

**JOINT FEDERAL, STATE, LOCAL
PUBLIC NOTICE
August 30, 2019**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency and Florida Division of Emergency Management have received the following application for Federal grant funding. Final notice is hereby given of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) consideration to provide funding in the form of Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Funds will be provided in accordance with Section 404 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), federal actions must be reviewed and evaluated for feasible alternatives and for social, economic, historic, environmental, legal, and safety considerations. Under Executive Order (EO) 11988 and EO 11990 FEMA is required to consider alternatives to and to provide public notice of any proposed actions in or affecting floodplains or wetlands. EO 12898 also requires FEMA to provide the opportunity for public participation in the planning process and to consider potential impacts to minority or low-income populations.

Funding for the proposed project will be conditional upon compliance with all applicable federal, tribal, state and local laws, regulations, floodplain standards, permit requirements and conditions.

Applicant:

City of Port St. Lucie

Project Title:

HMGP 4337-463 Hardening Communications Between Port St. Lucie and St. Lucie County (Fiber Optic Connectivity for Port St. Lucie Emergency Operations Center)

Location of Proposed Work:

The area affected by this project consists of the following locations:

- City of Port St. Lucie James E. Anderson (JEA) Water Treatment Plant: 6901 LTC Parkway
- St. Lucie County Emergency Operations Center (SLCEOC): 15305 Midway Road
- St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office: 4700 W Midway Road
- St. Lucie County Fire District: 5160 NW Milner Drive

Proposed Work and Purpose:

The project will install 96-strand, single-mode fiber optic cable in 2" underground conduits along Midway Road between the SLCEOC (15305 Midway Road) and the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office (4700 W Midway Road) - a distance of 6.1 miles. Two additional locations will be served by 24-Strand Single-mode fiber optic cables pulled from Midway Road - a line on LTC Parkway serving the JEA Water Treatment Plant (6901 LTC Parkway) and a line on NW Milner Drive serving the St. Lucie County Fire Department (5160 NW Milner Drive).

With over 189,000 residents, the City of Port St. Lucie is Florida's eighth largest city by population, housing more than 60 percent of the residents in St. Lucie County. Ranking larger than Ft. Lauderdale, Port St. Lucie is South Florida's 3rd largest city, occupying an area of 120 square miles within St. Lucie County.

Hurricane Irma recently demonstrated that the City is not prepared to effectively communicate with its partners during emergency situations. Coordination of efforts requires the City and County to remain in constant contact. Due to the poor communication system, the City Manager and Police Chief were driving 30-minutes one-way to the St. Lucie County EOC in order to share or receive pertinent information. This information sharing and coordination system is dangerous and out-of-date.

Communications and information systems have become increasingly critical parts of our daily lives. Most people take these services for granted until they are unavailable. Unfortunately, it is often the case that communication and information systems are lost in the wake of natural disasters - a time when they are need for communication between emergency responders in the field, coordinating recovery plans among first responders and community leaders, and relaying important safety information to the public.

Fiber optic communications will enable Port St. Lucie to share data with City partners like the SLCEOC in real-time. This hardened communication infrastructure will help the City to protect lives and minimize property damage in the event of natural, technological and societal hazards. Fiber optic technology will support Port St. Lucie as it provides hazard mitigation, disaster preparedness, evacuation, sheltering, and other services in the community. Additionally, the fiber optic communication system will support emergency response operations, including community health services, food and water distribution, and debris removal. This will enable Port St. Lucie to recover more quickly following disasters.

The protection of Port St. Lucie's population is the primary goal of the proposed project. City residents remain vulnerable during storm events due to the very real possibility of communications failure due to the nature of Port St. Lucie's above-ground communication system. Its failure during a storm would disrupt phone service, internet capability and the dedicated 911 link. This would force first responders to rely upon less effective cellular devices and radio communications. Efficient communication and quick response are critical in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Lost time due to communication failure can lead to catastrophe. The Port St. Lucie Police Department will be slow in responding to calls for help, the JEA Water Treatment Plant will be unable to quickly communicate warning to avoid drinking water, and the City will lose the ability to share information through its communication channels to vulnerable populations.

Project Alternatives:

The alternatives to the project that have been and will be considered are 1) the no action alternative and 2) the reliance upon third-party circuits (e.g., from providers like AT&T) to help support communication between the City and County. These alternatives to the proposed project are not viable because under Alternative 1) the current above-ground communications system will continue to present a high risk for injuries and loss of lives during severe weather incidents due to its likelihood to breakdown from wind impacts and flying debris; and Alternative 2) the third-party circuits would still be vulnerable to storm events and would be less effective than fiber technologies. Port St. Lucie would also have less flexibility with the circuits as AT&T would maintain authority over the system. The City plans to expand its fiber optic network to other fire departments in the future and the third-party circuit system would not allow for that expansion.

Comment Period:

Comments are solicited from the public; local, state or federal agencies; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of the proposed project. The comments should be made in writing and addressed to the Florida Division of Emergency Management, Bureau of Recovery and Mitigation, 2555 Shumard Oak Blvd., Tallahassee, FL 32399-2100. These are due within 15 days of this notice. The State will forward comments to applicable regulatory agencies as needed. Interested persons may submit comments, obtain more detailed information about the proposed action, or request a copy of the findings by contacting:

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