

## **Columbia Chemical Calamity Exercise – 2/15/2015**

In an effort to be prepared for future campus emergencies and in compliance with its Emergency Response Plan (ERP), Florida Gateway College (FGC) participated in a mock emergency exercise on its main campus on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2015. It was called the “Columbia Chemical Calamity.” The exercise was held in conjunction with the Columbia County Emergency Management Team which included the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office, County Fire Department, County EMS Services, County HazMat Team, and various College Departments, including twenty (20) students from the Law Enforcement Program. The exercise tested the readiness of college staff and county first responders to a mock scenario in chemistry lab which was initiated by disgruntled students who had not studied for their final exam. It led to an explosion and injuries.

The incident included all elements of a real emergency including the 911 call, building evacuation, College-initiated response, Law/Fire and EMS arrivals, establishment of the Incident Command and Staging Areas, Hot/Warm/Cold Zones established, site security, building entry, evacuation/triage, decon areas, and the “all clear.” The incident began at 9 a.m. and ended around noon with a debriefing session. The focus of this real-time (non-compressed) exercise dealt with immediate emergency response and the related planning and recovery issues involved in a chemical release with contaminated victims. This exercise did not address the “causes” of the hazards and events, but rather the effective and efficient response of the county’s and college’s emergency response teams and how they work together to address the impacts of this hazard. This simulated exercise involved actual field personnel, simulated victims and scenarios. The situation established pre-emergent relationships of the participating parties, and pointed out the strengths and areas of weakness on which steps have been taken to correct and strengthen. It validated plans, policies and procedures, as well as an opportunity for responding agencies to coordinate their activities. It was a very positive exercise.