

THE BEACON



Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

October 2010

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Winter Weather
Awareness Day
Thursday, Nov. 4



Time to prepare for winter

Severe Nebraska winters can paralyze wide areas and result in extensive damage to property, economic hardships, injuries and even death.

In an effort to remind Nebraskans to prepare for winter weather, **Gov. Dave Heineman** declared **Nov. 4 as Winter Weather Awareness Day** in a ceremony at the Capitol on Oct. 6.

Local and state emergency management officials, the National Weather Service and other volunteer agencies can support the state's citizens in mitigating the effects of severe winter weather by focusing attention on the upcoming winter season.

Community and individual preparedness can:

- Minimize the effects on property
- Ease the burdens placed on private, local and state resources
- Reduce the number of injuries
- Prevent loss of life

By being prepared and taking proper precautions, the people of Nebraska can reduce the effects of blizzards, snow and ice-covered roads, extremely low temperatures and other hazards of life-threatening weather developments.

To prepare for severe winter weather, citizens are urged to stay tuned for storm watches and warnings issued by the National Weather Service.

When a **Winter Storm Watch** is issued:

- Listen to an NOAA Weather Radio, local radio and TV sta-

tions, or The Weather Channel for further updates.

- Be alert to changing weather conditions.
 - Avoid unnecessary travel.
- When a **Winter Storm Warning** is issued:

- Stay indoors during the storm.
- If you must go outside, wear several layers of clothing to ward off the cold. Wear gloves or mittens. Wearing a hat will conserve valuable body heat. Avoid alcohol.
- Understand the hazards of wind chill, which combines the cooling effect of wind and cold on exposed skin. The results can be frostbite and hypothermia (the rapid loss of body heat).
- Walk carefully on snow or ice-covered surfaces.
- Avoid overexertion while walking in heavy snow or while shoveling snow. A common killer during winter storms is heart attack.

National Weather Service forecasts can give several hours advance notice of hazardous winter weather.

The Nebraska Emergency Management website lists tips for preparing for winter weather at www.nema.nebraska.gov. Click on the Disaster FAQ/Info tab.

Another good source for information is the Nebraska Department of Roads 24-Hour Weather and Travel Information line at 511. If calling from outside Nebraska, dial: 1-800-906-9069). Information is also available at www.511nebraska.org.



On the Cover:

Jim Meyer, meteorologist in charge with the National Weather Service (NWS) in Omaha speaks at the Winter Weather Awareness Day Proclamation ceremony Oct. 6 at the Capitol. Also pictured, from left, Gov. Dave Heineman, Brian Smith, warning coordination meteorologist with NWS and Al Berndt, assistant director of NEMA also participated.

Winter Weather Awareness Day is Nov. 4.



Bob Wilhelm, Mardell Hergenrader and Dan Hiller attended the Public Safety Interoperable Communications Grantee Conference in Cleveland.

NEMA staff attend grantee conference

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency's **Mardell Hergenrader, Dan Hiller** and **Bob Wilhelm** attended the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) Grantee Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, Oct. 5-6.

The PSIC Grantee Conference, was hosted by the Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grant Programs Directorate (GPD), and was an event designed to support grantees' programmatic efforts to enhance emergency communications through:

- Sharing of information, strategy, tools, and relationships to achieve the project plans in their Investment Justifications
- Opportunities for grantees to discuss funding challenges and identify solutions
- Networking and partnership building among grantees

The conference brought together PSIC project and financial manag-

ers, State Administrative Agencies (SAA) personnel, and NTIA and FEMA officials.

The conference included general sessions led by NTIA and FEMA leadership, as well as breakout sessions led by the grantees.

Topics of discussion included environmental compliance, audit, best practices, match documentation and closeout process details. NTIA and FEMA also rolled out the process and details for requesting a PSIC extension.



Bob Wilhelm presents at conference.

Stop. Think. Connect.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has launched "Stop. Think. Connect," a public cyber security awareness campaign to promote increased safety and security online.

"We all share a responsibility to prevent cyber attacks and increase our nation's resilience to cyber threats," said DHS Secretary **Janet Napolitano**. The "Stop. Think. Connect" campaign will help equip the public with simple information to keep themselves and their families safe and secure on the Internet."

"Stop. Think. Connect" includes cyber forums hosted in collaboration with the National Centers of Academic Excellence to bring together diverse groups of community, private and government participants for dialogues on cybersecurity issues; opportunities for members of the public to get involved and help spread the word by leading or hosting campaign activities; and a coalition for public and private sector organizations.

October is National Cybersecurity Awareness Month and is a coordinated effort between DHS, the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC), and the National Center for Supercomputing Applications to raise awareness about the importance of cybersecurity and help Americans establish smart cyber habits that will lead to increased protection online.

To learn more about the campaign and to download free online safety tips and resources, visit www.dhs.gov/stopthinkconnect. For information about DHS's other efforts to protect and safeguard America's computer systems and networks from attacks, visit www.dhs.gov/cyber.

Phase III of Statewide Radio Network complete

(York, Neb.) **Gov. Dave Heineman** was joined Oct. 19 by state emergency personnel and officials with the Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD) marking the completion of the third phase of Nebraska's new wireless radio network. The effort is a joint project of the State of Nebraska and NPPD, the state's largest power provider.

The wireless radio network is being assembled in four phases. Phase III includes 30 counties in central and eastern Nebraska. Thirty-eight counties in central and western Nebraska were part of Phases I and II, completed during the past year. Installations for the final phase are underway and expected to be complete by the end of the year.

"This new radio network is critical for first responders across our state," Gov. Heineman said. "NPPD utility crews have played an integral part in the response to storm damage in the last few years. The network being built will have increased capacity and broader reach because of the partnership we've formed with the Nebraska Public Power District."

In 2004, state officials outlined a plan to achieve interoperable communications for state and local first responders and emergency managers. The plan called for a new wireless radio network for state agency personnel that would also serve as a backbone to connect eight regional communications networks to achieve statewide interoperability.

State officials then worked with city and county officials to develop regional communications networks. Funding for the state network was approved in 2007 and a contract for building the state-owned network was completed in 2008.

In 2008, NPPD officials explored options for replacing the utility's aging radio system and became a partner in the wireless radio proj-

ect. The NPPD board approved the plan in the spring of 2009. The costs of developing the network have been shared by the state and NPPD. It will be licensed and operated by both entities, providing an additional layer of redundancy.

Phase III included installation of 457 new radios in NPPD utility trucks, upgrades and equipment installation on 12 radio towers in the 30 county area, along with the installation of 135 new radios in Nebraska State Patrol (NSP) Troop C vehicles, some of Troop B vehicles and 25 State Fire Marshal vehicles.

The network is now available to state agency personnel in a 68 county area, including 310 State Patrol vehicles, as well as 67 percent of NPPD utility crews.

State Patrol Superintendent **Col. Bryan Tuma** said, "Our partnership with NPPD has proven to be invaluable to this project. It has allowed for an efficient deployment of the system, benefiting both law enforcement and our public power partners."

When complete, the network will connect public safety personnel from seven state agencies and NPPD utility crews. It will also allow for communication with local first responders, county emergency management personnel and some

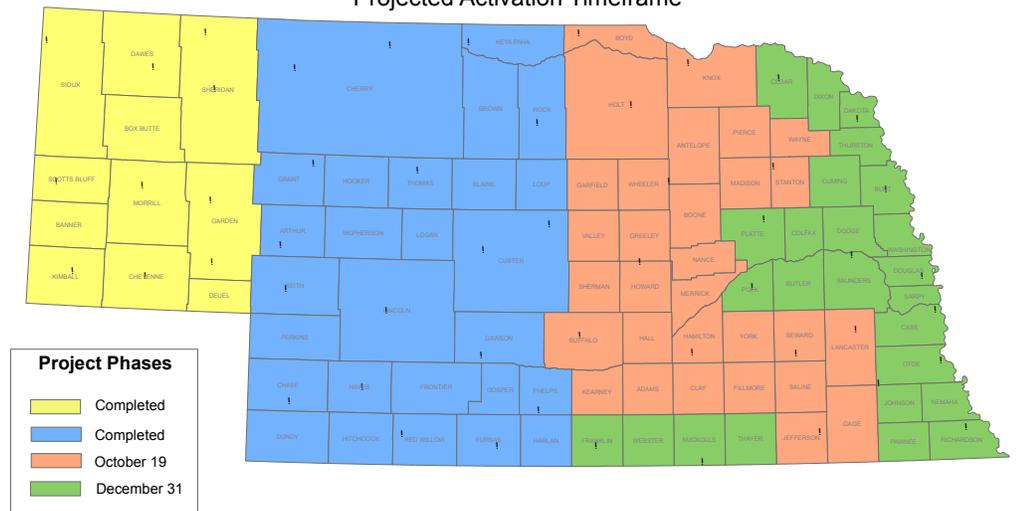
federal personnel in Nebraska.

Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, Nebraska's Director of Homeland Security, said, "The ability to communicate is a vital part of emergency response. This system is an example of the collaboration and innovation taking place in Nebraska that is delivering high-priority technology projects that benefit residents across the state."

The new Phase III area now active on the radio network includes: Adams, Antelope, Boone, Boyd, Buffalo, Clay, Fillmore, Gage, Garfield, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Holt, Howard, Jefferson, Kearney, Knox, Lancaster, Madison, Merrick, Nance, Pierce, Saline, Seward, Sherman, Stanton, Valley, Wayne, Wheeler, and York Counties.

State agency partners in the project include: NSP, the State Fire Marshal's Office, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, and the Nebraska Departments of Agriculture, Correctional Services and Roads. Other partners include the Office of the Chief Information Officer, which provides technical support for the statewide radio network, and Nebraska Educational Telecommunications, which has provided access to many existing radio towers across the state.

NEBRASKA STATE RADIO NETWORK
Projected Activation Timeframe



Be Prepared awards recognize excellence

Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy announced the recipients of this year's 'Be Prepared' awards, recognizing volunteers and community organizations for excellence in emergency preparedness and disaster response.

Presented during National Preparedness month, the Be Prepared awards program is in its third year of honoring Nebraskans who volunteer their time and energy to support preparedness in Nebraska communities. The awards are presented by **Lt. Gov. Sheehy** who serves as Nebraska's director of homeland security and are sponsored by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency in partnership with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

"These individuals are a great asset and I'm pleased to recognize a few of the many volunteers who contribute to Nebraska's preparedness efforts," Lt. Gov. Sheehy said. "This year's honorees have helped Nebraska communities be ready to respond to emergencies of all kinds. They work closely with local officials and first responders and are available to help Nebraskans and their families year round. I want to thank them for their commitment and for their diligence."

Several groups were presented with awards as part of this year's program.

The Citizen Corps Council of the Year award was presented to the **Douglas County Citizen Corps Council**. Citizen Corps groups increase the preparedness of citizens to respond in emergencies and the number of volunteers who are trained to support first responders.

The Douglas County Citizen Corps Council coordinates several programs to support first responders and provide training for volunteers, including: Fire Corps, Medical Reserve Corp, Volunteers in Police Services, and a Community Emergency Response Team

(CERT). The council offers a range of classes and education in first aid and disaster response. Last year, the council provided information to more than 5,000 residents as part of the Salute to Safety Expo held at Westroads Mall. Promotions were shown in Marcus Theaters in Omaha, Bellevue and Lincoln reaching more than 600,000 patrons. A Citizen Corps Night with the Omaha Royals was held to kick-off National Preparedness Month activities.

The **Schuyler Volunteer Fire Department** received the 2010 Local Hero Award, which recognizes extraordinary service in helping residents in an emergency situation.

In addition to responding to fires, Schuyler volunteer firefighters have demonstrated outstanding response to flooding and other natural disasters in recent years, helping protect the community with sandbags and evacuating residents in response to flooding in 2008. This year, firefighters were proactive in the face of imminent flooding, organizing sandbagging operations, notifying residents of rising waters and evacuating them as needed. The department also tracked volunteer hours and obtained supplies needed for a relief shelter, which helped minimize the impact of flooding for local residents.

The Excellence in Community Preparedness award was presented to the **BryanLGH Health System** and the **Cornhusker Chapter** of the American Red Cross, which coordinated medical services for the 2010 Special Olympics USA National Games held recently in Lincoln.

During a two year period, the organizations prepared to meet the health and medical needs of more than 3,000 Special Olympics National Games athletes and participants. A medical team of more than 900 volunteers, including Red

Cross first responders, BryanLGH registered nurses, physicians, and athletic trainers, were ready to support athletes at 14 different venues and three residence hall complexes. An example of the advance planning for the event, the medical history of every athlete was logged into the BryanLGH information system prior to the games, allowing the quick sharing of information with any hospital or urgent care facilities caring for an athlete during the USA National Games.

The Citizen Corps Partner Program of the Year was presented to **Nebraska Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)** for the active role the group plays in emergency planning and response activities.

Nebraska VOAD teams up with Citizen Corps Councils and its partner programs including the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and faith-based groups to educate and prepare the public on subjects of preparedness and resiliency. The group created a directory of services, contact information and response time for volunteer organizations and is developing a website to provide disaster preparedness information and aid resources. Members have participated in FEMA conferences on relief efforts and helped to implement new tools in Nebraska. During summer flooding, Nebraska VOAD helped to set up shelters and provide clean-up kits for residents.

Individual awards include:

The Citizen Corps Volunteer of the Year award goes to **Linda Ohri** of Omaha. A volunteer with the Eastern Nebraska Medical Reserve Corps and pharmacy professor at Creighton University, Ohri also chairs an immunization task force. Following the H1N1 outbreak last year, she organized and staffed vaccination clinics, staffed an informational hotline and recruited volun-

Continued on page 5

Be Prepared Awards Continued

teers over a three month period last fall.

Roger Hammond of Grand Island received the Excellence in Risk Communication award, for his volunteer work as HAM radio operator and chair of the Grand Island CERT program. A leader with the Hall County HAM Radio Amateur Radio Emergency Service, Hammond regularly reports to the Hall County Emergency Operations Center and works with county emergency management officials to coordinate storm reports from members of the Grand Island Amateur Radio Service. He also coordinates with emergency managers following regular tests of county outdoor warning devices.

Jared Stockwell of Grand Island was recognized with the Excellence in Preparedness Education and Outreach award. In 2008, the Grand Island Fire Department (GIFD) responded to a mobile home fire that claimed two victims. The home had no smoke detectors and Stockwell, a firefighter and paramedic with GIFD, was among the responders on the scene. He wanted to prevent future tragedies and collected data from mobile home parks in order to obtain a grant that provided 3,750 smoke detectors to mobile homes in city limits. He developed marketing and educational materials promoting fire safety and prevention and secured another grant to provide funding for billboards and other marketing tools being installed in Grand Island.

NEMA holds communications workshop in Grand Island

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency held a Communication Assets Survey and Mapping (CASM) and Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) Workshop in Grand Island on Oct. 5-6.

The CASM portion of the training session consisted of a webinar with **Jeff Lee**, CASM system administrator with the Department of Homeland Security.

“Everyone seemed to grasp and understand CASM as they were able to accomplish loading their information,” said **Rod Hutt**, communications network analyst for NEMA. “It seemed to be a consensus that CASM is a worthwhile tool. They understood that CASM was the logical starting point for entering data and then exporting it to their TICPs. Unlike some webinars, this one seemed to be value added and worthwhile. Attendees were able to ask questions during the presentation.”

An overview of the TICP process and how to mine the information from CASM was included in the TICP portion of the conference.

“We had access to wireless Internet, so we were able to have each of the approximately 25 attendees fill in their respective information and then exported it to their TICP,” Hutt said.

Each region had copy of the updated format for its TICP which

allowed for a transition from the 2007 version to the 2010 version.

NEMA and the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center had gone through the new versions and made suggestions for each region’s input.

The state has a TICP of its own. Three state agencies were represented and the representatives worked on the state’s TICP.

The next task for those who attended the conference is to go back to their regions and get information from each county.

“I believe they took this task seriously and that they will follow through on getting the updated information,” Hutt said. “The locals see how the information is important to them on a day-to-day basis, as well as in an emergency.”

Steve Cass, communications network analyst at NEMA, presented information on Paraclete and demonstrated how CASM/TICP and Paraclete go hand-in-hand.

Much of the information gleaned in the process will serve as information that will help locals decide what should be in the Paraclete database and radio programming features.

“Attendees gave the workshop good marks in their evaluations,” Hutt said. “The conference was very worthwhile and should be repeated from time to time.”



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.