

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Strength.

The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



National Guard Helps with COVID-19 Testing

Nebraska National Guard photo by Sgt. Lisa Crawford
Nebraska Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Tyler Fredrickson, 155th Medical Group, helps collect nasopharyngeal samples from first responders and healthcare workers, April 22, at a mobile testing site at the Sarpy County Fairgrounds in Springfield. The Nebraska National Guard has multiple teams supporting the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services with COVID-19 mobile testing across the state.



*A Message from
NEMA Assistant Director*

Bryan Tuma

We envision safer, less vulnerable communities in Nebraska made possible through effective collaborative partnerships committed to saving lives and reducing the impact of disasters.

Our mission is to coordinate, support and serve Nebraska through an effective and relevant emergency management agency.

During April, the number of COVID-19 cases globally, nationally and statewide has continued to rise. In Nebraska, we went from 145 positive tests and two deaths on March 30 to 3,784 positive tests and 68 deaths by April 30.

We continue to follow the **Six Rules to Keep Nebraska Healthy:**

1. Stay home. No non-essential errands and no social gatherings. Respect the 10-person limit.
2. Socially distance your work. Work from home or use the six-foot rule as much as possible in the workplace.
3. Shop alone and only shop once a week. Do not take family with you.
4. Help kids follow social distancing. Play at home. No group sports and no playgrounds.
5. Help seniors stay at home by shopping for them. Do not visit long-term care facilities.
6. Exercise daily at home or with an appropriately socially-distanced activity.

Some restrictions imposed by directed healthcare measures across the state will begin to be lifted, but it's important to stay vigilant and remember that social distancing is still necessary.

Gov. Ricketts has asked Nebraskans to visit testnebraska.com to complete an online assessment so that more Nebraskans can be assessed, tested and so that COVID-19 cases can be tracked in the state. The program will help the state increase testing which is important to stop the spread of the virus. Testing will allow those who test positive to stay home while those who test negative can return to work.

As part of the plan, Nebraskans are asked to take the #TestNebraskaChallenge and to nominate five friends to take the test. More than 137,000 people have taken the assessment, and the first two sites opened today in Omaha and Grand Island.

Please do your part and complete the assessment as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

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

Bryan Tuma
NEMA Assistant Director



FEMA



FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor's Second Letter to Emergency Managers

April 15, 2020

Fellow Emergency Managers,

First, let me thank you for all the incredible things you have done, and continue to do, for the American people. I am thankful for your tireless efforts under these unprecedented and demanding circumstances and for embrace of the guiding principle: locally executed, state-managed, and federally supported emergency response and recovery. Your heroic and extraordinary efforts across the country inspire me daily. Please keep up the great work.

This week marks completion of FEMA's first month leading the Whole-of-America coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic response. While we have a way to go, I have no doubt that we will be successful in protecting our communities by slowing the spread of the virus. I would like to share with you some lessons learned in these first 30 days that will shape our approach moving forward:

Preserve and Prioritize Scarce Resources to Save Lives. I ask you continue to use the [Strategies to Optimize the Supply of PPE and Equipment](#) to maximize your supply inventory. Additionally, this week, FEMA released [guidance](#) on how to best preserve PPE in your communities. Please review this guidance and be judicious in your requests for PPE and only request PPE after implementing strategies to optimize your current supply.

Our priority remains ensuring critical healthcare workers have the necessary PPE to treat COVID-19 patients. However, as President Trump said, other workers, too, have an essential responsibility to continue their jobs. Some of these jobs include activities critical to the resilience of the Nation during this pandemic – fire, emergency medical services and law enforcement personnel keeping our communities safe; energy companies keeping our lights on; water treatment facilities keeping water flowing from our taps; telecommunications companies keeping our communications networks functioning; and, food producers and distributors keeping groceries on the shelves in our local stores. Some of these workers need PPE for their regular occupational activities, while others now need PPE specifically to reduce their exposure to COVID-19 while carrying out their mission-essential work.

Please ensure that your state distribution system for PPE is moving the supplies to the end-user in a timely fashion. We are all experiencing this crisis now, please use all PPE you have on-hand; stretch your stocks as far as they can be stretched. Using stockpiled PPE allows the commercial system to catch-up with the goal of stabilizing and normalizing the commercial supply chain.

Another preservation practice we are investing in is the BATTELLE Critical Care Decontamination System (CCDS), which can sterilize N95 masks using a mobile CONEX box-based Vapor Phase Hydrogen Peroxide (VPHP) generator. It is FDA-certified with capacity to sterilize 80,000 N95 masks daily. We have five in the field today, with five new systems arriving every week. The federal government purchased sixty systems for use nationwide. If your state is interested in using one of these systems in your community, please contact your FEMA Regional Administrator for more details. Please be aware that, as with many re-

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sources in this environment, we are unable to fulfill all requests and we will seek to deploy these assets in a manner that ensures their maximum use.

Use Data to drive decision-making. I appreciate that states have shared the critical data elements about the status of hospital capacity, ventilators, and personal protective equipment (PPE) with both the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and FEMA. Significant effort has gone into gathering and submitting this data and I encourage you to continue providing this critical information daily.

We understand there has been some confusion the last few weeks regarding what data FEMA is asking for as well as how and where to submit this information. To streamline the reporting of this information, we are encouraging all facilities to utilize the National Health and Safety Network (NHSN) tracking system, which most healthcare facilities already access and use. Although reporting this data through states and FEMA regions remains an option, using NHSN ensures this information gets to our data and analysis team in the most efficient way and that we can receive the facility level data that we need to support decisions. FEMA will provide clarifying guidance to the FEMA Regional Administrators, which they can use to support facilities in your states in providing us with this vital information.

This data provided enables us to make informed decisions about where to send limited resources and provides context to support resource requests we receive from you. As an emergency manager, it is imperative that you understand: when your jurisdiction's peak may occur; the capacity challenges you may face and assistance you may require; when you may have resource shortages; as well as, where your resources are going.

Utilize federal medical staff, Federal Medical Stations (FMS), and Large-Format Alternate Care Sites (ACS). Real-time adaptation is critical to our success – it's a part of every emergency manager's core doctrine to prepare for the worst, then readjust. Both federal medical staff and the support structure provided via the FMS are in highest demand across the country. Daily, we look critically at the utilization of these resources.

When it comes to the full utilization of federal medical staff, we recommend that emergency managers, public health officials, and the on-the-ground resource providers— such as Department of Defense (DOD) and the HHS Public Health Service (PHS) — develop a flexible plan to reutilize federal medical staff to priority areas of need. A recent example of this is in New York City (NYC), where federal medical staff from both the Javits Center and USNS Comfort were placed into a medical “bullpen,” for local hospitals to draw from daily. In NYC, availability was based on existing and forecasted patient loads at both locations on a rolling 24-hour basis. This has allowed these highly in-demand resources to perform duties at their primary place of duty and at overwhelmed local public hospitals.

In total, we have 41 FMS committed across the country. Again, we look critically across the entire FMS inventory to ensure we have the right resource at the right location, at the right time. If your state no longer requires these resources, please contact your FEMA Regional Administrator to begin the demobilization process.

Additionally, for a variety of reasons, we witness underutilization of large-format ACS. In some cases, this has meant we have had to repurpose high-demand, low-density Federal medical capabilities in order to bring critical healthcare providers to the point of need. I am extraordinarily proud of the rapid adaptations our FEMA, HHS, and DOD teams have made on the ground in consultation with local and state officials to carry this out. These facts, coupled with a positive trend of fewer COVID-19 cases requiring acute medical care at these ACS, mean emergency managers must ensure their concept of operations for getting patients into these facilities is valid, while right-sizing the ACS bed-count to consider the available medical staffing required to effectively staff and deliver medical care.

Support Efforts to Flatten the Curve. Every American has a role to play in defeating the coronavirus. Ensure that your communities, small or large, embrace mitigation efforts, consistent with President Trump's [30 Days to Slow the Spread guidance](#).

FEMA Administrator Letter

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Strengthen the Supply Chain. FEMA continues to expedite the movement of critical supplies from the global market to medical distributors in various locations across the United States through Project Air Bridge. FEMA created the air bridge to significantly shorten the amount of time it takes for U.S. medical supply distributors to get personal protective equipment and other critical supplies into the country for their respective customers. All supplies will continue being distributed to CDC-designated hot spots as well as through the vendors' regular supply chain to locations across the country.

Continue to Bust Myths. As I continue to do calls with Members of Congress, Governors, and other key stakeholders, I find myself correcting misinformation. One of the areas I get the most questions about is regarding FEMA 'seizing' or 'commandeering' critical PPE. I want to share the ground-truth with you – FEMA is neither seizing or taking PPE from local or state governments or taking PPE from hospitals or any commercial entity lawfully engaged in the PPE distribution. However, there are bad actors out there who are hoarding and price gouging and trying to profit from the confusion and widespread fear surrounding COVID-19. The Department of Justice (DOJ), under the direction of Attorney General William Barr, has assembled a hoarding and price-gouging task force to prioritize the detection, investigation, and prosecution of illegal conduct related to the pandemic. The DOJ efforts resulted in the seizure of PPE from those individual bad actors and businesses hoarding PPE.

Regarding the Defense Production Act (DPA) and the use of priority ratings for "reallocation" of critical resources, DPA authorities are applied to support acceleration and expansion efforts. Priority rated DPA orders do not create a situation of "out-bidding;" rather, it puts the federal government requirement to the "front of the line" for fulfillment ahead of other orders so we can best assist you. In this process, we work to balance our authorities while avoiding interference of private sector supply chains that can deliver resources most efficiently and effectively. Therefore, as we process orders through the supply chain, we maintain close coordination with states to identify potential bidding conflicts. We look to you as well as your governors and tribal leaders to make us aware of apparent bidding conflict. If a bidding conflict occurs, we work closely with the state or tribe to resolve it in a way that best serves their needs. At the end of the day, we all have the same objective – getting the right resource, to the right place, at the right time.

As emergency managers, let's continue to do what we do best: coordinate, problem-solve, and act. I ask all of you to lead, innovate, and be resourceful. This truly is a whole-of-America response and I need your continued support as active participants – America needs us at our best.

Respectfully,



Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator

FEMA COVID-19 Response Resources

FEMA, HHS and its federal partners are working with state, local, tribal and territorial governments to execute a whole-of-America response to the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the health and safety of the American people. The FEMA Website has a variety of resources including:

- Patients/Healthcare – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/patients-healthcare>
- Governments – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/governments>
- Economic – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/economic>
- Data/Resources – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/data-resources>
- News/Multimedia – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/news-multimedia>
- How to Help – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/how-to-help>
- Rumor Control – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/rumor-control>
- Best Practices – <https://www.fema.gov/coronavirus/best-practices>

Get the latest information on how to protect yourself and what to do if you think you are sick at:

www.coronavirus.gov



U.S. Air Force photos by 2nd Lt. Natasha Hilsgen
Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen prepare to collect COVID-19 samples for testing, April 15 in Hastings. The Nebraska National Guard is supporting the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services with COVID-19 mobile testing sites in multiple counties throughout the state.



Nebraska National Guard photos by Sgt. Lisa Crawford
Left: Sgt. Kate Cole, combat medical specialist, 209th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), conducts medical screening of Nebraska Military Department personnel, April 14 at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln. Right: Senior Airman Austin Dawe, aircraft propulsion apprentice, 155th Air Refueling Wing, conducts medical screening, April 14. The Nebraska Military Department implemented daily installation personnel screenings in mid-April as part of the state's COVID-19 response, and as an additional measure to help preserve the health of the force.



Nebraska National Guard photo by 2nd Lt. Natasha Hilsgen
Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers fill individualized bottles of hand sanitizer, April 17 at the Nebraska Department of Transportation warehouse in Lincoln. The Nebraska National Guard is supporting the Nebraska Department of Administrative Services with distributing essential supplies across the state during the COVID-19 pandemic, including filling and packaging containers of hand sanitizer.

Meetings are Zooming Along

Business is not as usual in the age of COVID-19 as the pictures on this page can attest. Morning huddles are held via Zoom or Webex.

Left, the NEMA public assistance unit morning huddle on Zoom features staff working from home or in the Joint Field Office.

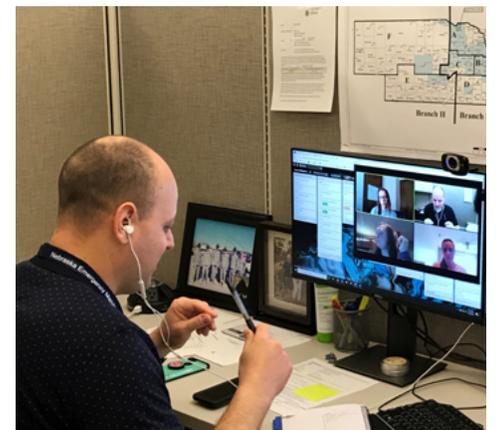
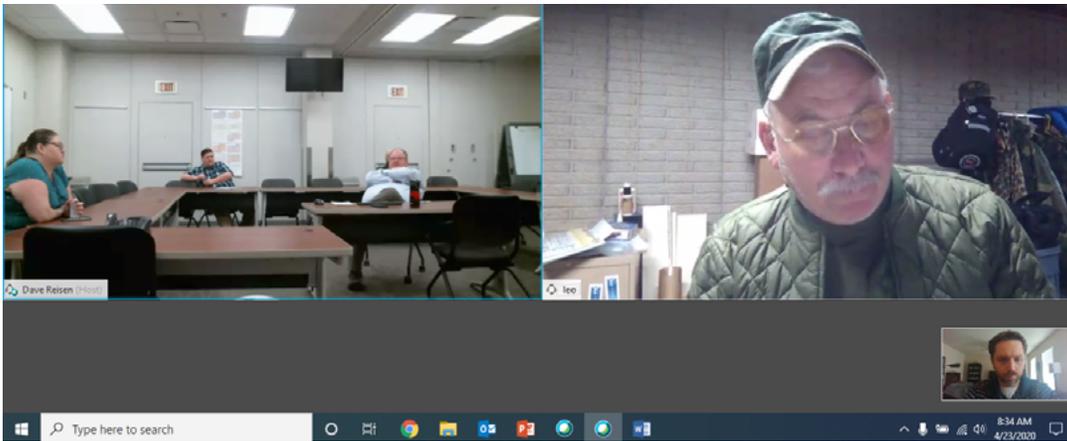
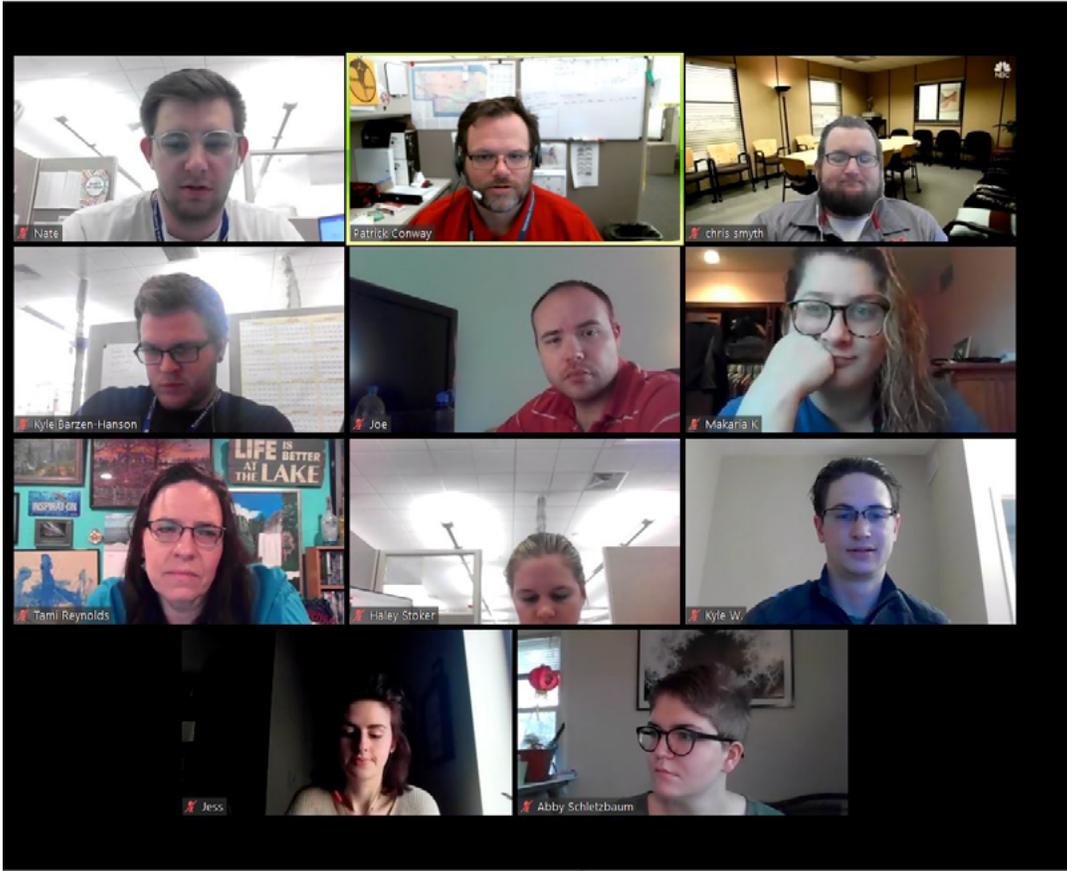
Center left, the planning, exercise and training unit meets via webex.

Bottom left: the Command and General Staff meeting is no longer held at the Joint field office in Lincoln but via Zoom, with participants from all over the country

Bottom right, John Gassman, hazard mitigation supervisor, conducts morning huddle also on Zoom.

Many NEMA staff members are teleworking, either full-time or part-time, in order to reduce the risk of COVID spread keeping in contact via telephone calls, instant messaging, Slack, Zoom teleconferences, e-mail, and the occasional small, but properly distanced, in-person meeting.

“Even though we are physically separated by many miles, our focus on the mission continues, and we continue to move forward with all of our work,” said Patrick Conway, public assistance unit supervisor. “Collaboration, communication and coordination continue. Individuals within the section still make appearances at the NEMA offices in the JFHQ building, but we are trying to reduce those, as well, in order to reduce our impact on the health check procedures at the gate. Conference calls with applicants, as well as with state, federal, and local partners happen on a regular basis, and we remain actively involved in all aspects of recovery.”





MRC volunteers William Kimsey and Cody Meredith make contact tracing calls.



To conserve masks in the fight against COVID-19, the MRCs are making their own masks.

Medical Reserve Corps Help in COVID-19 Response

The Central Nebraska MRC assisted in the setup of a drive-thru testing site in Kearney and assisted local health departments with the pick up and distribution of Strategic National Stockpile supplies for the COVID-19 response.

In addition, volunteers assisted in COVID-19 contact tracing for two

local health departments.

MRC volunteers from both the Eastern Nebraska/Western Iowa MRC and the Southeast Nebraska MRC have been supporting the Three Rivers Health Department with contact tracing and will continue to do so for the next few weeks.

The Eastern Nebraska/Western

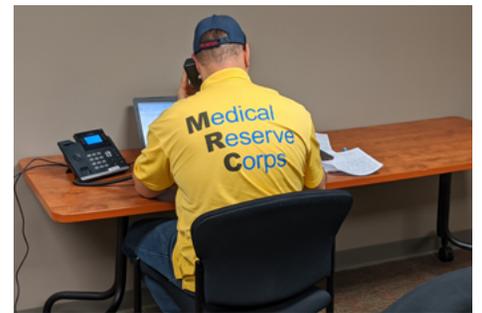
Iowa and Southeast Nebraska MRCs are also working with Public Health Solutions in Crete to organize a deployment of members to the area to assist in the COVID-19 response.

All MRCs and CERT teams remain at the ready throughout the state and are working with their local partners to better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nebraska.

The MRC Unit Coordinator Leadership has been working with DHHS to help affiliate volunteers to assist in local COVID-19 responses throughout Nebraska. Those interested in volunteering with their local MRC can contact **Quinn Lewandowski** at quinn.lewandowski@nebraska.gov.



Game and Parks Public Information Officer Jerry Kane did some social distancing on April 24 at Platte River State Park where he caught this bluegill.



William Kimsey of the Southeast Nebraska Medical Reserve Corps is pictured hard at work on contact tracing for a local health department.

Thayer County Emergency Manager Finds Missing Kids

A walk to grandma’s house for two siblings in Thayer County on April 21 resulted in Thayer County Emergency Management Director **Colt Farringer** enjoying a bit of role reversal.

Farringer got a call that two kids from Byron were missing and that the sheriff’s office and volunteer fire department were already on scene to search for the missing children who were last seen about 5:30 p.m.

He headed to Byron to assist at the command center. While en route he caught site of the missing 11-year-old boy and his six-year-old sister about 9 p.m. alongside the road.

“The two were headed to grandma’s,” Farringer said. “They thought they knew where they were going.”

They did, but it took quite a bit longer to reach her house near Chester on foot than it does by car and it got dark.

Farringer said he was glad he was late responding to the scene.

Thayer County Sheriff David Lee told Farringer that’s why they gave him the slow car.

“We usually support the guys that do the hero work so it was definitely cool to find the missing kids,” Farringer said.



Colt Farringer

State Celebrates Arbor Day With Safe Distribution of Trees

On Arbor Day weekend, youth and their communities participated in the statewide Nebraska Tree-A-Thon to celebrate trees.

Communities collaborated with a coalition of nonprofits and public institutions including Beyond School Bells, after-school providers, the Arbor Day Foundation, Natural Resources Districts, Audubon Nebraska, Nebraska Forest Service, Nebraska Department of Education and the University of Nebraska.

“Youth and their families are looking for ways to participate in out-of-school-time activities that are positive, lasting, and safely follow the guidelines of social distancing” said **Anna Wishart** of Beyond School Bells, Nebraska’s afterschool network. “The beauty of planting and celebrating trees is that it can be done safely in our backyards and in a socially distanced way in our neighborhoods.”

Communities and the coalition

have been working diligently to coordinate this initiative and develop resources for youth and families to learn about the benefits of trees and how to care for them.

“Our natural resources districts have partnered with more than 20 community afterschool programs that span Nebraska to find safe and creative ways to deliver tree seedlings into the hands of youth for planting,” said **Jim Eschliman**, Nebraska Association of Resources Districts president.

For youth and families that do not have trees to plant, the coalition has resources and activities for other ways to celebrate trees. Just last month, seven talented University of Nebraska-Lincoln students worked with tree experts to develop fun activities for youth to learn about trees. The Arbor Day Foundation has launched a social media campaign to plant up to 50,000 trees on behalf of people celebrating trees.

To get a tree planted on your behalf, all you have to do is post a picture of a tree (or a tree selfie is even better) and use the hashtag #ArborDayAtHome.

Whether it is going on a nature walk, making birdhouses, or posting a tree selfie, Nebraska’s youth and their families are encouraged to join the Tree-A-Thon this year to celebrate trees. Please join the Tree-A-Thon by posting a picture of your family planting and/or celebrating trees and make sure to tag the members of the Tree-A-Thon coalition and include #NETreeAThon, #TreeSelfie and #ArborDayAtHome.

“We need trees to keep our communities cool, healthy and resilient,” said Logan Donahoo, K-12 program manager at the Arbor Day Foundation. “We’re so excited to see the next generation of tree stewards make an impact on their communities and learn the lifelong skills of planting and caring for trees.”

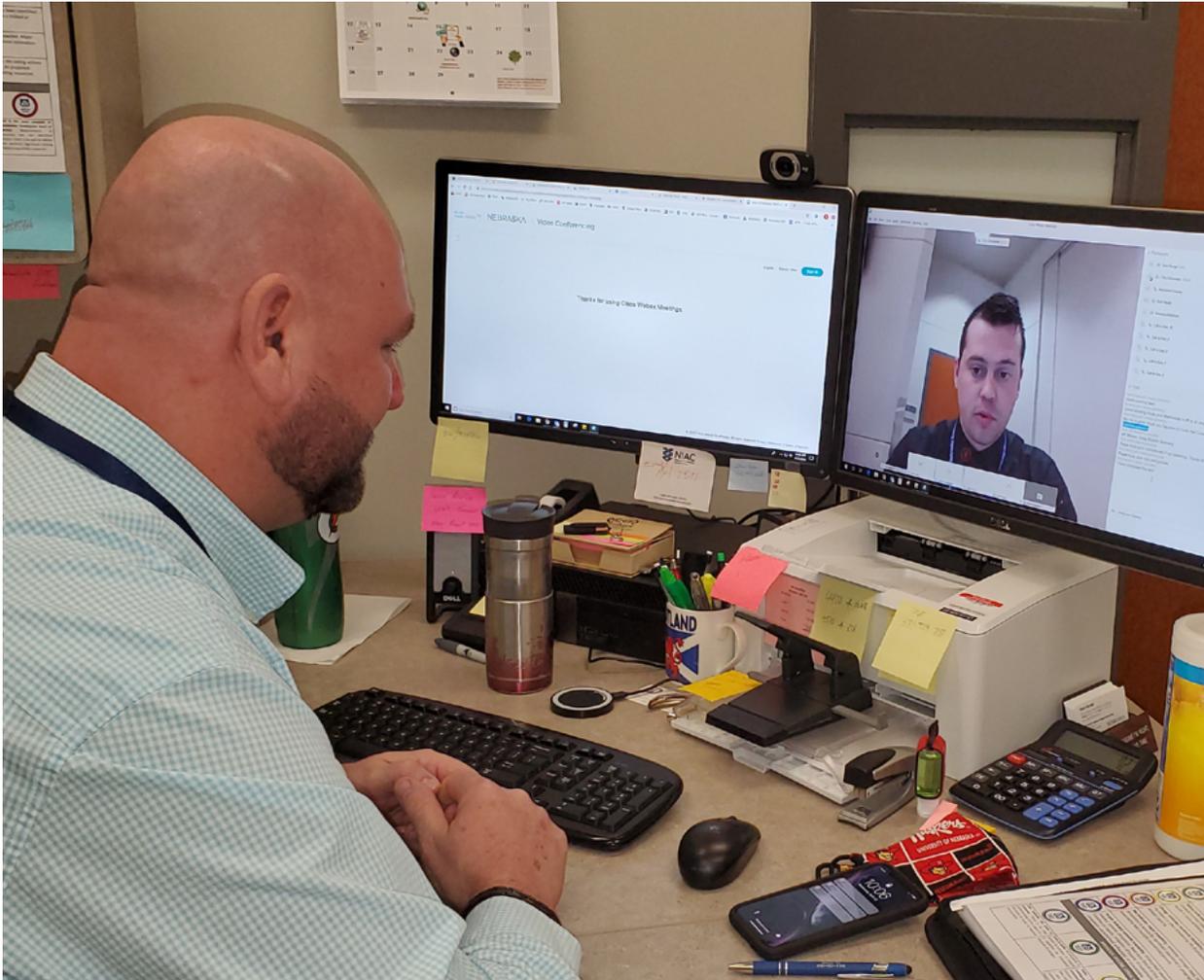


Rochelle Geiger with York County Schools hands out trees for the Nebraska Tree-A-Thon provided by the Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District.



Upper Big Blue Natural Resources District Forester Kyle Yrkoski provides trees to Barbara Coleman for York Middle School students to plant at home during the Nebraska Tree-A-Thon.

Food Security Task Force Works to Ensure Food Access



Nebraska Emergency Management Agency's Sean Runge, preparedness and operations section administrator, and Chris Schroeder, longterm recovery program specialist (on screen) participate in a Food Security Task Force web meeting. NEMA is coordinating the task force, alongside federal, state and local partners, with a mission to: ensure all people statewide have immediate access to sufficient amounts of food; assist the operations and reinforce the supply chains of the state's food banks, pantries and meal providers; and support Nebraska's agricultural producers, growers, and farmers.

NEBRASKA

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

(402) 471-7421
Toll Free: (877) 297-2368
Fax: (402) 471-7433

Governor Pete 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 includes emergency management news and activities from across the state. Please forward story ideas or photos for inclusion to: Jodie Fawl, Public Information Officer, 2433 N.W. 24th St., Lincoln NE 68524; 402-471-7428, jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov.

www.nema.nebraska.gov

