



## **New George County EMA Director brings international experience back to hometown**

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GEORGE COUNTY, Miss. ([WKRG](#)) – It’s rained 10 out of the 11 days George County’s new Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Director has been on the job, sparking flash flood warnings and a flood watch.

On the one dry day, Brian Henderson’s first on the job, he responded to an airplane slide-off on the Agricola airstrip. It’s the constant action that drew him to the position.

Henderson returns to George Co. with a range of experience in disaster planning and response. He and his wife began working in ministry in 2006 and served at the International Mission Board in Lima, Peru. Their first major mission was a mudslide near a mountain village.

“It closed probably a half mile of the road, just washed it completely out,” said Henderson. “We would haul supplies from Lima out to the slide, and then they would use burrows and all kinds of animals to move it around. Didn’t have the luxury of helicopters or four-wheelers.”

He went on to work as the disaster relief coordinator for Montana Southern Baptist Convention before moving back to George Co. in June 2020.

The EMA prepares and responds to a range of scenarios like flooding, hurricanes, chemical spills, train derailments and plane crashes. They also work with the public every day outside of emergency situations to assign addresses to every home and building in the county.

“It requires going out to the house site and measuring it. It’s very vital to what we do, so that way the fire truck or an ambulance- everyone knows where to go and how to get there. It’s more comprehensive than I thought it was, there’s a science to it,” said Henderson.

In addition to the EMA director responsibilities, Henderson is the fire coordinator- overseeing the personnel and equipment upkeep in the 911 dispatch center and the 14 volunteer fire

departments throughout the county. He's assisted by Chief Deputy EMA Director & Flood Plain Administrator Debbie Gilbert and 911 Center Manager Lori Stringfellow.

A 1991 George Co. High School, and later Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College graduate, Henderson was on the volunteer force for the Central VFD for nearly a decade.

"I missed it and I still miss it...I've known all the fire coordinators since 1990 and just thought, 'you know, how cool would it be to have your job?' And here I am, now I have it," he said.

The courthouse basement office is an early memory for Henderson, playing hot wheels while his mother worked in the chancery clerk's office. Today he's upgraded to a county pick-up truck and muck boots, but the same six-year-old excitement abounds.