



May 2015

The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

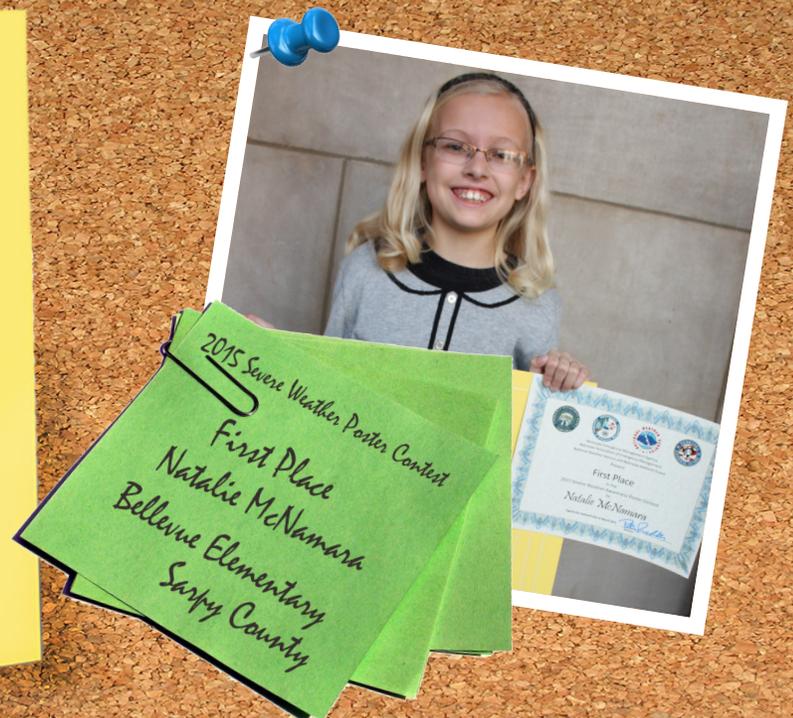


Governor's Tabletop
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Time to get Ready



A Message from
Bryan Tuma
NEMA Assistant Director

Local emergency managers across the state, and the staff at the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, would once again like to remind all Nebraskans to develop, practice and maintain plans for before, during and after a disaster.

It's not just up to individuals to prepare. As emergency managers, we practice what we preach. We prepare year round for the hazards that could affect Nebraska. One way we prepare is by practicing our plans and procedures for a state response to all types of disasters that could affect our state.

Governor's Tabletop Exercise — With that in mind, NEMA hosted the Governor's Tabletop Exercise, April 2, which included the governor, representatives from his office, directors from state agencies and emergency support function (ESF) representatives who deploy to NEMA when the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) is open following a disaster. The ESFs play an essential part in the response to state emergencies. With fewer than 40 staff working at NEMA, we would have a hard time responding to disasters on our own. We rely on our partner agencies to help us as we respond to any type of disaster.

Gov. Pete Ricketts (pictured in the State Emergency Operations Center at right) said the tabletop discussion gave him and other staff who are new to their positions, a great opportunity to learn about a state response. The tabletop focused on how resources are made available, the declaration process and how agencies and staff work together to respond following a disaster. Our State Emergency Operations Center was full of agency directors and ESF representatives who discussed the state response. It was just a month later that we put those discussions into practice with a partial activation when tornadoes and flooding struck southeast Nebraska.

A variety of other activities this spring have prepared us for the severe weather season including, a tornado tabletop exercise, a tornado summit, ESF training at the SEOC, the Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy, Wildfire Council meetings and a hazmat refresher course. We continue to work hard to be prepared.



Emergency Management Accreditation Program — **Another significant milestone for the agency was achieving re-accreditation for another five-years.** We were notified at the end of April that the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency had earned full accreditation from the Emergency Management Accreditation Program for our state's emergency management program. (See the article on page three.) It is a significant achievement to earn accreditation and I am particularly proud of our program. Successfully meeting the requirements of this strenuous process is not easily achieved, however, NEMA staff and ESF partners worked together to successfully document that we have a program which will continue to provide excellent emergency management response for the citizens of Nebraska.

Sincerely,

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

Nebraska Earns Reaccreditation

State officials were notified on April 29 that the Nebraska emergency management program has earned full accreditation from the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP).

This is the second consecutive time the state has earned this honor. Nebraska first earned accreditation in 2009 for a five-year period until 2014. The new accreditation continues through 2020.

Earning emergency management accreditation represents a significant achievement for the State of Nebraska, Gov. Pete Ricketts said.

“This is a public validation of the entire state’s preparedness effort,” said Ricketts. “By maintaining accredited status, we show adherence to industry-recognized standards. It shows that disaster preparedness and response is a high priority here in Nebraska.”

EMAP is a voluntary accreditation process for state, territorial and local government programs that coordinate preparedness and

response activities for disasters, from tornadoes to terrorist acts. It recognizes the ability of a state or local government to bring together personnel, resources and communications capabilities from a variety of agencies and organizations in preparation for and in response to an emergency. EMAP is the only accreditation process for state and local emergency management preparedness.



EMAP evaluates emergency management programs on compliance with requirements in 16 areas, including: planning; resource management; training; exercises, evaluations and corrective actions; and communications and warning. The Nebraska Emergency Manage-

ment Agency (NEMA) met all 64 standards for accreditation. Accredited programs must maintain compliance with EMAP standards and be reassessed every five years to maintain accredited status.

State, local and federal emergency managers developed EMAP to provide quality standards and a process for determining compliance. The Emergency Management Standard by EMAP creates a structure for strategic planning for improvement coupled with methodical, verified assessment by experienced peers from other jurisdictions, which results in stronger capabilities and accountability.

“Achieving accreditation is proof of the capability that exists among our state and local first responders and emergency management personnel,” said Bryan Tuma, NEMA assistant director. “We underwent an extensive peer-review assessment by EMAP trained assessors. This accreditation was sought and earned by NEMA on behalf of the state of Nebraska and all of the agencies and individuals who are part of our response team.”

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza Arrives in Nebraska

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA), in conjunction with the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), confirmed the presence of highly pathogenic H5N2 avian influenza (HPAI) in two commercial layer flocks in Dixon County, totalling 3.5 million chickens

Nebraska Emergency Manage-

ment Agency sent a field team to Dixon County to provide support to the Department of Agriculture as they responded to the outbreak.

“Unfortunately, Nebraska has joined a long list of states currently dealing with highly pathogenic avian influenza,” said NDA Director Greg Ibach. “We are working closely with our counterparts at USDA APHIS, as well as all of our Nebraska state agency partners to

ensure we are following proper protocols to address this situation. The goal is to quarantine the flock and attempt to control and contain the virus as quickly as possible.”

According to Ibach, the farms have been quarantined and the birds on the property will be depopulated. NDA is also working with Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality to ensure proper disposal of dead birds.

Severe Storms Strike Southeastern Nebraska

The State of Nebraska has requested that the Federal Emergency Management Agency work with NEMA and local emergency managers to conduct joint damage assessments in 10 southeast Nebraska Counties.

The request follows a severe storm system that struck the eastern portion of the state producing severe storms including heavy rains, large hail damaging wind, flooding and tornadoes from May 3-11.

“Preliminary damage assessments are designed to gather general information about the disaster’s impacts,” said NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma. “The assessments will allow state officials to determine whether disaster recovery

is within the state’s capabilities or whether federal disaster assistance may be needed.”

The counties requested for the public assistance preliminary damage assessment include: Adams, Cass, Gage, Jefferson, Lancaster, Nuckolls, Otoe, Saline, Saunders and Thayer counties.

“In addition to requesting a public assistance damage assessment, we are working to identify any available assistance options for individuals,” said Tuma.

The state also requested that the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) conduct damage assessments for homes and businesses in Jefferson, Saline and Thayer counties.



Deshler



Hebron



Gov. Pete Ricketts and volunteers in DeWitt.



Roseland



DeWitt



Fairbury



Lincoln



Assistant Director Bryan Tuma, State Sen. Laura Ebke and Director Daryl Bohac tour storm damage.



Severe Weather Awareness Week Poster Contest winners were honored at the State Capitol, March 18. Front row, from Left: Kaitlyn Emanuel, North Bend, fourth place; Emma Krusemark, Pender, third; Domanick Rexroad, Hebron, second; and Natalie McNamara, Papillion, Bellevue Elementary School, first; middle row; Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, director of NEMA, Emily Wageman, Region 5-6 Emergency Management, Tom Perez, Thurston County Emergency Management; Gov. Pete Ricketts; Laura Hintz, Knox County Emergency Management and the Nebraska Association of Emergency Management; Lynn Marshall, Sarpy County Emergency Management; back row, Brian Smith, National Weather Service; Dan Hiller, NEMA and Ryan Lowry, NEMA.

Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness

poster contest

LINCOLN – Natalie McNamara, a fourth grade student from Bellevue Elementary School in Papillion (Sarpy County), earned first place in the 2015 Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest, sponsored by the Nebraska Association of Emergency Management (NAEM), the National Weather Service (NWS), the Nebraska Military Department and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

McNamara's poster depicts a lightning bolt and the phrase "When you see my flash, you better dash" with a child and adult quickly exiting a park to

return to their home and safety.

The contest was open to all fourth grade students in Nebraska. The top four finishers were recognized by **Gov. Pete Ricketts** at a proclamation signing for Severe Weather Awareness Week, at the State Capitol, on Wednesday, March 18.

Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week, March 23-27, was observed to increase awareness of, and response to, severe weather hazards before the severe weather season began in Nebraska. A statewide tornado drill was held at 10 a.m., March 25, as part of the week's activities.

"We hope Nebraskans will take time during Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week to prepare for the severe weather we face in Nebraska during the spring and summer months," said **Bryan Tuma**, NEMA assistant director. "Making a safety plan and reviewing proper safety precautions is a good practice for those of us who live in areas affected by tornadoes, floods and severe thunderstorms."

Severe weather can result in tragic losses that preparation and planning can prevent. Through the poster

Continued on page 4

Poster Contest Continued ...

contest, fourth graders from across the state encourage Nebraskans to follow weather safety precautions.

The second place poster, by **Domanick Rexroad** of Thayer Central in Hebron, cautioned “Be Aware of bullies in Dark Alleys” and featured a tornado alley.

The third place poster, “Stay alert and don’t get hurt!”, was entered by **Emma Krusemark** of Pender Public Schools, and featured a tornado approaching homes. Her picture included a storm cellar with an emergency kit.

The fourth place poster, by **Kaitlyn Emanuel** of North Bend Central Elementary School, reminds people to stay inside when it is storming. It featured a lightning storm.

Posters were judged on originality, effort and accuracy. The top prize was a \$125 gift card, second was \$100 and third \$75, all sponsored by NAEM. NWS provides a \$50 gift card for fourth place. Each of the winners received a weather alert radio courtesy of **B.J. Fictum**, Saline County Emergency Management director. NEMA provides

certificates for all the students and the Nebraska Military Department mats the posters as a remembrance for students.

Top Four

First: Natalie McNamara, Papillion, Bellevue Elementary School, Sarpy County

Second: Domanick Rexroad, Hebron, Thayer Central, Thayer County

Third: Emma Krusemark, Pender, Pender Public Schools, Thurston County

Fourth: Kaitlyn Emanuel, School, North Bend North Bend Central Elementary, Region 5/6

Honorable Mention

Garrett Bellis, Aurora, Aurora Elementary School, Hamilton County

Isabelle Felber, Pender, Pender Public Schools, Thurston County

Ariel Guerra-Salazar, Crete, Crete Elementary School, Saline County

Payton Heffner, Trenton, Hitchcock County Schools, Hitchcock County

Kirsten Jensen, Hampton, Aurora Elementary, Hamilton County

Lindsay Johnson, Hebron, Thayer Central Elementary, Thayer County

Dilyn Klein, St. Paul, St. Paul Elementary School, Howard County

Alexa Krause, Denton, Crete Elementary School, Saline County

Elsie Ottun, Sargent, Sargent Elementary School, Custer County

Gabrielle Pavlik, Verdigre, Verdigre Public Schools, Knox County

Storm Peterson, Grant, Perkins County School, Perkins County

Taylor Pickinpaugh, Aurora, Aurora Elementary School, Hamilton County

Natalie Roberts, McCook, St. Patrick Catholic School, Red Willow County

Ashton Robinson, Imperial, Chase County Schools, Chase County

Chance Schultz, Carroll, Wayne Elementary School, Wayne County

Keira Smyth, North Platte, Hall Elementary School, Lincoln County

Landon Tines, Culbertson, Hitchcock County Schools, Hitchcock County

For more information on severe weather awareness or preparing for severe weather visit:

<http://www.nema.ne.gov/response-recovery/severe-storm-guide.html>

<http://www.bereadynebraska.com/preparation-101/>



Australian Emergency Manager Visits NEMA

LEFT: Phillip Campbell, manager of corporate communications for the State Emergency Service in New South Wales, Australia, gives a presentation in the State Emergency Operations Center. RIGHT: Campbell visits with Administrative Assistance Cindy Newsham. Campbell visited NEMA as part of a Churchill Fellowship. As a public information officer, Campbell reached out to NEMA PIO Jodie Fawl to meet NEMA staff and discuss how information is communicated with communities during emergencies as well as gain a better understanding of local emergency management arrangements in the United States. He also met with Lancaster County Emergency Management Director James Davidsaver.



Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters was one of the topics discussed at the conference.



Outgoing president Tim Hofbauer talks to incoming president Darrin Lewis.

NAEM Conference Connects

The Aftermath...Connecting the Circles for the Next Big One, was the theme of the 2015 Nebraska Association of Emergency Management Conference held April 1-3 at the Mid-Town Holiday Inn in Grand Island.

The circles the conference connected included NEMA and FEMA, the

National Weather Service, volunteers, long-term recovery, public health and debris management.

Sessions included:

- National Weather Service Weather Ready Nation initiative and redesign of the NWS website.
- Nebraska Volunteer Organizations

Active in Disasters shared experiences and lessons learned following Beaver Crossing and Pilger tornadoes.

- Wayne officials addressed long-term recovery and debris management operations following the tornado in Wayne.
- Seward Emergency Management, Four Corners Health Department and Region V Systems discussed community partnerships that were key to the response to the 2014 Seward County tornadoes.
- The Department of Environmental Quality presented on issues related to debris management.

The conference offered networking opportunities for partners in emergency management as well as interaction with vendors.



Michelle Woitalewicz of Howard County receives a presidents award from Tim Hofbauer of Platte County.



Shannon McVaney of Sarpy County presents Michele Evert of Colfax County with the Support Staff of the Year award.



Representatives of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency accept the Presidents Award. Pictures from left: Mike Loftis, Patrick Rooney, Leo Larkin, Afua Kwarteng, Julie Mayers, Merci Suarez, Tonya Ngotel, Jon Schwarz, Dave Reisen and NAEM President Tim Hofbauer.



NEMA Program Specialist Brent Curtis talks with students at Wisner Pilger Public Schools.

NEMA Program Specialist's Love of Books Benefits Wisner Pilger Students

**Story and Photo by LaRayne Topp
Courtesy of the Norfolk Daily News**

Ghost stories. Mysteries. War books.

Wisner-Pilger Middle School students made requests for favorite books when Brent Curtis stopped at their school one Tuesday afternoon.

By day, Curtis is a program specialist with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. He saw firsthand the devastation destroying the school and many homes in the Pilger and Wisner communities.

Curtis is also a part-time bookseller at Barnes & Noble SouthPointe book store in Lincoln. When he learned that the entire middle school library was destroyed — including its more than 2,700 books — he immediately knew his next plan of action.

“Our middle school was built in 1909, so we’d amassed a substantial collection of books for fifth- and sixth-graders,” said Wisner-Pilger Superintendent Chad Boyer. “This also affects

our elementary students since books are moved between the two collections.”

In response, Barnes & Noble set up the Wisner-Pilger Book Fair at its SouthPointe Pavilions store.

“These students have been through so much,” Boyer said. “Literature for this age is paramount, not only to their education but in strengthening their interest as lifelong readers.”

Curtis was pleased as well — not only to be able to help replace the books, but to meet the students themselves. He has worked at disaster scenes across the state for the past 20 years, he said, including tornadoes, floods, fires and ice storms.

To him, Pilger and Wisner are special.

“I’ve seen the two communities working together as one,” he said, calling the two towns a “shining example” of how people can assist each other in times of disaster.



Spotter Training

Brian Smith, a senior meteorologist at the Omaha/Valley National Weather Service, presents spotter training for one of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency monthly training sessions.



National Tornado Summit

Above: Mary Baker, Alisia LaMay and Dave Reisen of NEMA attended the National Tornado Summit in Oklahoma City, where LaMay and Baker, below, met former Nebraska Sen. Ben Nelson, who is chair of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. The National Tornado Summit is designed to improve disaster mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery in order to save lives and property in the United States. The summit serves as a national forum for state experts to exchange ideas and recommend new policies to improve emergency management.



Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy Offers Incident Management Team Training

Wildland fire training and incident management team (IMT) task book certification work were the focus of this year's Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy.

It was the eighth year for the academy, held at Fort Robinson State Park near Crawford on April 10-20, and the third year Nebraska Emergency Management Agency staff have worked as part of an IMT overseeing the camp.

Representatives of the Nebraska Forest Service, NEMA, Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Office, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Health and Human Services and various local emergency management agencies served on the IMT.

"Individuals seeking certification in various Type 3 IMT positions worked on completing their task books while working at the academy," said Public Information Officer Jodie Fawl. "Running the academy using the principles of the Incident Command System helps familiarizes students and overhead staff



NEMA's mobile operations trailer provided communications support at Fort Robinson for the 2015 Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy.

with the system prior to an event."

Last year, the Nebraska Fire Service reported 879 fires with 23,157 acres burned.

"Wildfire training is an important aspect of minimizing the impact of

wildfires that occur," said Casey McCoy of the Nebraska Forest Service.

This year, 13 classes provided a variety of training aspects to better prepare responders for wildfire suppression efforts.



ABOVE: Pat Gerdes of Region 15, who was serving as a communications technician, monitors radios communications in the mobile operations trailer.

RIGHT: Student participate in a course at NWFPA15 at Ft. Robinson State Park.



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“This is a great opportunity to help the fire service better serve their communities and our state.” McCoy said, “We want to thank the students and instructors who are attending; some from other states who have traveled many miles to be a part of this meaningful training opportunity.”

More than 120 students and 16 incident management trainees from Nebraska, South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, Texas, and Michigan registered to attend the training.

Command staff and Instructors came from Nebraska, South Dakota, Idaho, and Arizona and spent much time in preparation for this day.

Students and staff checked in through a rapid tag registration process like what would be used on the scene of a wildland fire.

At wildland fires, crews work together and are provided assignments. The assignments may be varied in function. Sometimes crews may be

working in different geographic areas, but all crews have to have down time to eat and rest. The rapid tag process helps staff track working hours, provide accountability, safety, and control of individuals entering and leaving the scene of an actual incident.

The same system of accountability and tracking at a wildland fire was applied to the individuals attending

classes at the Wildland Fire Academy. The credentialing also provided an opportunity for emergency management personnel to learn and practice the performance of this essential process.

“The ability to track the activity of firefighters at an incident is extremely important. The ultimate goal of credentialing is to try to make sure everyone goes home safely.”



The overhead team holds the daily planning meeting in the playhouse at Ft. Robinson.



NEMA logistics staff confer at the Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy.



Students practice deploying fire shelters at Ft. Robinson State Park.



Students receive chain saw instruction.



Night classes gave area firefighters an increased opportunity to attend classes at the academy.



Scenes from Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy 2015





NEMA Training and Exercise Section Supervisor Dave Reisen, right, gives an update as Assistant Director Bryan Tuma looks on.



NEMA Program Specialist Alisia LaMay, right, discusses planning issues with participants in the regional outreach program. LaMay discussed the local emergency operations plans and the support NEMA offers local emergency managers.

Regional Outreach at Ft. Rob

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency offered a regional outreach update at Ft. Robinson State Park, in conjunction with the Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy, on April 15.

The session focused on the services NEMA provides local emergency management agencies across the state.

“It was a great opportunity to interact with a small group of emergency managers and elected officials” said **Bryan Tuma**, NEMA assistant director. “We got great questions and it gave us a chance to see what issues and concerns matter most to the people we support.

“NEMA staff are well aware

that disasters are local. We work hard to support local citizens in their response to the emergencies and disasters that affect their communities.

“We want local officials to let us know if they have questions about the agency or if we could be of service as they complete their missions.”



NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma talks with emergency managers and county officials at the Playhouse at Fort Robinson State Park in a regional outreach meeting designed to update officials on Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.



FirstNet Stakeholders Meet

Initial consultation for FirstNet brought 117 public safety stakeholders to Kearney for the two-day event. FirstNet has been obligated by Congress to take all actions necessary to ensure the building, deployment and operation of the nationwide public safety broadband network. FirstNet will facilitate the use of rugged, easy-to-use devices designed to meet public safety requirements and provide a rich set of applications and services that enhance their ability to do their jobs. The FirstNet network should provide the backbone to allow the public safety community to improve its communications and perform its mission more safely.



Hazmat I.D. Refresher Course Held

Scottsbluff Fire Chief Dana Miller reports that a Hazmat ID refresher class was held in the Region 22 Emergency Operation Center with 14 firefighters and one explosive ordinance disposal tech from Scottsbluff Police in attendance. The instructor was Reece Morrison from Midwest City, Okla. "It was a great class that was part of our 360 upgrade purchased with homeland security funds on the previous grant cycle," Miller said.



Local Emergency Operations Plan Workshop Held at NEMA

Left: Program specialist Alisia LaMay addresses local emergency managers at the start of a workshop at NEMA that focused on updates to LEOPs. Above: standing from left, Program Specialist Logan Lueking and Planning Specialist Leo Larkin work with Duane Dreiling and Bill Bischoff of Chase County. The workshops provide a great opportunity for local emergency managers to work directly with NEMA planners as they update their LEOPs.

Threat and Risk Assessment Workshops Help Participants Identify Vulnerabilities

Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium and Union College each is hosted a threat and risk assessment training sponsored by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

The two-day trainings focused on teaching participants to identify and prioritize risks from all hazards, assess vulnerabilities, estimate consequences and reduce risk. The trainers are specialized staff from the National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center at Texas A&M.

Participants in the workshops did threat assessments at the zoo, CHI Health St. Elizabeth, Lincoln Public School District Offices and Pinnacle Bank Arena as part of their course work.



Evacuation Planning Course Held

A Sport Event Evacuation Training and Exercise Course held at the Henry Doorly Zoo provided assistance to sport venue managers to prepare or enhance evacuation planning capabilities to assist emergency responders in implementing flexible and scalable evacuation activities.

The course built on multi-agency collaboration by delivering critical evacuation planning information used by SportEvac, a computerized modeling simulation and visualization training system.

Participants were able to conduct evacuation analysis of a sport venue under a wide range of conditions. In attendance were representatives from Omaha Police Department, Omaha Fire Department, Henry Doorly Zoo, Douglas County Sheriff Office, College World Series, district health officials, Nebraska State Patrol, and local emergency managers from Lancaster and Sarpy counties.





The Homeland Security Group meets at the Nebraska State Capitol.

Homeland Security Policy Group Meets, Approves Certifications

The first meeting of the Homeland Security Policy Group this spring provided an overview of the Homeland Security program for Lt. Gov. Mike Foley as he assumed his new role.

One of the agenda items was to approve certification of the state's first type 3 all-hazards public information officer, logistics chief and planning chief.

NEMA's Jodie Fawl, Alisia LaMay and Dave Reisen were unanimously approved and can now be deployed with an incident management team anywhere in the country. They deployed to the Nebraska Wildland Fire Academy where they signed taskbooks for others seeking certification.

"The skills demonstrated to become credentialed are vital to the safe and efficient response to disasters in the state of Nebraska," said Bryan Tuma, assistant director of NEMA.



Emergency Support Function Training Held at NEMA

NEMA's Sue Krogman and Earl Imler address emergency support function (ESFs) representatives in the State Emergency Operations Center. The training focused on how the agencies and organizations work together to respond when an emergency requires state assistance. The ESFs provide structure for coordinating state interagency support for a state response to an incident.



Fawl



LaMay



Reisen



Virtual Tabletop Tests National Guard and Local Response

Above: The Nebraska National Guard, with the assistance of Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, hosted a virtual tornado tabletop exercise to test how the Nebraska National Guard would work with local responders in the event of a tornado. The tabletop was facilitated, at several remote locations throughout the United States, by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Left: Lt. Col. Troy Paisley addresses the group.

Hazmat Symposium Held

The 2015 Nebraska Hazardous Materials Symposium was held in Hastings and included presentations on crude oil, radiation and tanker truck response. Other presentations included meth lab disposal, decontamination and disasters.

The symposium was established to provide knowledge, skills and resources to deal with hazardous materials for all emergency responders, regardless of their level of training.

A new safety course on shipping crude oil by rail, designed for emergency response organizations and fire departments, was introduced nationally at the conference by the Association of American Railroads and the American Petroleum Institute. The introductory course, offered free of charge, is available to first responders from the Transportation Community Awareness and Emergency Response program, of which railroads and oil companies are members.



The annual Hazmat Challenge was part of the 2015 Hazmat Symposium held in Hastings.



Participants discuss a response to a possible tornado in Lancaster County.



Plans for the Department of Health and Human Services and the Military Department are discussed during the tabletop exercise.

Operation Take Cover

The Lincoln-Lancaster Healthcare Coalition hosted a tabletop exercise with a tornado scenario at the Center for People in Need.

NEMA staff and emergency support function representatives were among the participants.

According to Randy Fischer, hospital preparedness coordinator and public health emergency response coordinator with the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, the purpose of the tabletop exercise was to provide a forum for Lancaster County Healthcare Coalition organizations to participate

in a facilitated discussion of their roles, responsibilities, and anticipated activities in response to a tornado event.

During the tabletop exercise, players discussed shelter-in-place and evacuation plans, community response agencies' roles and responsibilities, and coordination and control activities.

The exercise provided participants an opportunity to evaluate current response concepts, plans, and capabilities for an incident involving a tornado event within the city/county. Through the exercise process, the exercise planning team also tried to identify

areas that require additional planning, training, and/or exercising to improve organizational and community readiness and resiliency.

"As the lessons from last year in Nebraska (Pilger and Beaver Crossing) in the past point out, and Joplin, Mo., as well as Hallam point out, all communities need to be prepared," Fischer said.

The scenario for the exercise took the path of the 2004 Hallam tornado and projected to Lincoln and on through Waverly. The exercise drew 135 participants from 45 agencies and tested the current plans of all.



Steve Gebers, a contractor with Ft. Calhoun Nuclear Power Plant visited NEMA to update Lt. Gov. Mike Foley, NEMA, Department of Roads and National Guard staff on the FLEX program.

Lt. Gov. Gets Update on FLEX, SAFER Nuclear Power Plant Programs

Steve Gebers, a contractor with Ft. Calhoun Nuclear Power Plant visited NEMA to update Lt. Gov. Mike Foley, state representatives on the FLEX program.

FLEX refers to Diverse and Flexible Coping Strategies. The objectives of FLEX are to enable a nuclear power plant to restore and maintain its key safety functions should an event occur at a plant.

According to NEMA Technical Hazards Manager **Jon Schwarz**, the Strategic Alliance for FLEX Emergency Response (SAFER) program provides longer-term support to nuclear power plants which have suffered Beyond Design Basis External Events (BDBEE) until they can once again operate with repaired or replaced internal safety related equipment.

The SAFER team is contracted by the nuclear industry to establish and operate national SAFER response centers to purchase, store, maintain and deliver emergency response equipment to a nuclear station in the case of a major nuclear accident anywhere in the United States.

Gebers reported that one of the primary lessons learned from the accident at Fukushima Daiichi, Japan, was that significant challenges presented by a loss of safety-related systems following the occurrence of a BDBEE.

In order to comply with Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) orders and Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) guidance that address these challenges, the utilities have contracted with SAFER to maintain supplemental equipment.

Should a BDBEE occur, SAFER will require transport of this supplemental equipment to the utilities.

SAFER has two regional response centers in Phoenix, Ariz. and Memphis, Tenn. which contain four sets of identical equipment (approximately five flat-bed trailers) which are designed to be used at all operational U.S. nuclear power stations. Each regional response center also has other sets of identical equipment designated for use at specific nuclear power stations.

Schwarz said in Nebraska, the nuclear power plants have identified specific staging areas within 30 miles of each utility that will receive, stage, and subsequently route the equipment to on-site staging areas prior to their installation within the plants.



In order to comply with Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) orders and Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) guidance that address these challenges, the utilities have contracted with the Strategic Alliance for FLEX Emergency Response (SAFER) to maintain supplemental equipment in Phoenix, Ariz. and Memphis, Tenn.

Emergency managers emphasize coordination, communication during tabletop drought exercise

by Kelly Smith,
Communication and Planning Specialist
National Drought Mitigation Center
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Emergency management agencies generally are not the front runners when it comes to mitigating and responding to drought in Nebraska, but they can play crucial supporting roles:

- Helping to get the word out to the public about conserving water, preventing fires and avoiding health hazards. Emergency management agencies are experienced in communicating with the public and have well-established media protocols, including use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook.
- Supporting other agencies responding to dry wells and other health-related issues, including local and state fire and health departments.
- Planning and coordinating response to wildfire, and disseminating prevention information.
- Helping with infrastructure (pipe) repair.

These were among the ideas shared by the emergency managers who participated in the Lower Platte South Natural Resource District's Drought Tournament the morning of Feb. 12. The tournament, a slightly competitive version of a tabletop disaster exercise, helped JEO Consulting document unwritten protocols for dealing with drought. This information will contribute to a drought plan that LPSNRD is developing for their watershed.

The LPSNRD, based in Lincoln, had good foresight in conducting the drought planning exercise, even though the district wasn't currently in drought. "It's raining outside, but we don't wait until the whole [drought]

map is red," said **Jeff Henson**, senior planner with JEO Consulting Group, who organized the event. "We're good on precipitation and we're still here talking about drought. It shows great vision."

Besides the natural resources district and emergency management agencies, participants were from the City of Lincoln, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Landscape Services, Nebraska Game & Parks, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local farmers.

Mary Baker, State Hazard Mitigation Officer, said that the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency helps monitor drought, but wouldn't get involved locally unless the situation was serious enough for the governor to declare an emergency. NEMA would be able to help arrange for resources if towns run out of water, could summon the National Guard for assistance, and would keep a very close eye on the wildfire risk. Baker noted that during the drought of 2012, resources were stretched thin across a multi-state region, posing an extra challenge to finding water and equipment for fighting fires.

Representatives from Cass and Lancaster counties' emergency management agencies identified education and outreach as key mitigation activities that their organizations could help with.

Mark Hosking, Lancaster County Emergency Management, emphasized the importance of "one message, one voice" in communicating with the public to avoid fostering speculation and misinformation.

He said that during drought, Lancaster County Emergency Management would:

- Work with fire departments to quit issuing burn permits.

- Work with health departments on issues such as water quality and quantity, and West Nile virus.
- Work with public works and pipeline owners on structural integrity.
- Work with USDA on disaster declarations and trucking in hay for livestock.
- Plan education and outreach messages.

Sandra Weyers, Cass County Emergency Management, said that in drought, her agency would:

- Meet with smaller communities to assess any vulnerabilities in water supply.
- Meet with volunteer fire departments to help plan firefighting for housing developments in forested areas that are difficult for fire trucks to reach.
- Monitor levels of lakes and rivers that would ordinarily be a source of water for firefighters.
- Assist other agencies, as requested.

Hosking observed that an immediate benefit of the Feb. 12 exercise was learning about which other agencies would participate in drought preparedness and response, and getting to know the people involved.

"I would love to see every district, every basin, do something similar to this tournament," Baker said to the group at the conclusion of the event. "Personally, I want you to prepare for the worst thing that could happen, so how about a five-year drought. You can't just say it's only going to affect western Nebraska. And you would be better off to take it the one step further that you don't think it's going to go. We say that it's the worst case scenario, but it can always be worse."

EM Update



NACO Meeting

NEMA's Chuck Chase, center, met with emergency managers at the Northeast Nebraska Association of County Officials meeting. They discussed TERREX, upcoming tabletop exercises, Basic Academy and training opportunities in the futures.

Regional Severe Weather Seminar

The 2015 Regional Severe Weather Seminar drew 350 people to the Saline Center Lodge northwest of Wilber and offered everything from a 7-foot-high, 10,000-pound storm-chasing vehicle from the Iowa Storm Chasing Network to training for spotters who help keep people safe in southeast Nebraska each storm season. B.J. Fictum, Saline County Emergency Management director, said the 350 count is the most since 2005, the year following the Hallam tornado. The registration process for the event was a homeland security exercise in credentialing, which is the new statewide initiative to ensure all first responders in fire, EMS, law enforcement, public works, civic organizations, government officials — anyone who could play a role in a disaster — are properly identified for accountability purposes.



Howard County Exercise

Howard County volunteers and emergency crews went through a tornado drill at the Howard County Courthouse in St. Paul to prepare for the severe weather season.

Debris littered the Howard County Courthouse, with cardboard boxes representing concrete blocks. Although it was just a drill, EMS crews, firefighters, law enforcement and volunteer injured victims didn't treat it as such.



"Just watching them, everyone got really into the scenario," said Howard County Emergency Manager Michelle Woitalewicz.



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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 six times a year and includes emergency management news and activities from across the state. Please forward story ideas or photos for inclusion to:

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Phelps County Responders Participate in Exercise

Phelps County Safe Communities Coalition hosted a guest speaker, Kevin Brooks of Vancouver, Canada, on April 21, who gave a powerful presentation to more than 850 high school students which preceded a mock motor vehicle collision with a student being arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence, three casualties and one fatality.

This exercise consisted of five actors staged in moulage and a countless of volunteers.

A group of EMS/fire, law enforcement officers, public and school officials and many other volunteers helped

put this event together, with a couple of key messages for students in attendance - drinking and driving, as well as texting and driving, can come with deadly and life changing consequences.

Participating in the exercise were: Holdrege, Loomis and Bertrand Fire/emergency medical services, the Phelps County Sheriff's Office, the Holdrege Police Department, the Nebraska State Patrol, Region 15 Emergency Management, the Phelps County Ministerial Association, the Nelson-Bauer Funeral Home and the Phelps Memorial Health Center.



Phelps County Safe Communities staged a mock motor vehicle collision with a student being arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence.



EMS/fire, law enforcement officers, public and school officials and many other volunteers helped in a Phelps County exercise which focused on key messages for students in attendance - drinking and driving as well as texting and driving, can come with deadly and life changing consequences.