

PUBLIC SAFETY IS A PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY OF ANY COMMUNITY
Joe Negron, Florida State Representative, District 82

As a region, we have lived through more hurricanes in the past two years than in the previous 20 years. Images of planes hitting the twin towers on Sept. 11, 2001 are indelibly etched in the minds of many, and the havoc caused by Hurricane Katrina has left a deep impression, serving as a reminder that we must be prepared for both natural and manmade disasters.

In many ways, the safety and well-being of our community depends on having a ready supply of well-trained, dedicated public service personnel who are prepared to come to our aid in all types of crisis situations. Coordination among our public safety agencies and their personnel is essential for effective preparation before a catastrophic event and for an efficient response in its aftermath. Seamless multi-agency operations also prove highly beneficial when responding to fires, crimes, and health emergencies whether they impact one person or many.

That's why the Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex planned for the Indian River Community College Main Campus is vitally important to everyone in our four-county area.

This unique multi-building facility will provide up-to-the-minute training in law enforcement, fire science, forensics, counter-terrorism, disaster preparedness and humanitarian aid in one centralized location. Its programs and services will be designed to ensure the safety and security of the Treasure Coast by offering programs for aspiring public service officers, professionals already working in the field, and community members, resulting in a planned, multi-level, coordinated response to all types of emergencies.

The new complex at IRCC will prepare three times the number of officers currently trained by the College and provide continuing education in new technologies, techniques and procedures for working officers. The complex will also house the 19th Judicial Circuit Crime Lab and Medical Examiners Office, creating a unique opportunity for students to examine actual cases in order to learn about ballistics, pathology and DNA testing.

The Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex will also serve as the base for IRCC's new Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Assistance Program, a national model for how to effectively respond to disasters, including terrorism.

This will be an exceptional facility. The 101,000 square-foot complex will feature a simulated town-center for enacting crimes, combating fires and making on-the-spot decisions. In cooperation with specialists in criminal justice, fire science, emergency health care and disaster relief, students will engage in "mock disasters" replicating crisis situations. Members of the public involved in crime watch groups and first aid and security personnel will be able to take part in the field exercises. Participants will establish a field command center; provide triage to "victims;" respond to explosions, fires and property damage; and practice clear communication and quick thinking under stressful conditions.

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Crisis response can't be learned in a book – our public safety professionals need the types of experiences that this new complex will provide.

Cooperation has been the hallmark of the planning process for the \$28 million Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex, with construction scheduled to begin this summer. IRCC and our public service agencies have exhibited exceptional prescience and commitment to our safety and security. In fact, I know of no other region in the country that has taken such a proactive approach. The vision and careful planning of IRCC and the Sheriff's Departments, Police Departments, Fire Departments and other emergency response agencies in our area are setting an example for a collaborative approach to public safety, free from jurisdictional impediments. Public safety for our entire region is the first concern.

This training center is vitally important. I have made funding of the Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex a personal priority and will support allocation of the necessary funds during the upcoming Legislative session.

Because of the Treasure Coast Public Safety Training Complex and its exemplary programs, those who respond to emergencies on the Treasure Coast will have the advantages of top-notch training and experience in many different disaster scenarios. This translates into a more secure Treasure Coast for all of us.

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