



September 2011

The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



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Al Berndt
Assistant Director

A LETTER FROM THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

It is transition time at the agency and throughout the state as we close out another busy summer disaster season and move into fall. For the flood impacted counties, we are finally seeing some relief on the Missouri and Platte River levels with the slowing of the releases from the dams by the Army Corps of Engineers. NEMA is transitioning from the response phase to the recovery phase. Applicant briefings have been held and shortly we will begin the process of writing project worksheets for the most current disasters. Everyone should have received the information on the temporary halt of payments for certain categories from the disaster relief fund by FEMA. While this is an inconvenience to on-going projects, I do not feel this will impact overall projects at either

the state or local level. In reviewing the status of current disaster within the state, NEMA has 16 open Federal disaster declarations dating back to January 2007.

In looking forward to what is happening on the national scale, I have been participating in conversations on how homeland security and emergency management programs might look like in the coming grant years. Right now there is a lot of talk about cutting the overall amount of funding flowing out to the states, combining programs and allowing more flexibility on utilization of funds to having a cost share on the part of state and local program participants. One of the central themes emerging is an increased emphasis on the amount of accountability for the funds and their usage. This will have an increased impact on current state and agency projects as we will need to be much more intentional in allocations and utilization of funds in support of both emergency management and homeland security projects.

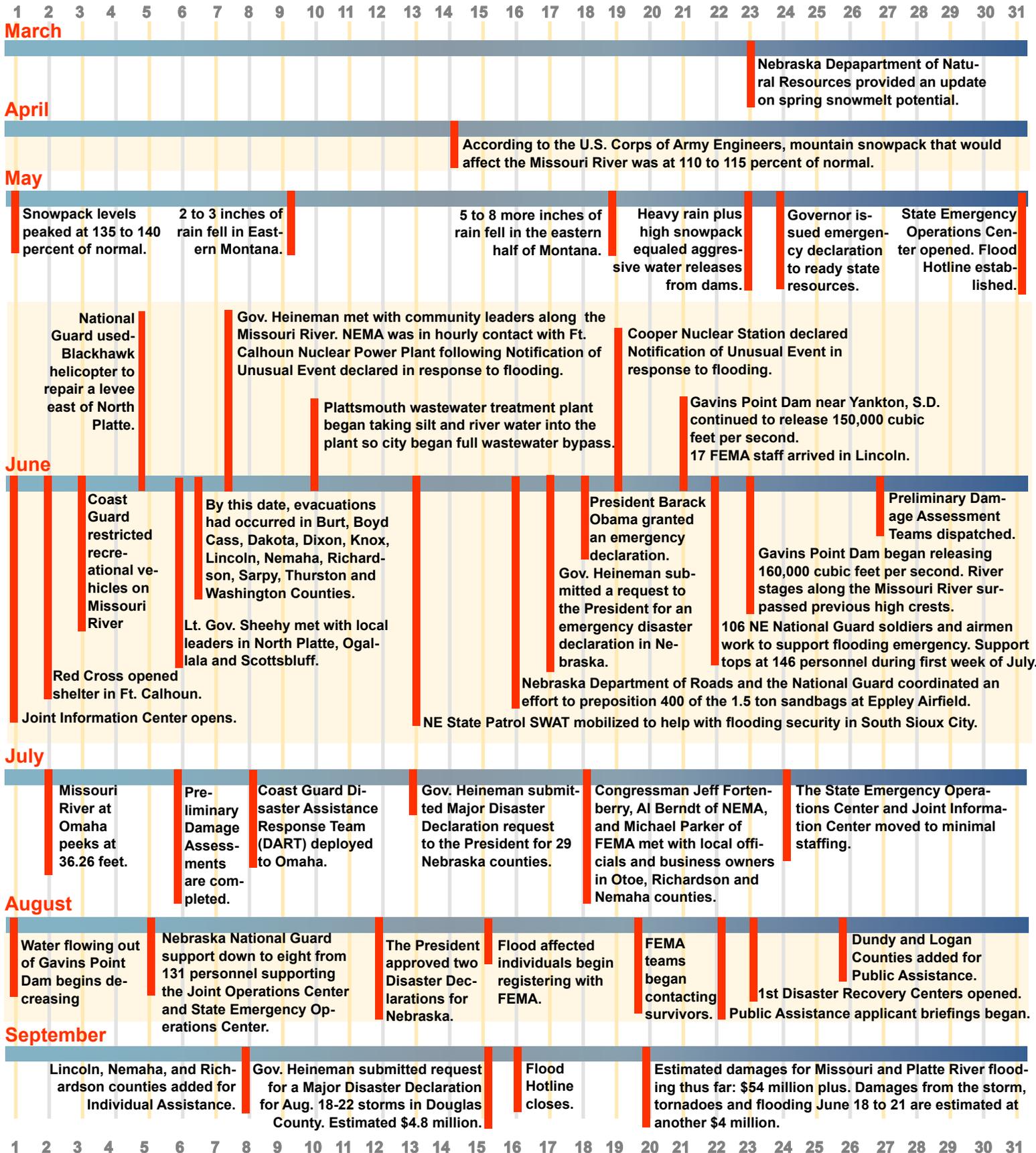
This month should see the start of construction on the Nebraska Wireless Interoperability Network in the panhandle region of the state. Over the course of the next several months I anticipate the completion of a large portion of the work across the panhandle and southern regions of the state. With **Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy** being appointed as the Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) for the state by **Gov. Dave Heineman**, I am confident that we will see a renewed emphasis on the completion of statewide communication projects.

Internally, with some respite from the disaster response side of agency activities, we are now moving forward in filling some of the vacant positions within the agency. Recently **Earl Imler** was promoted to Response and Recovery section supervisor, **Donny Christensen** was promoted to Response and Recovery unit supervisor and we are starting the interview process to fill five vacant planning specialist positions. On the Preparedness side of the agency, **Dave Reisen** was promoted to Training Unit supervisor for the agency. Dave will more than have his hands full as we look at meeting the mandates of LB573 in regards to credentialing, training and identification of emergency management workers. As NEMA closes out the year, for the first time in several years, I am in anticipation of having all open positions within the agency staffed.

Over these past several months it has been a pleasure and continues to be a pleasure working with the dedicated and hard working emergency managers across our state. I thank you for your commitment and dedication.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Berndt". The signature is fluid and cursive.

2011 severe weather TIMELINE





Bank erosion along the Missouri River.

Photo by Kevin Garvin, Cedar County, EM



The Missouri River at Blair on May 31.



Sandbag volunteers in Peru work together in a Nemaha County Emergency Management Agency effort to place sandbags around the water facility in Peru on June 6.



Volunteers work to sandbag the water facility in Peru. Nebraska Public Power District staff aided in the Nemaha County Emergency Management Agency effort on June 6.



Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers prepare to connect three sandbags onto a Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, June 7, near North Platte.
Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes



The Missouri River inundates the area near Plattsmouth.

Cover Photo

Damage Assessment team surveys a destroyed home on McKissick Island.

Photo by TSgt Dan Williams



June 28 flooding in South Sioux City.



Gavins Point Dam, in Yankton, S.D., releases water at a rate of 160,000 cubic feet per second affecting communities along the entire length of the Missouri River.



A destroyed home on McKissick Island in Nemaha County.

Photo by TSgt Dan Williams



Sand boils and protective measures taken near Bellevue's Hayworth Park on June 29.



FEMA Region VII Administrator Beth Freeman meets with NEMA's AI Berndt.



North Platte update on protective measures and flooding situation.



Gov. Dave Heineman, AI Berndt, assistant director of NEMA, and General Judd Lyons at the State Emergency Operation Center.



A Damage Assessment team prepares to assess homes in Nemaha County.

Photo by TSgt Dan Williams



Flooded streets in Brownville during July.



NEMA's AI Berndt updates staff at the State Emergency Operation Center on June 27 as Gov. Dave Heineman looks on.



Guardians of Freedom Air Show
NEMA showcased its Mobile Operation Center at the Sept. 10-11 Guardians of Freedom Air Show sponsored by the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce and the Nebraska Air National Guard at the Lincoln Airport.

TERREX 2011



State and local agencies participated in a joint exercise in May to test readiness of officials and emergency personnel in responding to a simulated attack on a college campus. The exercise involved hundreds of participants on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus. NEMA developed the state-wide event in coordination with UNL.



Clockwise from top left: NEMA Aaron Alward addresses participants; a "victim" gets made-up; officers respond; a victim is assisted from a classroom; and the incident command center.

Lt. Gov. Sheehy Presents 2011 Be Prepared Awards

As part of National Preparedness month activities in Nebraska Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy in his capacity as Nebraska's Director of Homeland Security, presented the fourth annual Be Prepared Awards sponsored by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency in partnership with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

"These individuals are a great asset and I'm pleased to recognize a few of the many volunteers who contribute to Nebraska's readiness efforts," Sheehy said. "This year's honorees have trained Nebraska communities to be equipped to respond to emergencies of all kinds. They work closely with local officials and first responders and are available to help Nebraskans and their families year round."

Scotts Bluff County Citizen Corps Council was named the **Citizen Corps Council of the Year** for working to train local volunteers to be prepared in the event of an emergency. The council offers a range of classes and education in first aid and disaster response.

Chandra Petersen of Arlington received the **2010 Local Hero Award**, which recognizes extraordinary service in helping in an emergency situation.

The flooding across Nebraska impacted a number of residents. In Washington County, more than 100 people were displaced by the flood and were being sheltered at the former Dana College residence halls. Petersen saw this as an opportunity to help those in need. She contacted the local Medical Reserve Corps coordinator to see what could be done about assisting those who were being temporarily sheltered. She set up a support group and conducted individual counseling for many people displaced by the flood.

The **Excellence in Community Preparedness Award** was presented to **Fabiola Dimas** of Crete, who created an All-Hazards Preparedness Program for members of the Crete community.

As an intern with Public Health Solutions in Crete, Dimas worked



Shelly Penner and Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy.

with members of the Crete police and emergency management, Saline County Emergency Management, and Public Health Solutions staff to create a program to educate the immigrant population in the area on emergency preparedness.

The **Citizen Corps Partner Program of the Year** was presented to **Shelly Penner** with Mid Plains American Red Cross for the active role the group plays in emergency planning and response activities.

The Mid Plains American Red Cross Chapter in North Platte serves 14 counties. Two years ago, the chapter was struggling to maintain volunteer programs and services. Penner was hired as director, and in a short time has turned the chapter into a thriving and vital entity in the community. With Penner's help, the Mid Plains chapter has substantially increased its volunteer base, and improved its volunteer and public training programs such as CPR/First Aid, military family assistance, and disaster response. In the past two years, the chapter has responded to numerous home fires in the 14-county region. Most recently, the chapter was involved in the Platte River flood response, establishing a public shelter and providing meals and water to flood response volunteers. Under the direction of Penner, the Mid Plains Chapter of the American Red Cross has become a key agency in North Platte's Local Emergency Operations Plan.

Individual awards include:

Citizen Corps Volunteer of the Year was presented to **Geraldine Thomas** of Omaha. Thomas is a volunteer with the Eastern Nebraska Med-

ical Reserve Corps (MRC) and also a member of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). She volunteers with the MRC decontamination team and regularly participates in disaster exercises at local hospitals. Her volunteer service includes time training for disasters, assisting with local health clinics to screen and vaccinate against H1N1, and providing first aid at a number of local and state-wide events.

Stan Coleman of Grand Island received the **Excellence in Risk Communication Award**. He has served in the local Grand Island Amateur Radio Service (GIARS) for many years as well as serving for years as a volunteer with the state's highway assistance program. Coleman manages the web page for both GIARS and the local CERT, coordinates emergency communications for the HAMs during events, and is a trained storm spotter.

David Duncan of Omaha was recognized with the **Excellence in Preparedness Education and Outreach Award**. From January to July, Duncan spent more than 850 hours assisting Omaha Firefighters with public education and fire prevention events. During the school year, he attended 53 elementary school assemblies, teaching children about Home Escape Plans and other fire prevention activities. He participated in numerous events such as The Salute to Safety Expo, The National Safety and Health Council's Safety Fair, and the National Preparedness Month Kickoff. When he's not participating in these events, he is assisting the Omaha Fire Department as a member of Fire Corps and researching grant opportunities to acquire materials to teach fire safety.



Geraldine Thomas and Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy.

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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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NEMA Staff Changes



Earl Imler
Response and Recovery Section Supervisor



Donny Christensen
Response and Recovery Unit Supervisor



Dave Reisen
Training and Exercise Unit Supervisor



Brent Curtis R&R Planning Specialist



Aaron Alward
Technical Hazards Planning Specialist



Alisia LaMay
Preparedness Planning Specialist



Ryan Lowry
State Coordinator
Citizen Corps/Medical Reserve Corps



Program Specialist Bill Meyer Retires

Assistant Director Al Berndt, right, reminds Bill Meyers, left, of the NEMA motto *Semper Gumby* (Always Flexible) at a retirement luncheon held in Meyer's honor in July. Meyer is known for his entertaining training sessions and dedicated service to the agency since April of 2002. His invaluable proficiencies and perspicacious nature provided adept experience to NEMA in service to the citizens of the State of Nebraska.

Training Calendar

NEMA Training Calendar

Course	Date	Location	Contact
Basic Academy	Oct. 24 - 28	Kearney	Dave Reisen 402-471-7177 dave.reisen@nebraska.gov
ICS 300	Dec. 5-7	Lincoln	Dave Reisen 402-471-7177 dave.reisen@nebraska.gov
Advanced Planning Concepts	Dec. 8-9	Omaha	Dave Reisen 402-471-7177 dave.reisen@nebraska.gov

Visit the NEMA Website at: <http://www.nema.nebraska.gov/preparedness/training-calendar.html> for other training opportunities