



NEWS

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GOVERNMENT INNOVATORS HONORED *State Employees Recognized for Saving Money*

TALLAHASSEE — Fifty-three individuals and teams of state government workers from Tallahassee are recipients of the Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards for going above and beyond the call of duty to work smarter and save money, many during last summer's hurricanes.

The high achievers were honored with certificates, plaques and cash prizes by Lt. Governor Toni Jennings at a luncheon today at the Tallahassee Civic Center. Their achievements are published in the "**2005 Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards**" magazine, which was released at the luncheon.

"This is a unique public and private partnership that recognizes the initiative and creativity of our state employees and promotes wise innovations that serve the people of Florida better," Lt. Governor Jennings told the audience of 930 state employees, their bosses and invited guests. "Promoting innovations that can be adapted and implemented throughout Florida government translates into a great deal of money in budget savings and improved taxpayer service delivery," she said.

Florida TaxWatch also released a special companion guide to the awards magazine, "**Helping Floridians Through Tough Times: A Salute to Hurricane Preparation and Relief Assistance Provided by State Government Employees**", which highlights the extraordinary efforts and accomplishments by state employees before, during, and after last year's record four hurricanes.

The Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards program is a major government improvement initiative chaired by Lt. Governor Toni Jennings and sponsored by Florida TaxWatch, The Florida Council of 100 and the State of Florida. Cash awards of \$200 to \$2,500 plus commemorative plaques and certificates of commendation are presented annually to state employees who clearly exceed their job descriptions and performance expectations in ways that improve service delivery and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.

"There is a tendency to think of government workers as faceless bureaucrats who consume taxpayer dollars," said Dominic M. Calabro, President of Florida TaxWatch. "The reality of course is that, just as in any enterprise, many public employees are innovators and leaders who provide the 'shareholders' of government, the taxpayers, with a more than fair return on investment," said Calabro.

“Good business – and more efficient government can be achieved at every level of state government,” said Mike Jennings, Vice President of Government Relations for Prudential Financial. “These employees are Florida’s ‘finest’ because they have gone beyond the call of duty to solve a problem or improve a service, and we’re delighted to be part of an effort to reward and thank them,” said Jennings.

The 2005 awards competition attracted 517 nominations for innovations and productivity improvements worth \$267 million in cost savings, cost avoidances and increased revenue for state government. Since 1989, more than 7,000 individuals, teams, work units and partnerships have been honored for producing \$5 billion worth of added value.

“This is one of the most unique programs in the country,” said Dennis Murray, Vice President of Group Insurance at Prudential Financial, who presented the awards today with the Lt Governor. “It’s a win-win for taxpayers and state employees to recognize efforts that go above and beyond the call of duty and Prudential Financial is honored to be a part of supporting such a worthwhile program.”

Winners from the Tallahassee area who were honored at the luncheon today included:

A Better Hurricane Shelter

Dr. Nur Yazdani

Florida A&M University

Dr. Nur Yazdani, a Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the Florida A&M University - Florida State University College of Engineering, developed the technology for design and construction of an in-home hurricane shelter that is being adopted by the Florida Department of Community Affairs, local governments and private citizens. For more information, contact Dr. Nur Yazdani at (850) 410-6125 . (Award FAMU-002) **(MEDIA AVAILABILITY/"SHOW & TELL" AFTER THE CEREMONY AT FAMU)**

Safer Food

Bureau of Food and Meat Inspection

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

The 182-member Bureau helped assure the safety of food affected by Hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne during this Herculean effort. Inspectors visited every retail food firm and food processor in impacted areas. Over 200 million pounds of unsafe food was destroyed and extra precautions were mandated when potable water was unavailable. For more information, contact J. D. Warren (850) 488-0295. (Award DACS – 017)

Faster Relief...

Agency for Workforce Innovation

Florida’s Agency for Workforce Innovation handled \$143 million in hurricane relief revenues, including a record breaking one-day turnaround on a relief grant from the U. S. Department of Labor. The agency processed more than 75,000 disaster unemployment compensation claims. For more information, contact Jessica Cary at (850) 245-7114. (Award AWI – 001)

...Delivered More Efficiently

Division of Forestry

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Six hundred and fifty staff members of the Division of Forestry, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, distributed food, water, ice and emergency services to areas impacted by the hurricanes, saving \$4.2 million in personnel, equipment and other resources over a two-month period. For more information, please contact Jim Karels at (850) 488-6111. (Award DACS – 018)

Hurricane Repair

Department of Transportation

Three thousand Department of Transportation staff facilitated motorists’ evacuation ahead of the hurricanes; cleared debris from roadways; repaired traffic signals, signs, and damaged roadways; and

transported cots and oxygen tanks for hospitals and shelters. For more information, contact Frank Day at (850) 245-1505. (Award DOT– 020)

Faster Hurricane Loans

Leslie Langston

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles

Leslie Langston, an operations analyst, streamlined the processing of applications to the U.S. Small Business Administration that helped to gain approval for 7,000 loans totaling \$210 million. For more information, contact Leslie Langston at (850) 921-1864. (Award DHSMV– 006)

Reduced Bureaucracy

Department of Elder Affairs

The two-person Regulatory Compliance Disaster Relief Team, Department of Elder Affairs in Tallahassee, persuaded the Federal Emergency Management Agency to reverse a two-decade policy restricting the sharing of selected information concerning disaster victims. This change enabled the department to identify, locate and serve hundreds of elders living in FEMA trailers who needed support services. For more information, contact Tom Reimers at (850) 414-2060 ext. 3150. (Award DEA – 016)

Improved Citizen Preparedness (Photo Available)

Tom Weaver

Department of Community Affairs

Tom Weaver, a Governmental Analyst with the Division of Emergency Management, Department of Community Affairs in Tallahassee, expanded the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) neighborhood program from 59 to 130 programs covering 60 counties, the largest number of programs in the United States. The objective of CERT is to help people help themselves and others during disasters. For more information, please contact Tom Weaver at (850) 413-9891. (Award DCA– 002)

Developed Cyber Security Training for Floridians

Secure Florida Team

Department of Law Enforcement and Florida State University

The four-member Secure Florida partnership created the nation's first cyber security awareness outreach class that is targeted to citizens. Termed C-SAFE (Cyber Security Awareness for Everyone), this class covers issues such as protecting computers against malicious codes, protecting families from predators, and protecting against identity theft. Team members are currently helping other states to adapt C-SAFE. For more information, contact Bob Breeden at (850) 410-7057. (Award FDLE-12)

Achieved Transportation Savings

Staff of the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged

Department of Transportation

Twelve staff members assisting the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged developed and implemented improved coordination of transportation services statewide, saving the Medicaid non-emergency transportation program over \$40 million annually. For more information, contact Lisa Bacot at (850) 410-5711. (Award DOT-11)

Prudential Financial is in its second year as Anchor Sponsor of the Davis Productivity Awards program. Their support is crucial for sustaining and growing this nationally unique initiative. Governor Jeb Bush and Lt. Governor Toni Jennings have made leveraging the added value of award winning achievements by adapting them to other areas of state government a priority for building a more effective and efficient government. An upcoming Florida TaxWatch publication will identify more than 100 achievements that can create \$100 million worth of this added value.

“This program is about recognizing, rewarding, and replicating excellence, innovation, and government accountability,” said Barney Barnett, Florida TaxWatch Chairman and Vice Chairman of Publix Super Markets.

This is the 17th year of the Davis Productivity Awards, which was started by the late A.D. and J.E. Davis, founders of the Winn-Dixie grocery chain. Florida TaxWatch, The Council of 100, and the State of Florida will be honoring other award winners from across the state at regional luncheon ceremonies scheduled as follows:

- Monday, June 6th – Jacksonville
- Tuesday, June 7th – Gainesville
- Tuesday, June 14th – Tampa
- Wednesday, June 15th – Orlando
- Thursday, June 16th - Miami

Since 1989, more than 7,000 individuals, teams, work units and partnerships have been honored for producing \$5 billion worth of added value.

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Florida TaxWatch is a private, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 25 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Our mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and education on government revenues, expenditures, taxation, public policies and programs and to increase the productivity and accountability of Florida Government. On the web at www.floridataxwatch.org