



January-February 2015

# The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



## Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac Welcomes EM101 Participants to NEMA

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*Prepare for the Worst*  
**Hope for the Best**



A Message from  
**Bryan Tuma**  
NEMA Assistant Director

**Outreach** is a focus of Nebraska Emergency Management in the days, weeks, months and years ahead. Whether it takes the form of Emergency Management 101 courses to update local officials on the role of emergency management or preparedness events and messages to better prepare Nebraskan's for disasters, we will focus our efforts on ways to keep Nebraskans safe. We are working with local emergency managers to:

- better prepare Nebraskans, their families, their businesses and their neighborhoods for an emergency,
- show local communities, business partners, organizations and other government agencies how to reduce exposure to natural and human-caused hazards,
- continue to improve public messaging before, during and after an emergency, and
- continue as trusted resources for Nebraskans on issues of emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Like emergency managers across the country, Nebraska EMs are working to help citizens increase individual preparedness by engaging with members of the community as vital partners in enhancing the resiliency and security of our nation through a whole community approach.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tuma".



**EM 101 was held at NEMA, the second offering of the course. It was met with positive reviews from participants who got a firsthand look at Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, its programs, staff and responsibilities.**

# 2015 LB Watch List

## *Legislative Bills relevant to Emergency Management (as of Jan. 30)*

<u>Bill</u>	<u>One liner</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Committee Referred To</u>	<u>Status</u>
LB022	Provide immunity to architects and professional engineers during emergency.	Krist	Judiciary	Remains in committee following Jan. 21 public hearing
LB055	Provide authority to the adjutant general to make expenditures for a disaster or emergency	Scheer	Government, Military & Veterans Affairs	Remains in committee following Jan. 22 public hearing
LB163	Create an emergency management registry allowing for public-provided data	Crawford	Government, Military & Veterans Affairs	Remains in committee following Jan. 22 public hearing
LB283	Allow school districts and ESU to make emergency expenditures	Baker	Government, Military & Veterans Affairs	Introduced Jan. 15
LB604	Change provisions relating to reimbursement to political subdivisions under the GEF.	Bloomfield	Government, Military & Veterans Affairs	Introduced Jan. 21
LB657	Appropriations for state agencies	Speaker Hadley	Appropriations	Introduced Jan. 22



## NEMA Staff UPDATE



**Troy Harris**, a retired master sergeant with the U.S. Air Force started as communications specialist with NEMA after 22.5 years active duty.

Harris served at Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Okla., Kunsan Air Base in South Korea, Yokota Air Base in Japan, Altus Air Force Base near Altus, Okla. He was also deployed to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar and Incirlik Air Base in Turkey.

While in the Air Force, Harris was a ground radio communication system specialist. He worked with airfield systems and on air traffic control communications, navigational, instrument landing and meteorological systems.

He is married to Cristal Harris and they have a six-year-old daughter named Miriam.

Harris enjoys camping, hunting and fishing and just spending time outdoors.

NEMA named a federal aid administrator, **Merci Suarez**, in January. She is taking the job formerly occupied by **Julie Mayers**, who was promoted to supervisor of the grants section.

Suarez was working at Lincoln Electric System prior to returning to NEMA. She had worked at NEMA as a contract employee in 2007.

Suarez also worked at the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the Kansas Highway Patrol on the homeland security grant.

Suarez earned her Bachelor of Business Administration from Baker University in Iola, Kan.

She is married to Lionel Suarez a counselor at North Star High School in Lincoln. She has two sons, three granddaughters and three grand sons.

# Local Emergency Managers UPDATE



**Butler County**  
**Scott Steager,**  
Director  
ssteager@butler-  
countyne.net  
(402) 367-7400

## Steager Named Butler County EM

The new Butler County Emergency Manager is David City native, **Scott Steager**. He is also 911 coordinator.

Steager is a member of the Butler County Board and has served on the David City Volunteer Fire Department since 2002. He is also an emergency medical technician and CPR instructor.

He is a basic-certified emergency manager and has taken many Na-

tional Incident Management System courses.

He and his wife, Chelsea, have three children. He enjoys hunting and fishing.

## Schneider to Serve as Deputy

Former EM **Rick Schneider** was Butler County's emergency management director for 10 years and will continue as deputy EM as he assumes the duty of chief deputy sheriff and 911 coordinator for the county.

Schneider has been EM for 10 years and will serve as chief deputy of the sheriff department, jail administrator and deputy EM.



## Region 22



**Tim Newman**  
Director  
tnewman@scotts-  
bluff.org  
(308) 436-6689

Tim Newman is the new emergency manager for Region 22.

Newman most recently came from Morgan County, Ala. where he was a dispatcher for five years.

Prior to that he was assistant emergency manager for Reno County, in Hutchinson, Kans. for five years.

Part of his responsibilities there included CERT and medical reserve care coordinator.

He has 1,300 hours of independent study, classroom and other training as well as real world disaster experience including six federally-declared disasters including the Greensburg Kans tornado.

Newman is replacing **Sheila Hort**, who is leaving after three months on the job.

Newman is married to Amber. He has a 23-year-old son, two step children, ages 12 and 14, and a 21-month old.

He likes to camp and fish and has a model railroad. He like to work on Ham radio and enjoys time on Facebook.

## Red Willow County



**Alan Kotschwar,**  
Director and Sheriff  
akotschwar@rwco.org  
(308) 345-1850

## Kotschwar Named Director

McCook native, Alan Kotschwar was named director of Red Willow Emergency Management.

He has been with the Red Willow Sheriff's Office for 20 years and with the McCook Police Department for the 12 years preceding.

He is married to, Jeannine, and they have three sons and three grandchildren.

## Gene Mahon Retires

Gene Mahon retired as sheriff and emergency manager in Red Willow County. He was sheriff for 28 years and civil defense/EM for 25. Prior to that he was with the police in McCook for 12 years. He worked as a police officer in California for seven years prior to that.

He and his wife, Jan, bought a mobile home and are going to do some traveling in addition to spending time with family (four children, five grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren.)



# MERRTT Course Offered at NEMA

A Modular Emergency Response Radiological Transportation Training (MERRTT), Train-the-Trainer, course was held at NEMA, Jan. 8-9, and included local emergency management, civil air patrol and NEMA representatives as students. A compressed version of MERRTT was held in Nebraska City on Jan. 10.

The Transportation Emergency Preparedness Program (TEPP) developed MERRTT to address concerns from states, tribes, and local jurisdictions about shipments of radioactive material by the U.S. Department of Energy.

NEMA Planning Specialist Leo Larkin was one of the students in the class and said “this course offered an in-depth look at radiological shipments, requirements of radiological transportation, handling radiation survey instruments and included some hands-on of equipment and patient care.”

MERRTT provides fundamental knowledge, at the awareness and operations level, for responding to transportation incidents involving radioactive material.

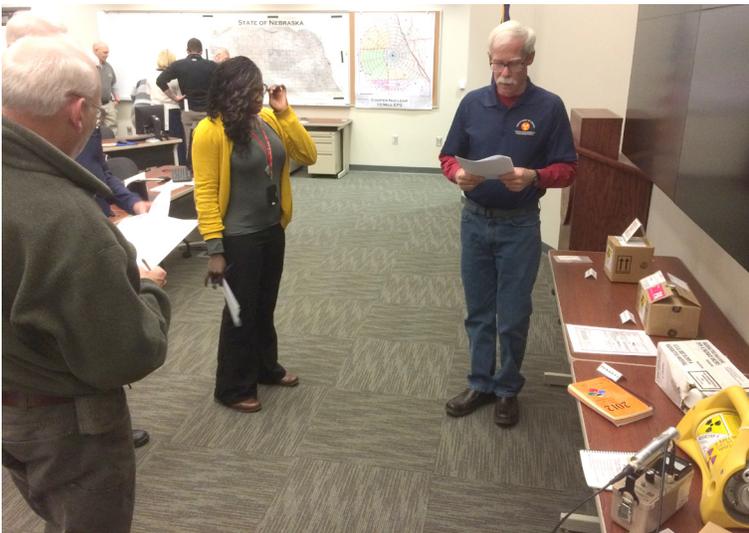
“The course meets the training requirement outlined in the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) Land Withdraw-



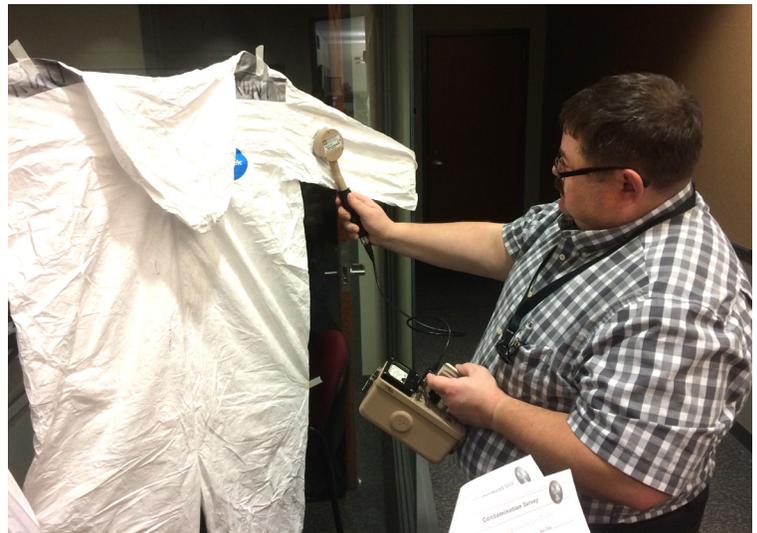
Department of Education MERRTT Instructor John Aloï from New York state discusses biological effects of radiation with the class.

al Act and is used for responders along the WIPP corridors,” said Jon Schwarz, NEMA Technical Hazards Section manager. “It includes 16 modules that can be integrated into existing hazardous material training programs.”

The course is designed to ensure responder readiness and includes six pre-planned exercise scenarios that validate responder readiness for response to a transportation incident involving radioactive material.



MERRTT Instructor Tom Dutton (right) assists NEMA’s Leo Larkin (left) and Afua Kwarteng (center) in identifying information on packages with various markings and radioactive labels.



Matt May conducts a radiological survey of suspected contaminated victim after receiving training in the use of the Ludlum Model 2241 with pancake probe.

# Eight Nebraskans attend National State Administrative Agency Symposium

Eight Nebraskans were among the 140 participants at the National State Administrative Agency Training Symposium held recently at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) in An-niston, Ala.

A total of 37 states, four territories and the District of Columbia were represented.

Nebraska was represented by: **Chuck Chase** and **Brandon Burton** of NEMA, **Mark Meints** of the Nebraska Department of Roads; **Lt. Col. Troy Paisley** of the National Guard; **Mark Hosking** of Lancaster County Emergency Management, **Zigmunt Orłowski** of Ponca Tribe Emergency Management, **Gary Petersen** of Seward and York Emergency Management; **Matthew May** of Winnebago Emergency Management.

The symposium included training simulations and lectures, such as a simulated subway accident, a mock radiological attack, briefing at the COBRA training facility on live chemical agents used in terrorist attacks, and a Noble Hospital emergency room simulated disaster.

**Karl Kim**, director of the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center and chairman of the consortium, said the state agents who attended work with first responders and learned about the many free training classes available to them through consortium member programs.

“This really is about demonstrating the training and capacity building that is available through the seven members of the consortium,” Kim said.

Each of the consortium’s seven member universities and agencies focus on different aspects of emergency preparedness. For example, the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology specializes in training first responders on explosives, while Louisiana State



Nebraska was represented at the National State Administrative Agency Training Symposium by: front row, from left, Brandon Burton of NEMA, Mathew May of Winnebago Emergency Management; back row from left, Mark Meints, Department of Roads; Lt. Col. Troy Paisley, National Guard; Mark Hosking, Lancaster County Emergency Management, Chuck Chase of NEMA, Zigmunt Orłowski of Ponca Tribe Emergency Management and Gary Petersen, Seward and York Emergency Management.

University holds classes on biological hazards and the University of Hawaii focuses on natural disasters.

This year marks the third such symposium held at the Center for Domestic Preparedness, said the center’s spokeswoman, **Lisa Hunter**. The three-day sessions are a great way to advertise all those courses, and for the many state agents to practice working together in emergencies.

Participants were busy all three days and were able to learn not only the new types of training that is available but also were shown response

equipment, Meints said. For example, the “BOO” which stands for “Base of Operations,” is basically a group of tents that make up a mobile hospital which can be brought in during disasters when a local hospital has been damaged or destroyed and would be operated by a federal disaster medical assistance team (DMAT).

“I left the symposium in Anniston with a better understanding of the training available, and how that training can be used to improve and increase the safety and security of the

**Continued on page 10**

# National State Administrative Agency Symposium Continued...

communities in Nebraska,” Meints said.

The consortium is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Through its member programs, the consortium trained more than 35,000 first responders from across the nation in Alabama between June 1998 and June 2014. The consortium has trained more than 2 million nationwide since 1998.

“We all gather every two years here in Anniston and all show off the latest training that we’ve developed — the latest new courses that are available to help build the preparedness of our nation,” Kim said.

This was the third symposium organized by the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC) which provides specialized training to the nation’s response force. The NDPC is a partnership of seven nationally recognized organizations that provide preparedness training for first responders within the context of all hazards.

“I learned about a variety of new courses, including a virtual law enforcement course, a social media exercise program, a risk assessment course and

a sports and special event evacuation course that we will bring to Nebraska,” Chase said.

In addition to providing greater insights into NDPC training, the symposium helped training representatives from each state learn about the valuable training opportunities at NDPC partner institutions.

“The NSAA symposium is informative, educational and a practical means to gather materials and understanding about the multiple planning, exercise and training opportunities available throughout America, at no expense to the local, regional or state agencies,” said Hosking. “I would recommend this opportunity to local, regional and state partners when offered the experience. I also applaud Nebraska Emergency Management Agency for offering this opportunity to local and regional emergency managers as representatives for the state of Nebraska. This enabled the locals to provide direct feedback on the planning, exercise and training needs within their counties and regions. The symposium highlighted the planning, exercise and training currently available, as well as prospective programs

being developed.

According to Lt. Col. Troy Paisley, the four-day consortium gave participants a peek into the vast amount of no cost unique domestic response training opportunities that are available. Additionally, those who attended were able to interact with more than 100 state, local, and tribal emergency response professionals from across the nation.

“From the National Guard perspective, this event was particularly beneficial in the on-going effort to develop relevant and challenging training strategies for our service members in a domestically centered training environment,” Paisley said. “Historically, training efforts, especially over the past decade, have been largely focused on the National Guard federal mission in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, etc. Thus, training opportunities that are specifically focused on the state’s domestic mission and provide interagency interaction are invaluable. The symposium provided one way that the National Guard can achieve its strategic domestic preparedness objective.



## Annual Ice Meeting

The annual Lower Platte River ice preparedness meeting was held at the Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District in December. NEMA State Hazard Mitigation Officer Mary Baker kicked off the meeting that was held in preparation of the season when ice potentially could cause flooding throughout the area.



## Ice Jam

Ice jams and flooding at Two Rivers State Park on the Platte River caused concern for local emergency managers and the Papio-Missouri Natural Resources District. A combined effort, on the part of the locals, for mitigation was unnecessary as the ice jam broke on its own, Jan. 29.



### Gov. Pete Ricketts Takes Oath of Office

NEMA staff watch from the State Emergency Operations Center as Gov. Pete Ricketts is sworn in during a ceremony at the State Capitol on Jan. 8.



### Region 5-6 Holds Hostile Action-Based Tabletop Exercise

NEMA staff were among the participants in a tabletop exercise in Blair, hosted by Region 5/6 and Director Bill Pook, in preparations for the hostile action-based functional exercise scheduled later in 2015.



### Central Platte River Coordination Meeting Hosted at NEMA

Representatives from the Central Platte and Twin Platte Natural Resource District met with local emergency managers and state agencies as well as the National Weather Service, the Nebraska State Patrol and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at NEMA to discuss flood mitigation and tactics for the central Nebraska portions of the Platte River.

# NEMA Hosts CARDEX 2015

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency conducted a resource accountability workshop and drill for 35 participants from 27 agencies and jurisdictions, Jan. 13-14, at the Holiday Inn Express in North Platte.

The first part of the workshop covered lessons learned from the use of Salamander Industries Resource Accountability systems and tools at planned events and disasters in Nebraska from the last several years.

The last section of the workshop involved revising a draft version of a resource accountability standard operating procedure to be employed by all users of the Salamander Industries technology in Nebraska.

The CARDEX exercise drill gave participants an opportunity to employ these systems and tools in a simulated resource accountability response to a tornado in North Platte.

Participants used the Rapidtag, Mobile Express and Command systems to record simulated resources responding to the disaster within an Incident Command System format.



# Creighton Basketball Star Returns to Nebraska for Sports Management Course

Sport Event Evacuation Training and Exercise, a course presented by the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security (NCS4), which is a division of the University of Southern Mississippi, will be presented to Nebraska on March 17-18. Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium will host the course, which is geared toward Division I college sports arenas and stadiums.

"NCS4 is limited in the number of presentations for this course, yet, Nebraska's hosting of the College World Series (CWS) furnished me some clout, the planets aligned, and we were able to get them this year," said **Chuck Chase**, exercise training officer for NEMA, "As it stands, it looks like we may be getting participation from UNL, UNO, and Creighton, all of which are Division I schools."

Local personnel who work outside the stadium during the CWA are expected to attend, as well as represen-

tatives from the Metropolitan Entertainment and Convention Authority (MECA), which manages the stadium.

So, why the zoo? "More than 20,000 people attend the zoo every Saturday, every summer," Chase said. "It is one of the state's major draws, and they are leading the nation's zoos with the preparedness activities they are performing."

Last year the Henry Doorly Zoo hosted a tabletop exercise that was attended by zoo and emergency management officials from six states and four zoos. This year the zoo will be working on their existing evacuation plan and making it even more robust. They will be hosting a risk assessment course (MGT 315) in February, evacuation training (MGT 412) in March, in-house NIMS training in April, and an evacuation workshop in May.

"I think NEMA is glad to bring this to Nebraska, not just for the Division

I schools and the zoo, but also for our other colleges, like Peru State, or other events, like Husker Harvest Days or the Nebraska State Fair," Chase said.

Southern Miss is bringing in one of the top instructors for this course; **David S. Corderman**, the former chief of the FBI's Leadership Development Institute. The supporting instructor will be **Mike Caruso**. Caruso directs all 21 of Texas A&M's sports in event management and game operations as well as annual NCAA regional and national championships. If the name Mike Caruso is familiar to you, it may be because he received his master's degree at UNL, and his bachelor's degree at Creighton University, where he played basketball under legendary Coach Eddie Sutton. The Creighton record book is riddled with Caruso's name, including fourth, ninth and 13th place for free-throw percentage during his sophomore through senior years.

## Woodmen of the World, KLIN Replaces Pilger Flags



Woodmen of the World and radio station KLIN to presented 50 U.S. flags and 10 flag cases to the City of Pilger to replace flags damaged during the tornado that struck in June. The event was held at St. Peter's Church in Pilger. Left: Jeff Bridges, state manager for Woodmen of the World with Village Clerk/Treasurer Kim Neiman and Right, Heather Kneiff and Donovan Evans – employees at Midwest Bank with Neiman. "They gave us an additional 20 flags to ensure we have all new ones for the cemetery on Memorial Day," Nieman said. "We did not know how we were going to raise funds for all the cemetery flags that were damaged. It is very overwhelming to receive the gift of the flags. Pilger will be able to continue a long-standing tradition of putting them up for the Memorial Day weekend. We cannot express how much it means, not only to the Pilger residents, but to all who have relatives buried at the cemetery, the ones who see the flags from Hwy 275 while driving west, and those who attend the annual Memorial Day ceremony.

## A Message from the State Emergency Response Commission Coordinator

I'm excited to tell you about several upcoming hazmat happenings.

The SERC kicked off the new year with a bang with the creation of a SERC Program Overview which can be found here: <http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/serc-overview.pdf>. This short PDF will give you a brief history of the SERC, its members and our accomplishments in 2014.

A much anticipated LEPC guide was finalized and can be found here: <http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/lepc-guide.pdf>. This guide replaces the older green guide that I would bring out when I visited your LEPCs. The newer version found online has external links to everything hazmat planning and LEPC.

Mark your calendars as 2015 is the year of the Region 7 LEPC/TERC conference, this is the four state regional conference. I'm excited to announce that Nebraska is again the host state. The conference, Aug. 6-8, will be located at the Lied Lodge Conference Center in Nebraska City. If you've never attended this conference, here's your chance. More information will be coming out shortly, but I encourage any LEPC member to attend. The conference is **FREE** to LEPC members with an active LEPC (unsure what "active" means – it's all in the LEPC guide above).

On the hazmat response side; I'd like to announce that we are again hosting a hazmat challenge. This year's challenge will be held in conjunction with the Hazmat Symposium. The challenge will be March 27, followed by the symposium March 28-29. As an "active" LEPC member, if you are interested in attending the symposium, please let me know, we can use the HMEP mini grant system (also explained in the guide) for the registration/rooms.

On the national front, big news with the DHS CFATS (chemical facility antiterrorism standard) front. The president signed into law HR 4007, which amended the program and requires DHS to share information with first responders (if you remember when the program was created, anyone inquiring had to have a need to know and security clearance). More information can be found here: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/4007>.

Shale Oil continues to make the news both nationally and locally. Nebraska was highlighted in the winter edition of TRANSCAER - <http://www.transcaer.com/docs/newsletters/magazine/2015%20winter/index.html> and will be one of the top contenders for the much anticipated API/AAR Crude Oil Safety course which should be coming out shortly. I'll send more information as it becomes available.

Don't forget those looming deadlines:

**TIER II Reports are due to the SERC, LEPC and Fire Dept by March 1**

**LEPC Annual Reports are due April 1**

As always the SERC members and I would love to hear from you. Our next meeting is at our annual retreat in North Platte, April 7-8. Send us your meeting minutes, agendas and stories. We enjoy hearing what work you're all doing out there.



Tonya Ngotel

## Nebraska Plans Statewide Exercise Along Crude Oil Route

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), in conjunction with the BNSF Railway, has begun the planning stages for a statewide exercise involving multiple levels of government, the private sector and first responders.

NEMA Exercise Training Officer **Brandon Burton** led the first planning meeting where objectives were discussed,

seminars were planned and current planning standards were updated. Three seminars are planned along the affected route to help identify gaps in plans, resources and training. A final discussion based tabletop will involve newly elected officials, state agency directors and railroad personnel.

"We feel an exercise of this magnitude is critical to ensure an efficient

and safe response, should we have an issue along any rail in Nebraska," said **Tonya Ngotel**, State Emergency Response Commission coordinator and Nebraska state coordinator for TRANSCAER. "Plans are in-place; hazmat teams have been trained and equipped. This as an opportunity to test plans and identify gaps that need to be addressed prior to a real event."

## FEMA Encourages Young People to Join Youth Preparedness Council

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is seeking applicants for its Youth Preparedness Council. The council supports FEMA's commitment to involving youth in preparedness-related activities and provides an opportunity for young people to offer their perspectives, feedback and insights on how to help make America more resilient.

"Young people play a key role in advancing emergency preparedness and informing our efforts," said FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate. "The Youth Preparedness Council offers FEMA the unique opportunity to benefit from the

perspectives of young people, while also empowering them to engage with their communities to increase readiness."

As advocates for preparedness, council members will complete a self-selected youth preparedness project and have the opportunity to share their opinions, ideas, solutions and questions about youth disaster preparedness with FEMA leadership.

To apply, Youth Preparedness Council applicants must be 13 to 17 years old. They must also be engaged in individual and community preparedness or have experienced a disaster

that motivated them to make a positive difference in their community.

To be eligible for consideration, applicants must submit a completed application form and two letters of recommendation. Completed applications and all supporting materials must be received no later than March 2, at 11:59 p.m. EST. New Youth Preparedness Council members will be announced in May 2015.

For more information about completing and submitting the application, please visit: [www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness-council](http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness-council).

## Serve with CERT

Volunteering, like disaster preparedness, is a year-round activity. If members of your community are looking for opportunities to give back this year, consider encouraging them to join your local [community emergency response team](#) (CERT).

Team members receive training in basic medical operations, light search and rescue, and many other useful disaster skills. After completing their training, CERT volunteers may support their communities in a variety of different ways before, during, and after emergencies, including providing information to the public, conducting residential checks, supporting traffic and crowd control efforts, staffing emergency operations centers, and more.

Check out [FEMA's blog](#) and [CERT Newsletter archives](#) highlighting great activities from teams around the country. Learn more about CERT, [find a team](#) in your area, and encourage community members to start volunteering today.

**Nebraska Contact: Ryan Lowry**  
**Citizen Corps State Coordinator**  
**Phone: (402) 471-7424**  
**Email: [ryan.lowry@nebraska.gov](mailto:ryan.lowry@nebraska.gov)**



The Nebraska Citizen Corps Program (NECCP) is starting things off on a high note in 2015. The Central Nebraska Medical Reserve Corps (CNMRC) was selected to receive a \$1,500 grant from the Walmart Foundation through the Local Facility Giving Program. This is the second grant the CNMRC has received from Walmart. Previous grant funds were used to purchase supplies and equipment for volunteers to be used during disaster exercises and deployments. Congratulations to **Ron Pughes**, unit coordinator, and all of the volunteers.

The NECCP recently took the opportunity to educate youth about being prepared. Ryan Lowry, state coordinator, spoke with kids at a the Nebraska National Guard Child and Youth event in Lincoln about the types of disasters or emergencies that can occur and how they can be better prepared for them. Kids ranged in age from 5-11 years old and talked about their family communication plans and how to put together a preparedness kit. Everyone received their own Bad-Day-Bag with flashlight and water bottle to take home and start their own personal preparedness kit.

## Create a Bad Day Bag!

Nebraska Citizen Corps promotes preparedness in all situations. Creating a Bad Day Bag is just one way to be prepared for a disaster or emergency. A Bad Day Bag can be kept in your office, car, dorm room or anywhere you might need to grab it and go. You can include items that will be useful such as:

- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Hand sanitizer
- First aid kit
- Cell phone charger
- Emergency contact information
- Water bottle.

Follow @NE\_CCP on twitter and use #BadDay Bag to share with us what's in your kit.

# Amy Stroh's Legacy: Commitment, Dedication to NEMA

It's hard to imagine Nebraska Emergency Management Agency without staff assistant, Amy Stroh. For more than 40 years, she was the one constant at an agency that helps Nebraska citizens prepare for and recover from disasters of all shapes and sizes.

Her death on Sunday, Jan. 25, nine days short of her 60th birthday, was an unwelcome shock. She died following a brief illness.

She is survived by her husband Jeff, son Jake, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews and co-workers, all of whom will miss her greatly.

"Forty years is a long time at one job," said Assistant Director Bryan Tuma. "It's especially rare in an age when moving to bigger and better jobs is the norm. Amy's loyalty to first the Nebraska Civil Defense Agency and then to Nebraska Emergency Management Agency is a testament to her dedication."

Amy started working for the agency on Aug. 12, 1974, at age 19, after graduating from Spaulding High School and Lincoln School of Commerce. Through the terms of seven governors, eight adjutant generals and six assistant directors, Amy's consistent ability to adapt to ever-changing policies was commendable. From replacing typewriters with computers, cutting stencils and carbon copies with photo copies, plus the introduction of fax machines, scanners, e-mail and cell phones, her aptitude for adapting to advancing technology and learning new skills was praiseworthy.

Amy received a Commendation Medal from **Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac**, the adjutant general and director of NEMA in August to commemorate her 40 years of service.

The commendations read: "Through her willingness to share her skills, as well as her institutional knowledge, she had become a mainstay of the agency. Mrs. Stroh's exceptional service reflects great credit upon herself, the Nebraska Emergency Management



**NEMA staff including Director, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac watch as a Nebraska Flag flown at the Joint Forces Headquarters is taken down for presentation to Amy Stroh's family in honor of her service to the state.**



**Deputy Adj. Gen. Rich Dahlman presents Amy Stroh with a medal for Meritorious Service to the Nebraska Military Department on her 40th anniversary with the agency in Aug. 2014.**

Agency, Nebraska Military Department, State of Nebraska and Nebraska National Guard."

For many years, Amy worked in the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Section as a staff assistant. She efficiently worked in the joint information center as a communications specialist at numerous exercises for Cooper and Ft. Calhoun nuclear power stations.

"Amy was definitely an asset to this

section as well as the entire agency," said Jon Schwarz, technical hazard section manager. "When Amy made her smooth transition from REP to administration, we felt her absence greatly. Amy's presence in this agency has been so prevalent, I don't know how we will get along without her."

Her daily work included procurement of materials and supplies for the entire agency. Amy handled commu-

nications and radio tower contracts and the annual report for the technical hazards section.

When someone works in one place for 40 years, they develop knowledge that can never be found in a standard operation procedures (SOP), and Amy kindly and willingly share her vast knowledge and experience.

“Amy was a gentle soul who took a feisty pill every once and a while,” said co-worker Julie Bergfield. “I just moved over to this section, and Amy did a lot of training with me. It was always full of good information, but included plenty of laughs.”

Many times Amy knew what was going on at the agency almost before anyone else; she had her sources. Her insight and observations were helpful as NEMA staff completed their work.

Her last day at the agency was Dec. 24 and was marked by a potluck holiday lunch. Potluck lunches were Amy’s favorite time at NEMA, and she made sure that everyone was included, Bergfield said. If someone forgot to bring a dish, Amy would be the first to say “It doesn’t matter, we have plenty of food.”

Amy looked out for her co-workers, said Public Information Officer **Jodie Fawl**. “She cared about us and the feeling was mutual. We’re sure going to miss her.”



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**Amy Stroh through the years at NEMA:**

1. With former Gov. Mike Johanns;
2. With former Adj. Gen. Stanley Heng;
3. With former Gov. Ben Nelson;
4. With former Gov. Bob Kerrey;
5. With co-workers Rich Faulkner and Jackie Maly;
6. With assistant director, Bryan Tuma, at her 40-year celebration;
7. With former Adj. Gen. Judd Lyons;
8. With NEMA Technical Hazards Manager Jon Schwarz and former assistant director, Al Berndt, in June 2014;
9. Laughing at Larry the Cable Guy’s antics when he visited NEMA in 2013.



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Governor Peter Ricketts

State Homeland Security Director

Lt. Governor Mike Foley

NEMA Director

Major General Daryl Bohac

Assistant Director

Bryan Tuma

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

The Beacon is published monthly and includes emergency management news and activities from across the state. Please forward story ideas or photos for inclusion to:

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## Calendar of Events

**March 17** LEOP Workshop, NEMA

**March 23-27** Severe Weather Awareness Week

**April 1-3** NAEM Conference, Grand Island

**April 30** National PrepareAthon! Day

**Aug.-Sept.** TERREX seminars, tabletops. Winnebago, Fremont, Tecumseh, Lincoln.

**September** National Preparedness Month

**Sept. 30** National PrepareAthon! Day

To register for classes visit [the NEMA Training Calendar page](#).

## America's PrepareAthon!

America's PrepareAthon! is a national, grassroots campaign for action to increase community preparedness and resilience through natural hazard-specific drills, group discussions, and exercises. Check out: [www.ready.gov/prepare](http://www.ready.gov/prepare) for a suite of resources to help develop and promote actions, including: how to guides, instructive animations and promotional materials.

Everyone is encouraged to to register preparedness events (like drills, exercises, table tops and discussions) throughout the year at [www.ready.gov/prepare](http://www.ready.gov/prepare) to show momentum. There will be increased media focus during severe weather preparedness weeks and on April 30, for National PrepareAthon! Day. There's a National PrepareAthon! Day twice a year. The second one for 2015 is on Sept 30 at the end of National Preparedness Month.

The momentum is building with over 25 million participants, overall, in 2014; and 2.4 million on board already for 2015.

- Spread the word by registering activities (i.e., drills, exercises, table tops) and feel free to use the America's PrepareAthon! name to amplify those efforts. States can now join the millions who have participated in the national movement to spread the preparedness message across the country.
- Use America's PrepareAthon! materials to support your state's severe weather preparedness week, flood safety week and tornado drills.

## Weather-Ready Actions of the Month

■ **January: Resolve to Stay Alert for Dangerous Weather** Make sure wireless emergency are are enabled on your mobile phone. These alerts can save your life. If you haven't turned them off, great. You're already weather-ready. If you know you turned them off in the past, or aren't sure, go into your phone's settings and check your notifications to make sure the alerts are turned on. For more information: [www.weather.gov/wirelessalerts](http://www.weather.gov/wirelessalerts) or [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDpcGypv2\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDpcGypv2_U)

■ **February** Teach a loved one about **Turn Around, Don't Drown**. It is NEVER safe to drive into floodwaters. [www.weather.gov/floodsafety](http://www.weather.gov/floodsafety)