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Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) officials held a series of applicant briefings in July and August to help local governments and eligible private nonprofit organizations apply for federal disaster recovery assistance.

The briefings were open to representatives of the declared counties affected by the severe storms, tornadoes and flooding that began on June 1.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Public Assistance (PA) Program provides federal funds to reimburse a minimum of 75 percent of the costs for removing debris, conducting emergency measures and repairing levees, roads, bridges, public utilities, water control facilities, public buildings and parks. The State of Nebraska and the applying agency cover the remaining costs.

Government entities eligible to participate include local, county and state governments, Indian Tribal organizations and eligible nonprofit organizations. Eligible nonprofits may include educational facilities, emergency, medical, rehabilitation, temporary and permanent custodial care facilities (including those for senior citizens and individuals with disabilities). Museums, zoos, community centers, libraries, shelter workshops, homeless shelters and any health and safety service of a governmental nature, may also be eligible.
The long-awaited contract for the Nebraska Regional Interoperable Network (NRIN) has been signed and Communications Services Inc. (CSI) has begun network analysis, tower mapping and engineering assessments that will build out regional networks across the state.

“The network will connect the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs),” said Dan Hiller, planning supervisor at NEMA. “It will connect dispatch centers in the eight PET/Commo Regions across the state. CSI will be identifying towers to be used for point-to-point data transportation.”

The engineering will include assessment on towers to determine capabilities for holding equipment, Hiller said.

“We are outlining the process that NEMA will need to do as far as coordination with the OCIO (Office of the Chief Information Officer) and CSI to expedite the regional network build out within a short time frame of two years,” he said.

The network will allow dispatch centers in a local jurisdiction to send voice and data to other dispatch centers in other jurisdictions within the regions, reports Rod Hutt, wireless network coordinator.

“It has potential to establish voice data with the NPPD/State Radio System.” Hutt said. The main part of the contract is the microwave data network build out at more than 200 locations.

The data network will control the future mutual aid network and in the future may carry the national warning system (NAWAS) messages, according to Bob Eastwood, communications specialist.

“In the future it could be the backbone of the new digital Ham Radio D-Star System,” Eastwood said. The data system could link D Star repeaters allowing them to be a truly statewide amateur radio system as a support to public safety.”

Mold Poses A Potential Health Threat

Mold growing in recently flooded buildings can cause health problems, state and federal emergency management officials warn.

Water-damaged rooms are moist environments ideal for mold to flourish. People with respiratory problems such as allergies or asthma should not spend time in houses that might contain mold. Mold often is visible as a fuzzy growth or discoloration on surfaces. It usually has a musty, earthy odor.

Those sensitive to mold spores may experience wheezing, difficulty breathing, nasal and sinus congestion, burning and watery eyes, dry cough, sore throat, shortness of breath or skin irritation.

Mold can cause significant health problems. It is urgent that residents and business owners clean their homes and work environments as quickly as possible and not risk serious, long-lasting health effects.

Watch for scams and fraud following storms, flooding, tornadoes

Survivors recovering from severe storms, flooding and tornadoes that struck Nebraska beginning in June are urged by state and federal officials to beware of scam artists who prey on others’ misfortunes.

Common types of fraud after disaster strikes are scam artists, contractor fraud and identity theft.

Keep in mind the following suggestions to be safe from scam artists or unscrupulous contractors:

■ Do business only with licensed and insured contractors.
■ Use known contractors first.
■ Ask for references and a written estimate.
■ Get a copy of the final, signed contract.
■ Do not give personal information such as your bank account numbers, social security number, or other information to those without proper identification.
■ Do not sign off before the job is finished.

To report suspected fraud in Nebraska, call the Office of the Attorney General, Consumer Protection Division toll-free at (800) 727-6432.

![Disaster Recovery Resources for Nebraska Citizens](image-url)
The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is charged by Nebraska statute to reduce the vulnerabilities of the people and communities of Nebraska in terms of injury, loss of life and property damage resulting from natural, technological or man-made disasters and emergencies. NEMA is responsible for coordinating the state response in any major emergency or disaster including the support of local governments as needed or requested, and coordinating assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other federal partners.

The Beacon is published monthly by NEMA to share news about the agency and emergency management activities throughout the state. Story ideas can be forwarded to: Jodie Fawl, Public Information Officer, NEMA, 1300 Military Road, Lincoln, NE 68508; (402) 471-7428; or jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov.