

HardisonInk.com

Dixie County earns top emergency management certification in the nation



(from left) Division Chief Scott Garner, Bryan Koon, the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management and Dixie County Emergency Management Director/County Manager Timothy Alexander pause for a photo opportunity Thursday night in Cross City.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © May 23, 2015 @ 4:57 p.m.

CROSS CITY -- Only eight of Florida's 67 counties have met the high standards that the Dixie County Emergency Management Department met, according to Bryan Koon, the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management – based in Tallahassee.

Koon presented a plaque to the Dixie County Commission on Thursday (May 21). He also delivered news of a \$50,000 award earned by Dixie County Emergency Management Director Timothy Alexander, Division Chief Scott Garner and staff for that department of the county.

That \$50,000, Koon explained, is broken down into \$10,000 for each year of accreditation and the county has achieved a five-year accreditation.

With Hurricane Season starting on June 1, Koon is usually all over the state reminding families, individuals and communities of the extreme importance to all to prepare in advance for this season.

Florida is the most prone state to be affected by hurricanes, he said, and it is every Floridian's responsibility to be prepared for them.

"One of the things that pleases me the most about being here tonight is being able to say Dixie County has proved it is going to be ready for Hurricane Season," Koon said, "and for all of the

HardisonInk.com

other natural and manmade disasters that can come to our state in the future.”

Dixie County recently completed the Emergency Management Accreditation Program, he said. This extremely rigorous program includes 64 standards, which county staff had to prove that the county met to receive this accreditation, he said.

“Dixie County is also one of the smallest jurisdictions in the entire country to ever achieve that accreditation,” Koon said. “The other ones in the state of Florida that have achieved it – Miami-Dade, Duval, Orange – are large counties with large staffs.”

Alexander and Garner have demonstrated the leadership to show small counties can meet the needs of its residents and visitors “when the chips are down” and to provide them with the services they need at that time, Koon said.

“The Emergency Management Program at Dixie County, Florida, has met nationally recognized emergency management standards and is accredited by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program April 2015-2020,” Koon said as he read the plaque.

Alexander then thanked Garner for the effort he put in to make this award come to fruition.

“When he first came to me two years ago and mentioned the EMAP (Emergency Management Accreditation Program),” Alexander said, “I said, ‘Look. There is no need in us putting forth that kind of effort just for recognition and a plaque.’ Then, Bryan decided he would start awarding the counties with additional funds.”



Bryan Koon, the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management speaks to the Dixie County Commission about the significance of this feat by the county's Emergency Management Department.

Alexander still told Garner that he thought it was virtually impossible for “a one and a half man shop” to meet the criteria set by this program.

Garner said Dixie County Emergency Management started on the program in June of 2014.

“The EMAP Accreditation Commission said ‘There’s no way you can do it,’” Garner said. “And, with Tim also saying, ‘I don’t think you can do it,’ it just fueled it a little bit more.”

Garner got it done. Garner thanked everyone who helped in the effort for their support.