and relocation of existing sirens in seven jurisdictions throughout Franklin County.



# Alerting & Warning



### **Upper Arlington Siren Damage**



Last October, a siren located near Jones Middle School in Upper Arlington was damaged. Due to strong winds, the siren pole snapped and fell onto several parked cars in the area. Ironically, FCEM&HS was already in talks with Upper Arlington officials to have the 30-foot-tall siren upgraded and moved to a new location.









ALERT Franklin County is a web based mass notification and warning program used by FCEM&HS to inform residents about severe weather and important emergency/disaster alerts in Franklin County. ALERT Franklin County is customizable and allows the recipient to choose the alert type and delivery method.

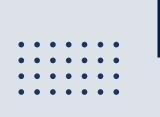
FCReady is a text only message alert method that provides a quick and easy way for residents and visitors in Franklin County to receive emergency information. Severe weather alerts are not sent through FCReady since the system does not require a profile or personal information. Registration is done by texting FCReady to 888777.







# Alerting & Warning



### **Everbridge Notifications**

In 2024, Franklin County Emergency Management & Homeland Security (FCEM&HS) introduced a new initiative, enabling local jurisdictions to independently manage their own organizational platform within the Everbridge Mass Notification System. This enhancement provided communities with greater control over their local emergency and non-emergency communications, ensuring more direct and timely outreach to residents.

FCEM&HS Warning Systems Manager, Thomas Page, Jr. worked with three local jurisdictions Bexley, Grove City, and Westerville to assist them in adopting Everbridge to enhance their community engagement efforts. Each jurisdiction now operates its own dedicated opt-in portal, enabling residents to subscribe to alerts tailored to their specific community. This system not only improves the flow of critical information, but also allows each city to establish and reinforce its unique brand identity within the platform.

By leveraging Everbridge's capabilities, these jurisdictions can communicate directly with their residents, fostering a more connected and informed community. FCEM&HS will continue to support local governments in implementing this system in 2025, ensuring broader access to reliable and efficient communication tools across Franklin County.







### **Everbridge Users Symposium**

Warning Systems Manager, Thomas Page, Jr. was invited to present at the 2nd Annual Everbridge User's Symposium in Cincinnati, Ohio. The annual event serves as a platform for Everbridge users from both the public and private sectors to exchange best practices, stay informed about new features, and offer valuable feedback on their experiences with the system. FCEM&HS will host the 3rd annual event in 2025.

### **Operations**



The Operations Program is essential in coordinating multi-jurisdictional efforts to reduce immediate hazards, protect lives and property, maintain situational awareness, and restore normal operations following natural or man-made disasters.



The program is responsible for executing plans and procedures, managing warning systems and resource distribution, utilizing information technology to enhance situational awareness, and overseeing operations at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC). Additionally, it ensures a continuous, 24/7 response to all-hazard events. To fulfill this commitment, FCEM&HS operates an On-Call System, with two staff members designated to monitor phone and email communications outside regular business hours.

#### 2024 Event Assessment

FCEM&HS operates the Agency Assessment Center to maintain situational awareness of incidents and events impacting Franklin County. It monitors and coordinates responses to planned and unplanned events, from severe weather and public gatherings like Red, White & Boom to critical civic activities such as primary and Election Day voting. By providing real-time assessments, the center strengthens county preparedness, response, and resilience.







### **Operations**





### **Franklin County Tornadoes**

In 2024, Ohio saw a record-breaking 74 tornadoes, its worst season since 1992. Franklin County was hit by five on February 28. An EF2 tornado struck eastern Franklin County, damaging homes and trees, while an EF1 moved through Hilliard, causing roof and siding damage. Three EF0 tornadoes touched down near Harrisburg and Groveport. Fortunately, no injuries were reported.

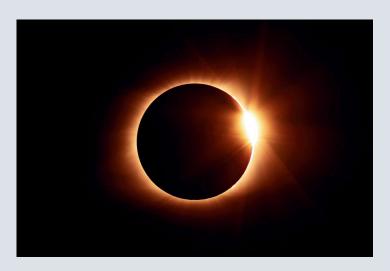








### Solar Eclipse



On April 8th, a total solar eclipse crossed a large portion of the United States, including Ohio and Franklin County. FCEM&HS worked in partnership with the State of Ohio, local jurisdictions, first responders, and community organizations to create a comprehensive plan aimed at ensuring the safety of residents and visitors during the rare astronomical event.

FCEM&HS utilized the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) to monitor the event and provide a common operational picture with real-time updates if needed. The path of totality, passed just north of Columbus and lasted approximately three minutes and 40 seconds. Thanks to careful planning and coordination, the event concluded with no reported incidents.

# Homeland Security





Franklin County Emergency Management & Homeland Security (FCEM&HS) collaborates with agencies and jurisdictions across the county to coordinate information sharing, planning, training, and resource allocation to protect Franklin County from acts of terrorism.

### **Mobile Camera Trailers**

FCEM&HS collaborates with local agencies to support special events, providing operational assistance, situational awareness, and alerting. This includes operating the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) and utilizing the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) platform to ensure secure information & intelligence sharing and situational awareness for ongoing public safety efforts.

In 2024, FCEM&HS acquired two mobile camera trailers to enhance security and situational awareness during emergencies and public events. These trailers provide real-time monitoring capabilities, aiding in threat detection, incident response, and overall public safety across Franklin County.



#### **Ohio Counterterrorism Conference**





In January, FCEM&HS Homeland Security Coordinator Carl Roberts was instrumental in developing the First Annual Ohio Counterterrorism Conference in Columbus. The two-day conference featured case studies on the mass shootings in Buffalo and Las Vegas, threat assessment and management, online extremism, and a presentation by Aaron Stark, a mental health advocate who planned but did not follow through with a mass shooting.

The event offered special classes for law enforcement including behavior patterns and domestic terrorism investigations. The event was sponsored by FCEM&HS, FBI, Infragard, Ohio Fusion Center and Ohio Homeland Security.

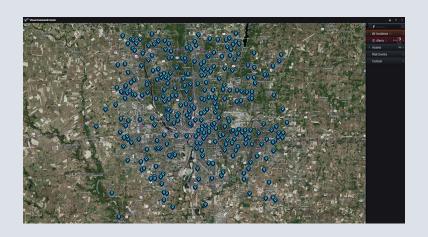
# Homeland Security



### 2024 Election Security

In support of the Franklin County Board of Elections (BOE) and the local jurisdictions for election security, FCEM&HS staffed the Agency Assessment Center to monitor incidents impacting polling locations and counter disinformation on November 5th.

Representatives from Columbus Police, Columbus Fire, Franklin County Sheriff's Special Operations, Northwest Area Strike Team (HazMat), and COTS assisted in providing situational awareness to BOE leadership. The group worked to resolve misinformation, prevent resource duplication, and assist in incident response, while local law enforcement remains responsible for polling site security.





### Joint Hazard Assessment Teams (JHAT)



A key national concern on Election Day was the potential disruption of polling locations through suspicious packages or swatting calls. To address this in Franklin County, FCEM&HS implemented the Joint Hazard Assessment Teams (JHAT) strategy, successfully used at OSU football games for two decades. These small teams of bomb squad and hazardous materials experts rapidly assess threats with minimal public impact.

On Election Day, four JHAT teams were deployed in Franklin County to handle such incidents. With local specialized teams also serving the broader region, this model provided additional capacity, ensuring support for nearby areas without straining local resources.

# Training & Exercises



Training and exercises play a pivotal role in strengthening community preparedness. FCEM&HS is dedicated to facilitating essential training in the region for emergency management professionals, first responders, public health professionals, volunteer organizations, and other key partners who contribute to the safety of Franklin County.

Throughout 2024, FCEM&HS coordinated numerous training opportunities across Franklin County. The Agency actively conducted and participated in various exercises, all geared towards validating the community's preparedness and response capabilities. These initiatives also served to evaluate the effectiveness of existing plans and procedures, regardless of the specific threat or hazard at hand.



### By The Numbers







# Training & Exercises



# Franklin County Annual LEPC Exercise

Franklin County's Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is represented by the Chemical Emergency Preparedness Advisory Council (CEPAC).



On September 19, 2023, at 10:46 a.m., the Franklin County Chemical Emergency Preparedness Advisory Council (CEPAC) conducted an Actual Functional Exercise at the I-270 East and I-71 North underpass in Grove City, Ohio. Under clear skies and 64-degree temperatures, the Jackson Township Fire Department (JTFD) HazMat 203 responded to a semi-tractor trailer accident. The overturned truck, operated by XPO Logistics, carried ten 55-gallon drums of a hazardous liquid mixture, some of which were leaking. The driver was transported to the hospital.

While the incident site was near residential areas, it remained outside evacuation thresholds. The interstate was closed in both directions until cleanup was completed, and normal operations resumed at 4:30 p.m. The exercise successfully tested six key objectives, including Incident Assessment, Command, Resource Management, Personnel Safety, and Traffic Control.

JTFD conducted a debriefing and collaborated with the Franklin County Emergency Management Agency to document the exercise for hazardous materials response credit. The exercise report, evaluated under the Ohio Hazardous Materials Exercise Evaluation Methodology (OHM-EEM), received official concurrence from the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC).



### **Exercise Objectives Met:**

Incident Assessment

**Command** 

Resource Management

Personnel Safety

Traffic Control

# **Planning**





Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security is responsible for the development, coordination, and maintenance of over 60 local plans, including the Franklin County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and associated Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) and Annexes.

In times of crisis, staff members are tasked with creating specific plans tailored to the situation, generating Situation Reports to convey critical information, and utilizing Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to enhance decision-making. They also provide expertise to county partners and review emergency plans for all schools in Franklin County, ensuring comprehensive preparedness and response measures are in place.

### **Debris Management Plan**

With support from Hamilton County, Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security (FCEMHS) developed and implemented a county-wide Debris Management Plan (DMP) to coordinate debris removal after emergencies or disasters. The plan streamlines demolition, clearance, transportation, recycling, and disposal while minimizing environmental impact and aiding recovery.



### **Continuity of Operations Plan**





FCEM&HS partnered with 16 Franklin County agencies to develop both individual agency-specific and a comprehensive county-wide Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). This initiative ensures that each agency has a structured framework to maintain critical functions in the event of disruptions, while also promoting a unified, county-wide approach to operational resilience.

To enhance coordination, FCEM&HS hosted two workshops on essential functions, alternate work sites, and emergency resource management. Completed in September 2024, the COOP plans strengthen county resilience by outlining procedures for sustaining operations, delegating authority, and maintaining communication during crises.

# **Planning**



### Franklin County Snow Emergency Briefing

The Franklin County Annual Snow Emergency Briefing was held alongside the inaugural Central Ohio Snow Plow Roadeo last November. Hosted by the Central Ohio Chapter of the American Public Works Association in partnership with the Columbus Department of Public Service, the event provided a platform for public works agencies to network, exchange best practices, and demonstrate their skills on a challenging snow plow course.



The snow emergency briefing covered the three snow emergency levels—Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3—outlining their effects on businesses, government operations, and schools. Representatives from various agencies, including the National Weather Service, shared valuable insights and answered questions.





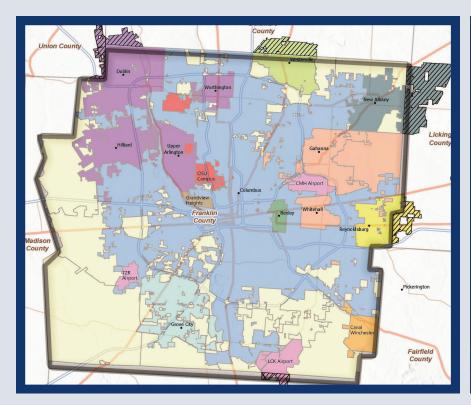
# Regional Communications



Franklin County's first responders rely on reliable communication systems for real-time emergency response. Effective coordination across jurisdictions and agencies is crucial for handling threats from natural disasters to terrorism. The Franklin County Regional Communications Program ensures seamless communication among emergency teams, enhancing response efforts and community safety.

### Franklin County 911 Plan

In 2024, FCEM&HS undertook updating the Franklin County 911 Plan to accurately reflect 911 service levels and operations in Franklin County. This update took into account new state requirements as well as beginning the process of migrating to Next Generation 911 (NG911) service.







### Regional Communications





# Ohio TERT Hurricane Helene Response



In October, Members of the Ohio Telecommunicator
Emergency Response Team (Ohio TERT) deployed to Ashville,
North Carolina to assist in the aftermath of Hurricane
Helene. The team deployed through the Emergency
Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to assist with 911
dispatching responsibilities. The system enables states to
provide state to state support through matching resources
as they are available.

During the near month long deployment, Johnna Sells, Franklin County Communications Coordinator joined emergency dispatch personnel from Strongsville, Urbana, Bedford, Westlake, North Lawrence, Butler, and Franklin counties as well as the State of Ohio to assist local dispatchers who were exhausted, mentally stressed, and/or may have suffered personal and physical losses from Hurricane Helene.

While on a supply run during the first full day in Buncombe County, NC, TERT team member, Johnna Sells encountered a litter of puppies being surrendered in a parking lot near the Ohio TERT basecamp. Their owner had lost his home in the floods and could not keep them. Johnna found homes for all but one puppy, and in the spirit of TERT's mission to assist in any way possible, the little pup was brought back to basecamp and named Noah Ashe.

Noah quickly bonded with the crew, providing comfort to both the team and those seeking assistance. His presence lifted spirits among response teams and citizens alike. Now the official National TERT mascot, Noah is training as a full-time therapy dog for Chagrin Valley 911 and will serve as a deployable asset for future Ohio TERT missions.



### **Meet Noah Ashe**





### Volunteer Resources





FCEM&HS relies heavily on volunteers at every stage of disaster management—before, during, and after emergencies. As frontline responders in the immediate aftermath of disasters, volunteers play a crucial role in emergency response efforts. Their commitment and contributions are invaluable to FCEM&HS and the Franklin County community.

### Frankin County Volunteer Organizations

The Franklin County and Columbus Medical Reserve Corps (FC&C MRC) and the Franklin County Community Emergency Response Team (FC CERT) are vital volunteer networks dedicated to enhancing community resilience. FC&C MRC organizes local medical and nonmedical volunteers to support public health preparedness, responding to public health threats, emergencies, major disasters, and requests from local officials. Meanwhile, FC CERT, a nationally supported but locally implemented program, educates residents on how to better prepare for hazards that may impact their communities. Together, these organizations play a crucial role in strengthening public safety and emergency response efforts.

In 2024, members of FC CERT and FC&C MRC provided support for events and exercises in Franklin County including the Columbus Air Show as well as the Defense Supply Center (DSCC) and Bolton Field Full Scale Exercises. Participants were moulaged to simulate burns and wounds and sent to local hospitals to exercise mass casualty responses.







# Agency Renovations



In 2024, the Franklin County Commissioners acquired the property housing FCEM&HS. Prior to the purchase, several renovations were undertaken to enhance its functionality and appearance. The kitchen was upgraded with new cabinetry, modern countertops, and energy-efficient appliances, making it more practical and inviting. The restrooms were improved with upgraded plumbing and new fixtures. A new HVAC system was installed, ensuring improved air quality, and optimal climate control.

An additional meeting room, equipped with advanced technology was added to enhance collaboration and productivity. Furthermore, the entire building received a fresh coat of paint for a clean, modern look, along with new carpeting to enhance comfort and aesthetics.



### **Grants**



FCEM&HS oversees the allocation and dispersal of grant funding to Franklin County and the surrounding counties constituting Homeland Security Region 4 (HSR4). These grants, distinct from disaster-related funding, are provided to enhance the capabilities of local governments in preventing, protecting against, responding to, and recovering from both natural and man-made disasters.

The funding originates from various sources including the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), and is distributed through the Ohio Emergency Management Agency (OEMA).

### Grants Administered Through FCEM&HS

| <b>•</b>    | Emergency Management<br>Performance Grant               |
|-------------|---|
| <b>&gt;</b> | State Homeland Security Grant                           |
| <b>&gt;</b> | State Homeland Security Grant<br>Law Enforcement        |
| <b>&gt;</b> | Hazardous Materials<br>Emergency Preparedness Grant     |
| <b>&gt;</b> | Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Grant |
| <b>•</b>    | Public Utilities Commission<br>of Ohio Grant            |
|             | Urban Area Security                                     |

Initiative Grant

#### **Noise Supression Headsets**

Columbus SWAT members are frequently exposed to high-intensity noise from gunfire, explosive breaching, and flashbang devices, which can contribute to hearing damage. To protect operators, FCEM&HS acquired Tier 1 Headband-Type Headsets with Arc Rail Helmet Adapter Kits in 2024.

These headsets feature advanced noise suppression technology and adjustable, amplifiable electronic hearing, enabling operators to maintain full 360° situational awareness while safeguarding their hearing.



# FIRSTNET. Bult with AT&T Remarks AMERICANS AMERICANS

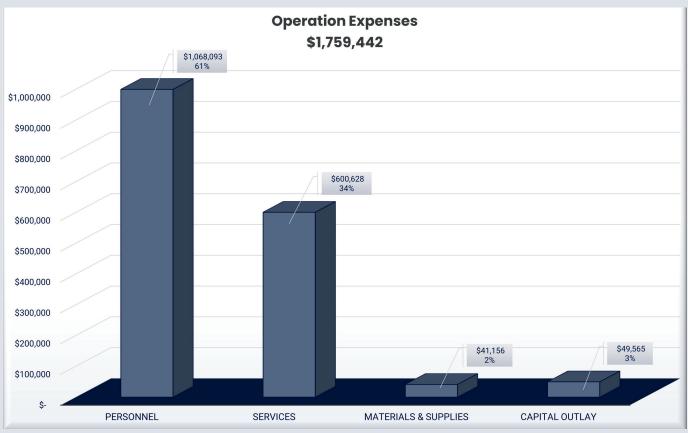
### FirstNet Digital Deployable Communications

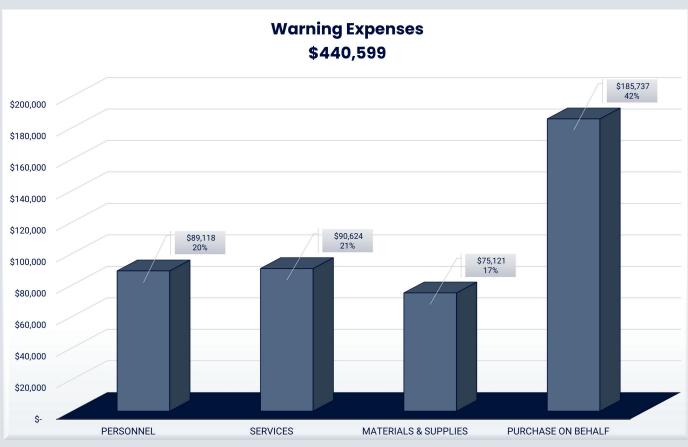
In 2024, FCEM&HS acquired two FirstNet Rapid Deployable Systems (Mini CRD/SLC) to enhance emergency response capabilities. These highly deployable regional assets provide critical digital cellular and WiFi connectivity at incident scenes or large-scale events where existing communication infrastructure may be unavailable, damaged, or overwhelmed by the demands of first responders and emergency management personnel.

FirstNet Rapid Deployable Systems will provide secure, prioritized communication, ensuring first responders maintain coordination and situational awareness in challenging environments.

### **Fiscal**







# Franklin County Emergency Management and Homeland Security





### FOR MORE INFORMATION



614-794-0213



www.fcemhs.org



5300 Strawberry Farms Blvd. Columbus, OH 43230-1049

