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CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND

PRESS RELEASE:
For immediate release

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Tybee Island Upgrades Emergency Warning System

Tybee Island, Ga. – (September 12, 2008) Tybee Island continues to work at the forefront of emergency planning by cooperating with Chatham County's Emergency Management Agency (CEMA) to replace their old, single site, warning siren with a multi-site system comprised of four Whelen Model 2910 omnidirectional speaker systems. This new system includes both old-style tone warnings, as well as eight pre-recorded messages that spell out in detail the nature of the warning being given. (See box.) When needed, live announcements can also be made with the system. With older sirens, which are purely tone-based, the coding system, used to distinguish one warning signal type from the next, might not be known by everyone, and people from other locations may be used to a completely different set of codes.

The system installation will be completed the week of September 15th, and each of the eight messages will be tested before the installation can be signed off. During this week, such tests will be preceded by the message, "This is a test. This is a test of the emergency warning system. This is only a test." One of the eight recorded announcements will then follow until all sites and all messages have been checked. After acceptance, the warning system will be tested at noon on the first Wednesday of each month, just like the old system.

Mayor Jason Buelterman notes, "This new, state-of-the-art system will be a significant upgrade in the City's public warning system. Not only does it provide coverage for the entire Island, including Spanish Hammock and Lazaretto Creek, it will give us the capability of communicating to folks the nature of the emergency."

"Tybee is such an outdoor recreation destination, many of our visitors and residents may be out on the beaches or over kayaking in the marshes," adds City Manager Diane Schleicher. The Lazaretto Creek loudspeakers will reach across much of the back river marshes and most of the national park at Fort Pulaski.

Because of these large numbers of people outdoors, particularly during the summer season, the City Council wanted to do something to ensure the safety of everyone on the Island in inclement weather, so Jimmy Brown, Tybee's Emergency Management Director, working with staff from CEMA, first tried to get a grant from the State or Federal governments. Had Tybee recently suffered a disaster, such funding might have been more forthcoming, but the application was denied, so Council decided to move ahead with a new alarm system immediately. Even at \$123,000 for the system and \$36,000 for installation, it seemed like a wise investment on behalf of the citizens and visitors on the Island!

The system will be tied into CEMA, allowing them to initiate warnings that may affect areas throughout the Savannah-Chatham area. The on-going maintenance of the system will be under CEMA's direction. Warnings which are specific to Tybee Island can still be initiated locally. Day trippers or visitors with nowhere to go if severe weather strikes suddenly can take advantage of one of the three Safe Sites set up on Tybee: Battery Brumby, located across from the Tybee Island Lighthouse near North Beach; the Tybee Island Gymnasium, in the middle of the Island; or, in the conference rooms at the Ocean Plaza Hotel near the South Beach.

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This system is designed to be effective outdoors, although even inside with activity going on, one is likely to hear the initial warning tones that precede each verbal announcement, even if the announcement itself may be unclear. For this reason, people who are indoors when the weather seems to be looking dour should continue to listen to NOAA Weather Radios or tune to local television and radio broadcasts for emergency updates.

Pre-recorded messages for the Tybee Island warning system:

Tone Alert* : discontinuous air horn
TW4 – Tornado warning : “Warning! A tornado warning has been issued for our location. Please take shelter immediately.”
EW1 – Evacuation warning : “An emergency evacuation of this area is required. Follow evacuation route instructions. Listen to radio and TV for details.”
HW1 – Hurricane warning : “Hurricane Warning! A hurricane warning has been issued for this area. Hurricane Warning!”
STW2 – Severe thunderstorm warning : “Thunderstorm Warning! A severe thunderstorm warning has been issued for this area. Seek shelter away from this area immediately!”
T1 – Test : “This is a test. This is a test of the emergency warning system. This is a test.”
CRW1 – 1 – Chemical release : “Chemical release! Stay inside buildings and close windows and doors unless advised by authorities to evacuate area. Chemical release! Stay inside buildings and close windows and doors unless advised by authorities to evacuate area. Chemical release!”
Voluntary evacuation : “A voluntary evacuation of this area is required. Listen to radio and TV for details.”
Swimmers advisory : “A Swimmers Advisory has been issued. Rip tide currents are present. Swim with caution!”

* Note: All verbal announcements will be preceded by a tone alert.

About Tybee Island, Ga.:

The City of Tybee Island, Georgia is on the outermost barrier island off the Savannah area coast. With a wild bird sanctuary, over three miles of ocean beaches and salt marshes on the back river, outdoor recreation activities abound for visitors to the island. As a key defense point to the important Savannah port, Tybee’s Fort Screven, Tybee Fort Theater, Fort Pulaski, and the Tybee Island and Cockspur Lighthouses combine with the unique architectures of the island’s raised cottages to form a rich backdrop for history buffs. Attracting a strong artistic community, there are several local supporting art galleries. Keeping the island interesting year round are several arts festivals, the Annual Pirate Fest, the Beach Bum Parade, St Patrick’s Day celebrations, the Hot Rod Run, the Beach Bash, and the Christmas Parade, as well as fireworks displays on Independence and New Year’s Days off the Parker Pier and Pavilion. The Marine Science Center cooperates with Georgia’s DNR to protect threatened sea turtle species by searching for nests, protecting their eggs, and making sure hatchlings make it to sea. For visitor information, stop by <http://www.tybeevisit.com/>, and to find more about the City of Tybee Island, visit our web site at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/>.

For information about the products of Whelen Engineering Co., Inc., visit their web site it <http://www.whelen.com/>.

Chatham County Emergency Management Agency provides a broad array of information and services related to emergency planning at <http://cema.chathamcounty.org/>.

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Picture attachments: Location of sirens and their predicted range of effect; Whelen 2910 Omnidirectional unit; Relative size of 2910

Copies of this release can also be found at <http://www.cityoftybee.org/PressReleases.aspx>

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