



March 2011

# The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



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# Severe Weather Week Poster Contest winners honored

LINCOLN – Knowing what to do when there’s a tornado watch or warning was **Lillian Cohen’s** message in her winning poster for the 2011 Severe Weather Poster Contest.

Douglas County’s Cohen, a fourth grade student at Friedel Jewish Academy in Omaha, earned first place in the annual contest sponsored by the **Nebraska Association of Emergency Managers, National Weather Service and Nebraska Emergency Management Agency**. The contest was open to Nebraska fourth grade students.

“We had more entries this year than any previous year of the contest,” said Gage County Emergency Manager **Mark Meints**. “This contest encourages awareness of the dangers of severe weather and preparedness steps individuals can take to be ready when severe weather strikes their community.”

Twenty-seven emergency managers submitted entries for their counties and numerous individuals sent in their own posters. The selection committee judged 96 finalists. Others honored were: Second Place, **Margaret McGinnis**, Cozad Elementary, Dawson

County; Third Place, **Colin Rimsky**, Papillion, Home School, Sarpy County; Fourth Place, **Bryce Christensen**, St. Paul Public School, Howard County.

The top four finishers were recognized by **Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman** at the State Capitol during a Proclamation Signing for Severe Weather Awareness Week, March 14-18. The week is an opportunity to increase awareness of, and response to, severe weather hazards and is designed to encourage Nebraskans to be prepared for severe weather by making a safety plan and reviewing proper safety precautions for protecting their lives during severe weather.

Fourteen students earned honorable mention certificates and include:

**Carlee Archibeque**, Burwell Elementary; **Elizabeth Blaser, Duncan**, Lost Creek Elementary; **Ashley Briere**, Lincoln, Human Elementary; **Carson Boetcher**, Lincoln, St. Patrick; **Lucas Clark**, Avoca, Weeping Water Public; **Gerricka Dacpano**, Ord, St. Mary’s; **Shelby Decker**, Blue Springs, Southern Elementary; **Citori Lutz**, Benkelman Elementary; **Claire Meerian**, Gretna, Thomas Elementary; **Emily Morris**, Gretna, Thomas Elementary; **Alexis Sack**, St. Paul Elementary; **Olivia Sis**, Benkelman Elementary; **Ellie Walter**, Omaha, St. Pius/St. Leo Elementary; and **Gabby Witkowski**, Omaha, Friedel Jewish Academy.



First Place — Lillian Cohen



Second Place — Margaret McGinnis



Third Place — Colin Rimsky



Fourth Place — Bryce Christensen



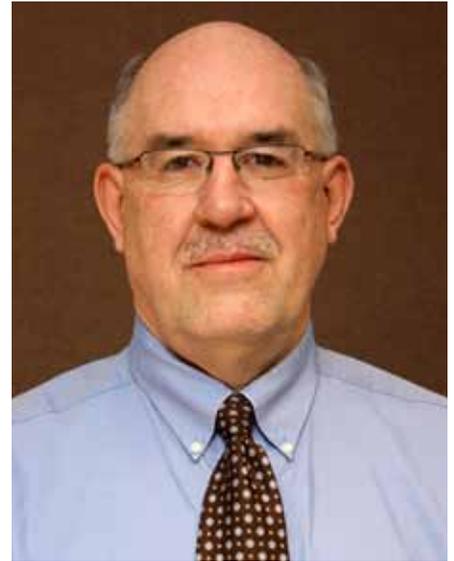
Emergency managers and weather service personnel pose with poster contest winners: front, from left, Lillian Cohen, first; Margaret McGinnis, second; Bryce Christensen, fourth; and Colin Rimsky, third. Back, from left, Eric Plautz, Douglas County; Major General Judd Lyons, director of NEMA, Michelle Woitalewicz, Howard County, Jim Meyer and Brian Smith of the National Weather Service, Roseanne Dobesh, Sarpy County; Brad Woldt, Dawson County; and Mark Meints, Gage County.

**M**arch finds us transitioning from winter months into spring storm season across the state. NEMA staff in all sections continue to be busy with various projects to lead the state emergency management efforts. I wanted to take this opportunity to brief the state's emergency managers on a couple of happenings at the state level that have a direct impact on local programs and, depending on agency and legislative action, will have a direct bearing on future programs.

This month, the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the legislature voted LB573 out of committee and into select file on the floor of the Unicameral. This bill was introduced by **Senator Scott Price** and, if passed, will allow for the use of yellow lights by emergency management workers and storm spotters. It also allows for the setting of training, identification and credentialing standards for emergency management workers. Since this is the first year of the legislative session, if the bill is not acted on this year, it will carry over into the next year's legislative session. **Pat Gerdes** of Region 15 testified at the committee hearing on the bill.

This past week, **Aaron Alward** and I attended the South East District Nebraska Association of County Officials (NACO) meeting and talked about emergency management badging and credentialing. With the training work being done to develop a state level Type III Incident Management Team (IMT), NEMA has adopted a format for badging personnel and is encouraging local jurisdictions to utilize the same format. A statewide badge format will enable personnel arriving on scene to be more easily identifiable and hasten check-in procedures. For the most part, the state criteria is based upon a badging and credentialing criteria set up in Kansas and allows for universal format across the state. While not mandatory at this time, standardization will be coming across the state to achieve better uniformity in the near future. Along with the development of the state Type III IMT within NEMA, the state has now established a policy on credentialing and established a qualifications committee for making recommendations to the Nebraska Homeland Security Policy Group on personnel, team membership and task books for credentialing. Emergency Managers across the state will be receiving the state's credentialing directive and badging formats via e-mail in the next few days. If you have any questions contact [aaron.alward@nebraska.gov](mailto:aaron.alward@nebraska.gov).

And finally, also on the agency website is the [2010 Annual Report](#) recapping the activities of the agency during the past year. As always, it is a pleasure for NEMA, and me, to serve each and every one of you and the citizens of our state. I look forward to seeing each of you at the upcoming NAEM Conference in Kearney.



**Al Berndt, Assistant Director**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Al Berndt', written in a cursive style.



Graduates of the Spring 2011 Emergency Management Basic Academy are: front, from left, Sheryl Machacek, Renee Critser, Angela Hammond, Kay Anderson, Donna Mainwaring, Chris Blaha and Melanie Bates; second row, James Johnson, Matthew May, Shawn Owens, Stuart Bowsher, David Cooper, Tarik Abdel-Monem, Adam Hayard, Evan Knight and Chris Langlois; back row, Charles Volcek, John Jenson, Gerald Hinrichs, Bill Boyer, Bill McPherson, Dale Herrington, Mike Farquha, Shane Hunter and Clint Hlavaty. Not pictured Clint Strayhorn.

## Basic Academy Builds Professional Relationships

Emergency management coursework is just one part of the Basic Certification Program Nebraska Emergency Management Agency offers.

The academy is designed to build professional relationships between emergency managers from across the state. The connections developed during the course are essential.

NEMA presented its 2011 Spring Basic Academy in North Platte during the first week of March.

Twenty-six participants completed the requirements of the Basic Certification Program for Emergency Management.

Participants include emergency managers, volunteers, and support staff.



Basic Academy participants give a presentation on an annex of the Local Emergency Operations Plan.

“This group effectively engaged one another in the study of emergency management,” said **Aaron Alward**, exercise training officer at NEMA. “This group immediately began working together as a cohesive group.”

Among the information covered in

the week-long course were sessions on the history of emergency management, radiological emergency preparedness, the State Emergency Response Commission/Local Emergency Planning Committees, Local/State Emergency Operation Plans and the Emergency Managers Handbook.

Coursework also included weather spotting, individual and public assistance hazard mitigation grant management, Nebraska Association of Emergency managers presentation, Emergency managers panel discussion and an exercise planning section that included an exercise.

The academy reflects the current emergency managements emphasis on business management rather than the technical response of the old civil

the technical response of the old civil



defense concept.

“Basic Academy provided me an overview of two major roles of an emergency manager: the behind-the-scenes office work and the titular emergency management work,” said Evan Knight of NEMA. “Knowledgeable presentations on such topics as planning, grant management, and hazard mitigation effectively gave a new EM an idea of what to expect as far as office work goes, while the functional exercise we did at the end hinted at what it would be like to manage an emergency. It was a great course for anyone interested in the field of emergency management.”

**Photo Caption: Basic Academy participants prepare for, and take part in, an exercise.**

Photos by Tarik Abdel-Monem



# Platte River Water Flows Being Monitored

## State Officials provide update on spring snowmelt potential

High water conditions are occurring along the North Platte River in Nebraska and are expected to continue to intensify throughout the spring, according to **Brian Dunnigan**, director of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and **Al Berndt**, assistant director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) indicates there is limited storage space in the Wyoming reservoirs along the North Platte River and its tributaries to capture all of the expected snowmelt runoff from the mountains in Colorado and Wyoming.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is reporting snow pack in the Upper North Platte area at 134 percent of average (with some areas having as much as 182 percent of average) and in the Lower North Platte area (including Sweetwater and Laramie rivers) at 114 percent of average.

The total conservation storage capacity of the Wyoming reservoirs is 2,787,800 acre-feet of water. At the end of February, the reservoirs were near their maximum capacity with 2,258,801 acre-feet of water. The estimated snowmelt runoff potential in the

North Platte system above the lowest reservoir is approximately 1,475,000 acre-feet. In response, the Bureau of Reclamation began releasing storage water downstream in early March to make room in the Wyoming reservoirs for expected spring runoff.

In Nebraska, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District (CNPPID), the owners and operators of Lake McConaughy, are currently bypassing some inflows and are also storing some water in Lake McConaughy. CNPPID may request a temporary variance from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to allow an increase in the amount of water that can be stored in Lake McConaughy to help alleviate flooding downstream.

DNR is in daily contact with the USBR and CNPPID officials as water is released and is sharing information on its downstream effects in Nebraska. DNR and NEMA officials are working together to monitor conditions and will continue to provide updates.

Currently there is moderate flooding at North Platte and minimal flooding at Lewellen. Landowners along the North Platte River should keep a watchful eye on the river over the next few months.

Information on what may be expected at different high water levels is available for certain sites along the North Platte River on the National Weather Service Website at [www.crh.noaa.gov/lbf/](http://www.crh.noaa.gov/lbf/)

General flood safety tips include:

- Stay informed and keep a battery operated radio for receiving local news and storm information
- Safeguard possessions and consider removing them from flood prone areas if time permits
- Develop an emergency plan including a safety kit and evacuation route to higher ground if necessary
- Have a designated location for family members to meet if they become separated
- Do not attempt to drive, walk or swim in flooded areas
- If you must evacuate your home turn off all utilities at the main power switch and close the main gas valve if possible

Questions about flooding anyone needing assistance should contact their local county emergency manager. A directory of all local managers is available at [www.nema.ne.gov/director-lists/directors.html](http://www.nema.ne.gov/director-lists/directors.html).

## FEMA and NOAA Urge Families to Prepare for Spring Flooding

WASHINGTON - With many communities facing threats of spring flooding, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are providing information to help individuals and families prepare for flooding dangers at [www.ready.gov/floodawareness/index.html](http://www.ready.gov/floodawareness/index.html).

“As the nation’s most common and expensive natural disaster, floods can strike virtually every community,” said **FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate**. “We’re encouraging individuals and families to take a few simple steps to protect themselves and their property. These include learning about their risk of flooding, having an emergency preparedness kit, storing important documents in a safe place and considering the purchase of flood insurance. Most homeowners insurance policies don’t cover flooding, and most policies take 30 days to go into effect so it’s important to act now.”

According to the National Weather Service, more deaths occur due to flooding each year than from any

other severe weather related hazard.

“Floods occur somewhere in the United States or its territories nearly every day of the year, killing nearly 100 people on average annually, and causing damage in the billions of dollars,” said **Jack Hayes, Ph.D., director of the National Weather Service**. One essential safety tip is to never cross a road that is covered by water. Remember, Turn Around, Don’t Drown.”

All areas of the country can be at risk for flooding and when such conditions are forecast, important information and life-saving alerts are available at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov).

More than half of all flood-related deaths result from vehicles being swept downstream. Flash flooding can take only a few minutes to a few hours to develop. Be prepared to take detours and adjust routes due to road closures if there is standing water.

Individuals can learn more about seasonal flood risks and what to do to prepare by visiting FEMA’s [FloodSmart.gov](http://www.floodsmart.gov) or by calling 1-800-427-2419.

# Save the Date!

## LONG-TERM COMMUNITY RECOVERY WORKSHOP

### DATE + TIME

Wednesday, April 27, 2011

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

### LOCATION

TBD (Final details forthcoming)

Lincoln, Nebraska

FEMA Region VII, in partnership with the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, is offering a Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) Workshop for emergency management, economic development and planning professionals. FEMA Region VII LTCR staff will present tools for organizing, managing and supporting a local community recovery process.

### PURPOSE:

- Engage emergency management, economic development and planning professionals as a resource to build capacity to support long-term community recovery.
- Provide awareness of FEMA Long-Term Community Recovery (LTCR) program and tools.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Clarify and prioritize common issues for long-term community recovery.
- Recognize opportunities for agency coordination and partnership-building.
- Discuss transition from preparedness and response to long-term community recovery.
- Explore tools for community recovery and capacity building to address communication, decision-making, and project and resource development.

**Register Early** to attend this workshop where you will discover opportunities to leverage recovery resources and improve local, state and federal coordination.

### WORKSHOP CONTACT:

Aaron Alward, NEMA

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402-471-7175



[www.nema.nebraska.gov](http://www.nema.nebraska.gov)

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Fax: (402) 471- 7433

**Governor Dave Heineman**

**State Homeland Security Director  
Lieutenant Governor Rick Sheehy**

**Director:**

**Brigadier General Judd Lyons**

**Assistant Director:  
Al Berndt**

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is charged by Nebraska statute to reduce the vulnerabilities of the people and communities of Nebraska in terms of injury, loss of life and property damage resulting from natural, technological or man-made disasters and emergencies.

NEMA is responsible for coordinating the state response in any major emergency or disaster including the support of local governments as needed or requested, and coordinating assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other federal partners.

*The Beacon* is published monthly by NEMA to share news about the agency and emergency management activities throughout the state.

Please forward story ideas or photos for possible inclusion in *The Beacon* to:

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# Training Calendar

## NEMA Training Calendar

Course	Date	Location	Contact
Nebraska TransCAER Training Tour 2011	June 25 - July 16	Alliance Broken Bow Seward Hastings	<a href="mailto:tonya.ngotel@nebraska.gov">tonya.ngotel@nebraska.gov</a> <a href="mailto:clark3@nebraska.com">clark3@nebraska.com</a>

[www.TRANSCAER.org](http://www.TRANSCAER.org)

## Other Training Opportunities

Emergency Planning For Special Needs Communities	March 28-29 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 9 a.m. to noon	Columbus Community Hospital Third Floor Conference Room	<a href="mailto:pccem@megavision.com">pccem@megavision.com</a>
Emergency Planning For Special Needs Communities	March 31- April 1 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. 9 a.m. to noon	Wayne Fire Station	<a href="mailto:cedaren@hartel.net">cedaren@hartel.net</a>
NIMS 100	April 9 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.	Omaha 84th and Dodge	Tom McMahon (402) 522-7970
NIMS 700	April 9 8 a.m. - Noon	Omaha 84th and Dodge	Tom McMahon (402) 522-7970
AWR 209: Dealing With the Media: A Short Course for Rural First Responders	April 19 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.	Beatrice Gage County Extension 1115 West Scott	Shawn Weise <a href="mailto:sweise@diodecom.net">sweise@diodecom.net</a> (402) 223-7036
MGT 335 Event Security Planning for Public Safety Professionals	May 10-11 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.	Wayne Fire Hall 510 Tomar Drive	Nicholas Kemnitz <a href="mailto:wayne_em@abbnebraska.com">wayne_em@abbnebraska.com</a> (402) 833-5190

- The 2011 Nebraska Association of Emergency Managers Spring Conference begins April 8- 10 at noon at the Kearney Ramada Inn. Conference information can be found at [www.naem.us/2011naeman.htm](http://www.naem.us/2011naeman.htm)
- Check out the re-designed NEMA Website at [www.nema.nebraska.com](http://www.nema.nebraska.com).
- Google operates [Google Crisis Response](#), a Website that is designed to provide news, information and other helpful online tools in the wake of a disaster.
- The National Weather Service (NWS) released its [annual spring outlook](#) March 16 to help citizens take the [necessary steps to prepare](#). This year's outlook predicts spring flooding will worsen, affecting almost half the country .
- **Personal and Family Preparedness:** As the recent tragic events in Japan have reminded us, emergencies can strike at any time. The best way to make sure your family is taken care of when disaster strikes is to make sure you are prepared. The Ready Campaign encourages all Americans to have an emergency supply kit, an emergency plan and to be informed about emergencies that can happen in your area and the appropriate responses. To make sure your family is ready before disaster strikes, visit [Ready.gov](http://Ready.gov) to start building your family's emergency plan today: <http://ready.adcouncil.org/beprepared/fep/index.jsp>
- March is American Red Cross Month, a great opportunity for citizens, families and businesses to review disaster plans and build or restock emergency kits. For more information on the more information can be found at [CitizenCorps.gov](http://CitizenCorps.gov).
- **National Response Framework:**The Department of Homeland Security, working through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, has developed and maintains the National Response Framework (NRF), a guide that details how the Nation conducts all-hazards responses – from the smallest incident to the largest catastrophe. The NRF makes clear the roles and responsibilities of federal agencies for all domestic incidents, so that every member of the nation's emergency management team understands how the federal response will be coordinated. For more information on the NRF, visit <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/>.