

## LEE COUNTY PUBLIC SAFETY URGES EOC VISIT

Fort Myers, Fla.- Nearly five dozen people toured the Lee County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and learned about hurricane preparedness last night, but Emergency Management officials want more.

Officials are hoping an overflow crowd will see the facility where decisions are made on the safe operation of the community in a disaster before the next Board of County Commissioners meeting. The EOC is open again Sunday, July 26, at 2:30 p.m. for a tour and preparedness seminar.

"We simply don't know if the building will withstand a major hurricane," explained J. Stakenburg, Emergency Management's Operations Chief, when asked why it's so important to get the public to view the building. "We want the community to see the facility so they can understand how difficult it is now to direct preparations, response and recovery in a disaster, and how easily we could end up with no EOC if this building disappears in a storm the way Charlotte County's EOC did in Hurricane Charley."

The building is first on the state's list of EOC's needing replacement and there is a grant ready to be used for the construction. However, the grant requires a local match and county commissioners must decide if the need should be met now or later. The grant money will be forfeited if not used this year.

Emergency Management is responsible for coordination of all preparatory work done to protect life and property before an imminent disaster, as well as coordination of all response and recovery efforts during and after a disaster such as a hurricane, tornado or uncontrolled brush fire.

Those efforts include purchase and dissemination of sandbags, calling for evacuations, coordinating utility (such as water and electric) restoration and opening shelters prior to storms. In addition, Emergency Management coordinates insurance response, road clean up and debris management as well as bringing in state and federal assistance to, among other things, cover roofs with tarps following a disaster.