

The image shows the cover of a report. The background is a photograph of a classical stone column, likely made of marble or limestone, with a fluted shaft and a base consisting of several stacked, rounded tiers. The lighting is dramatic, with the left side of the column in shadow and the right side catching the light, highlighting the texture of the stone. The text is overlaid on the dark, shadowed portion of the column.

"Keep the Courts Open"

Final Report

**Florida Supreme Court
Workgroup on
Emergency Preparedness**

March 28, 2002

Emergency preparedness requires that coordination be established with all public agencies that may become involved in assessments and responses to threats. The courts cannot achieve a high level of emergency preparedness without the support and cooperation of agencies in the executive branch and with local agencies and constitutional officers. Key to successful planning is the establishment of means to foster coordination of resources and the establishment of communications links that will support immediate responses to threats and emergencies.

Likewise, such efforts will require the appointment of officers who may aid judges in the development of plans and coordinated responses to threats and emergencies. Means to communicate threats to the decision makers of the judicial branch should be put in place and efforts should be made to enhance and improve interoperable communications among all courts within the judicial branch. While the chief judges of the districts and circuits should be informed of the latest threat information, they should not duplicate the efforts of the law enforcement community but should rather work with such agencies to foster information sharing and information dissemination.

Closure of court proceedings may be necessary to protect the public, judicial officers, and court employees, however, planning may help to ensure that proceedings will continue at alternate locations. The leadership of the judicial branch should be consulted and be involved in assessing threats and in determining an appropriate response.

The public should be informed of emergencies which threaten the ability of the courts to continue operations and should be advised when proceedings will continue or what alternative locations will be used for the continuation of proceedings. Regular and coordinated media briefings should occur and one representative should speak for the courts during emergencies.

These guidelines are consistent with the State's *Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan* (CEMP), Section VI- Continuity of Government, and the State's *Survivable Crisis Management Plan* (SCM), Section III — Continuity of Government.

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