

BICYCLE RIDE ACROSS GEORGIA

2026 EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

May 31 – June 6, 2026

LaFayette, GA → Rome → Cave Spring → Carrollton → Trilith / Fayetteville → LaGrange → Columbus

EVENT DIRECTOR — PRIMARY EMERGENCY CONTACT
Ron Ward, Event Director
Phone / Cell: 706.566.1017
Email: Ron@brag.org
For immediate on-ride assistance: (404) 382-7747
All emergencies: 911

ON-EVENT EMERGENCY PERSONNEL
John Athens — EMT / Paramedic 770.616.1283
Steve Gatlin — Police Officer / Safety & Security 478.447.2290
Richard Matthews — SAG Team Lead 706.988.9299

Table of Contents

- 1 Purpose & Policy
- 2 Procedure
- 3 Communication Systems
- 4 Assistance
- 5 Designated Shelter Locations — 2026 Route
- 6 Emergency Phone Numbers — 2026 Route
- 7 On-Event Emergency Personnel
- 8 Action Plans
 - 8.1 Inclement Weather
 - 8.2 Heat / Sun Emergency (NEW)
 - 8.3 On-Road Incident
 - 8.4 Dangerous / Aggressive Motorist
 - 8.5 Medical Emergency
 - 8.6 Fire
 - 8.7 Active Shooter / Security Threat
- 9 Safety Tips

1. Purpose & Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this multi-hazard Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is to develop clear procedures for warning BRAG participants, staff, and local residents of approaching severe weather, extreme heat, on-road incidents, or any other danger, and to identify locations where BRAG participants may seek shelter and protection. The Action Plans also provide a clear course of action during an emergency to prevent further loss of life or property.

Policy

BRAG will monitor conditions throughout the event and enact emergency response plans as appropriate. The Event Director will make notifications of weather watches, warnings, and any other dangerous situations if such conditions occur. If a critical incident should occur, BRAG will immediately notify corresponding law enforcement, fire, emergency management, and local representatives to coordinate a response.

2. Procedure

BRAG registration personnel, the Event Director, and the on-event safety team will monitor conditions throughout the ride and evaluate reports of emergencies provided by participants, staff, and local authorities. BRAG will monitor the National Weather Service for active alerts and will monitor temperature and heat index forecasts daily.

Note: BRAG Headquarters moves each day to the next overnight town. The Event Director (Ron Ward, 706.566.1017) is the single point of contact for all emergency communications regardless of location. Upon identification of any threat, BRAG will enact the corresponding Emergency Action Plan.

3. Communication Systems

Communication systems available to BRAG in the event of an emergency include:

- Mass Text System — Ability to send texts to all registered participants who provided a cell number. Participants who did not register a number may opt in via the BRAG website.
- Email — Mass email capability to all registered participants and BRAG community members.
- Phone — Ability to call any participant or their registered emergency contact.
- Social Media — Facebook and Instagram for real-time community communication.
- Megaphone — On-site loudspeaker for immediate, localized communication at camp or rest stops.
- GPS / Ride with GPS App — The official BRAG route app. Participants can be directed to check the app for route changes or shelter locations.

4. Assistance

Assistance in emergency situations will be coordinated as follows:

- BRAG will seek assistance from Law Enforcement, including local police, county sheriffs, and Georgia State Patrol for related emergency matters.
- BRAG will seek assistance from local fire departments for related emergency matters.
- BRAG will seek assistance from Georgia Emergency Management and its related regional contacts for related emergency matters.
- BRAG’s on-event EMT/Paramedic (John Athens, 770.616.1283) serves as the first medical responder on route and at camp.
- BRAG’s on-event Police Officer (Steve Gatlin, 478.447.2290) serves as the primary safety and security liaison with local law enforcement throughout the week.
- BRAG’s SAG Team (Richard Matthews, 706.988.9299) provides vehicle-based support and participant retrieval across all daily routes.

5. Designated Shelter Locations — 2026 Route

The following locations have been identified as potential severe weather / emergency shelters along the 2026 Big BRAG route. In the event of a tornado warning or severe weather activation, participants will be directed to the nearest appropriate shelter.

Day / Town	Shelter Facility	Address
Sat (Day 0) — LaFayette	LaFayette High School (Camp HQ)	5178 Round Pond Rd, LaFayette, GA 30728
Sun — Rome	Forum River Center	301 Tribune St, Rome, GA 30161
Mon — Cave Spring	Rolater Park / City Hall	13 Old Cedartown Rd, Cave Spring, GA 30124
Tue — Carrollton	Carrollton High School (Camp HQ)	202 Trojan Dr, Carrollton, GA 30117
Wed — Carrollton (Layover)	Carrollton High School (Camp HQ)	202 Trojan Dr, Carrollton, GA 30117
Thu — Trilith / Fayetteville	Trilith Town Stage (Camp HQ)	125 Shepperton Way, Fayetteville, GA 30214
Fri — LaGrange	LaGrange High School (Camp HQ)	516 N Greenwood St, LaGrange, GA 30240
Sat — Columbus	Columbus Convention & Trade Center	801 Front Ave, Columbus, GA 31901

- All rest stops maintain a copy of the Ride Guide and the Event Director’s contact. Volunteers will use cell phones to relay shelter instructions to riders on route.

6. Emergency Phone Numbers — 2026 Route

All emergencies: 911. BRAG immediate assistance line: (404) 382-7747.

Jurisdiction	Type	Number
LaFayette PD	Law Enforcement	911 or 706-639-1540
Walker County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	706-638-1909
Floyd County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	706-291-4111
Cave Spring PD	Law Enforcement	911 or 706-777-3382
Carrollton PD	Law Enforcement	911 or 770-834-4451
Carroll County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	770-830-5888
City of Fayetteville PD	Law Enforcement	770-461-4441
Fayette County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	770-716-4720
LaGrange PD	Law Enforcement	911 or 706-883-2603
Troup County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	706-883-1616
Columbus PD	Law Enforcement	911 or 706-225-3205
Muscogee County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	706-653-4225
Polk County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	770-749-2900
Haralson County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	770-646-2011
Douglas County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	770-942-2121
Coweta County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	770-253-1502
Harris County Sheriff	Law Enforcement	706-628-4211
Redmond Regional Medical Ctr	Medical	Rome, GA — 706-291-0291
Tanner Medical Center	Medical	Carrollton, GA — 770-836-9666
Piedmont Fayette Hospital	Medical	Fayetteville, GA — 770-719-7000
WellStar West Georgia Medical	Medical	LaGrange, GA — 706-882-1411
St. Francis / Piedmont Columbus	Medical	Columbus, GA — 706-596-4000

7. On-Event Emergency Personnel

The following credentialed personnel travel with BRAG for the full duration of the 2026 event (May 31 – June 6):

Name	Role	Contact
Ron Ward	Event Director — Primary Emergency Spokesperson	706.566.1017 Ron@brag.org
John Athens	EMT / Paramedic — On-Route First Responder	770.616.1283
Steve Gatlin	Police Officer — Safety, Security & LE Liaison	478.447.2290
Richard Matthews	SAG Team Lead — Participant Retrieval	706.988.9299
Franklin Johnson	BRAG Director (off-event backup)	678.548.1938 franklin@brag.org

Franklin Johnson is the sole authorized spokesperson for any media inquiries during the event. No other staff or volunteers may provide statements to media beyond confirming that BRAG’s emergency action plan has been activated.

8. Action Plans

The purpose of the action plans is to provide specific, actionable responses to emergency situations to prevent further damage to life or property. Action plans should be implemented immediately upon recognition of an emergency situation.

Each action plan addresses:

- Identifying and assessing the hazardous situation and activating the plan
- Incident stabilization
- Crisis communication

8.1 Inclement Weather

DEFINITIONS

WATCH — Conditions are favorable for severe weather. Prepare to act.

WARNING — Severe weather or tornado has been spotted. Seek shelter immediately.

Activation

Activate when a Tornado Warning or other weather warning poses a clear and present risk to life or property.

Communication

- Contact local police, sheriff, and emergency management to inform them BRAG is activating the Inclement Weather Action Plan. Request assistance notifying participants to seek shelter.
- Alert all BRAG staff via phone/text: activate the Inclement Weather Action Plan and direct participants to the designated shelter for that day's town (see Section 5).
- Send a mass text and email to participants with: (a) warning level, (b) shelter location and address, (c) instruction to remain sheltered until the all-clear is given.
- Post to BRAG Facebook and Instagram with shelter information.

Stabilization

- Direct staff to assist participants in moving to the designated shelter.
- If safe to do so, secure tent structures, equipment, and any items that could become projectiles in high winds.
- Remain in the designated shelter until the threat has fully passed.
- Once the all-clear is given, inspect participant areas for hazards: fallen trees, downed power lines, debris, etc. Notify participants before resuming activity.

8.2 Heat / Sun Emergency — NEW for 2026

WHY THIS MATTERS

The 2026 Big BRAG runs May 31 – June 6 across northwest and west-central Georgia.
Afternoon temperatures and heat index values can exceed 95°F–105°F on exposed roads.
Heat exhaustion and heat stroke are realistic risks on any day, particularly Tuesday (58 mi)
Thursday (55 mi), Friday (61 mi), and Saturday (58 mi).

Activation

Activate when: (a) the National Weather Service issues a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning for any county on the day’s route; OR (b) BRAG staff or the on-event EMT identify multiple riders showing signs of heat-related illness.

Prevention Measures (Daily)

- Event Director monitors NWS forecasts each morning before mass start.
- If heat index is forecast to exceed 100°F, a pre-ride announcement is made emphasizing hydration, pace management, and the option to SAG.
- Rest stop volunteers ensure coolers with ice and water are fully stocked and opened no later than posted times.
- SAG vehicles conduct more frequent sweeps on extreme heat days.

Signs of Heat-Related Illness (share with all staff)

- Heat Cramps: muscle cramps, heavy sweating. Rest, hydrate, move to shade.
- Heat Exhaustion: heavy sweating, weakness, cold/pale/clammy skin, weak pulse, nausea, fainting. Move rider to cool/shaded area, apply cool wet cloths, offer water if conscious. Call John Athens (770.616.1283).
- Heat Stroke (EMERGENCY): high body temperature (103°F+), hot/red/dry skin, rapid strong pulse, possible unconsciousness. Call 911 immediately. Cool the rider rapidly with ice packs, cold wet towels to neck/armpits/groin. Do NOT give fluids. Direct ambulance to location.

Communication

- Notify BRAG HQ (Ron Ward) of any heat-related medical incident.
- If multiple riders are affected, send mass text encouraging all riders to seek shade, hydrate, and consider SAGging.
- Coordinate with local emergency management if a heat emergency results in multiple casualties.

8.3 On-Road Incident

Activation

BRAG will be notified by a participant, SAG driver, volunteer, or emergency personnel of an incident on the road. Upon notification, activate the On-Road Incident Action Plan.

Communication

- Call 911. Provide: (a) nature of the incident, (b) precise location (road name, mile marker, or cross street), (c) your name and callback number.
- Notify BRAG HQ / Event Director (Ron Ward, 706.566.1017) with the same information.
- If approaching riders are at risk, instruct nearby personnel to warn them. Use a megaphone, arm signals, or position a vehicle to slow traffic.
- If significant road closure results, request law enforcement assistance rerouting riders and traffic. Notify all staff of route change via mass text.

Stabilization

- Only trained responders (John Athens, EMT, or arriving EMS) should provide first aid.
- Do not move the victim unless their location is immediately unsafe.
- Control access to the scene. Take universal precautions to prevent contact with body fluids / bloodborne pathogens.
- Meet the ambulance at the nearest entrance or emergency access point and direct them to the victim(s).
- Complete a BRAG Incident Report as fully as possible. If EMS transports the victim, note the destination facility. Deliver the completed report to BRAG HQ.

Second-Stage Communication

- Contact the victim's emergency contact (from their registration). State only factual, confirmed information. Do not speculate. Leave a voicemail with a callback number if no answer.
- Communicate with the broader BRAG community (email/text/social media) only if the incident affects ongoing rider safety or route conditions.
- All media inquiries are handled exclusively by Ron Ward. Other staff/volunteers should not provide any information to media.

8.4 Dangerous / Aggressive Motorist — NEW for 2026

Activation

Activate when a motorist engages in behavior that poses a direct threat to rider safety: deliberate swerving toward cyclists, verbal threats, throwing objects, or road rage that does not self-resolve.

Immediate Actions

- Riders: move fully off the road surface, stop, and do not engage or retaliate. Note the vehicle description, color, make, and license plate if safe to do so.
- Call 911 and provide: vehicle description, direction of travel, last known location, nature of the threat.
- Notify BRAG HQ (Ron Ward, 706.566.1017) and on-event Police Officer (Steve Gatlin, 478.447.2290).
- Steve Gatlin will coordinate directly with local law enforcement for any active pursuit or follow-up.

Communication

- If the threat is ongoing along a specific road segment, warn approaching riders via mass text and SAG radio/phone to avoid that segment until law enforcement clears it.
- Document all details in a BRAG Incident Report.

8.5 Medical Emergency

Activation

BRAG will be notified by a participant, SAG driver, volunteer, or emergency personnel of a medical emergency. Upon notification, activate the Medical Emergency Action Plan.

Communication

- Call 911. Provide: (a) nature of the medical emergency, (b) precise location, (c) your name and callback number.
- Call John Athens, EMT/Paramedic (770.616.1283) immediately. He is the on-event first medical responder.
- Notify BRAG HQ / Event Director (Ron Ward, 706.566.1017).
- If other riders are near the threat, instruct nearby personnel or bystanders to warn them.

Stabilization

- Check the rider for a Road ID or other medical identification to assist responders.
- Only John Athens or trained EMS should provide first aid assistance.
- Do not move the victim unless their location is immediately unsafe.
- Control access to the scene. Apply universal precautions.
- Meet the ambulance at the nearest access point. Direct responders to the victim.
- Complete a BRAG Incident Report. Note destination facility if EMS transports the victim. Deliver to BRAG HQ.

Second-Stage Communication

- Contact the victim's emergency contact. Provide confirmed facts only. Do not speculate.
- Communicate to the BRAG community only if the situation affects ongoing participant safety.
- All media inquiries are handled exclusively by Ron Ward.

8.6 Fire

Activation

Upon immediate notification or discovery of a fire or smoke situation, activate the Fire Emergency Action Plan.

Communication

- Call 911. Provide: (a) nature of the emergency (fire and/or smoke), (b) precise location, (c) your name and callback number.
- If others are at risk, instruct nearby personnel to warn them and evacuate the immediate area.

- Notify BRAG HQ (Ron Ward, 706.566.1017).

Stabilization

- Rescue or remove persons from the immediate scene only if safe to do so.
- Close all doors to the hazard or fire area if safe to do so to confine the fire.
- Use the nearest fire extinguisher only if the fire blocks your evacuation path and it is safe to do so.
- Evacuate all persons to a safe distance from the fire.
- Ensure fire hydrants are not blocked by vehicles or equipment.
- Await the arrival of the fire department and direct them to the scene.

Second-Stage Communication

- Contact any victim's emergency contact. Provide facts only.
- All media inquiries: Ron Ward only.

8.7 Active Shooter / Security Threat

RUN • HIDE • FIGHT

RUN: If there is an accessible escape route, evacuate immediately. Leave belongings behind.

HIDE: If escape is not possible, hide out of the shooter's view. Lock/block doors. Silence phones.

FIGHT: As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger, attempt to disrupt or incapacitate.

Activation

Upon immediate notification or discovery of an active shooter or violent security threat, activate this plan.

Ensure Your Own Safety First

Get yourself to a safe location before calling for help. This may mean sheltering in place and locking doors, or evacuating and moving away from the threat.

Communication

- Call 911. Provide: (a) nature and urgency, (b) location, (c) your name and callback number. Stay on the line if safe.
- Call Steve Gatlin (Police Officer, 478.447.2290) who will coordinate directly with responding law enforcement.
- Notify BRAG HQ (Ron Ward, 706.566.1017).
- If participants are near or approaching the threat, instruct nearby personnel or SAG drivers to divert them away immediately.

Stabilization

- Follow all law enforcement instructions on scene.
- Do not re-enter the area until law enforcement declares it safe.
- Account for all staff and participants as quickly as possible.
- Complete a BRAG Incident Report once the scene is secure.

9. Safety Tips

The following general safety guidance is shared with all participants at the start of the event and reinforced through the Ride Guide and BRAG Safety Pledge.

Rules of the Road

- BRAG is a ride, not a race. Participants are expected to obey all traffic laws and traffic control devices at all times.
- Stop at all stop signs and red lights. Do not call out “Clear” — what is clear for one rider may not be for another.
- Ride single file when a vehicle is behind you. Never ride more than two abreast (Georgia law).
- Ride as far to the right as practicable except when making a left turn or going straight through a right-turn-only lane.
- Use bicycle lanes and shoulders whenever available and safe.

Communication on the Bike

- Call out “Car Back” or “Car Up” to warn other riders.
- Announce intentions: “Slowing,” “Stopping,” “Turning.” Use hand signals.
- Call out hazards: “Gravel,” “Hole,” “Tracks,” “Animal.”
- When passing: “On Your Left.” Never pass on the right.

Equipment & Visibility

- Wear a properly fitted helmet at all times while riding.
- Do not wear headphones while riding.
- Wear bright, reflective clothing. Use lights if riding before sunrise or after dusk (required by Georgia law).
- Ensure your bike is in proper working order before each day’s ride (brakes, tires, drivetrain).

Weather & Heat

- Monitor daily forecasts. On hot days, increase hydration before, during, and after the ride.
- In rain, reduce speed, increase following distance, and use extra caution on railroad tracks and painted road markings (extremely slippery when wet).
- In lightning, seek shelter immediately. Do not continue riding.
- If you ever feel unsafe — due to weather, traffic, fatigue, or any other reason — stop, get completely off the road, and call the SAG team (Richard Matthews, 706.988.9299).

Stopping & Emergencies

- If you stop for any reason, get completely off the road surface.
- For immediate BRAG assistance: (404) 382-7747.
- For any emergency: 911.

- Check your Road ID or medical ID tag daily — make sure your emergency contact information is current.

Participant Responsibility

- You are responsible for your own safety. BRAG assists as much as possible, but you control your ride.
- Read the cue sheets and watch for BRAG road markings. Hazards change — not every hazard can be signed.
- Report dangerous motorists and cyclists to event staff or call 911.
- Violations of the BRAG Safety Pledge may result in ejection from the ride.

Our primary concern is the safety of riders, residents, and guests during this event.

If you have questions or identify omissions, please contact Event Director Ron Ward: Ron@brag.org | 706.566.1017

Bicycle Ride Across Georgia, Inc. • P.O. Box 8812, Atlanta, GA 31106 • (404) 382-7747 • www.brag.org