



The Beacon

June 2012

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



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Cottonwood Fire Northeast of Harrison Affects 4,500 Acres

A wildfire that claimed more than 4,500 acres in Sioux County in the northwestern corner of Nebraska from June 17-20 resulted in no injuries or structural damage.

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) sent four staff members and its Mobile Operations Center to Harrison to provide logistical support for the Cottonwood Fire.

Gov. Dave Heineman authorized an emergency declaration allowing for the use of state resources to respond to the fires.

Resources from across the state worked together to respond to the fire.

NEMA supports local jurisdictions when emergency situations occur across the state, said **Dave Reisen**, exercise and training supervisor.

“Basically, if local emergency managers need resources, they ask us for assistance and we will do what we can to get them what they need,” Reisen said.

In addition to 12 mutual aid fire departments, a variety of resources were directed to the fire.



Deputy State Fire Marshal Pat Gould, Harrison Fire Chief and Incident Commander J.W. Gieser and State Fire Marshal Jon Falgione at the staging area.

The Nebraska Army National Guard send a UH 60 Blackhawk helicopter with a Bambi Bucket for dispersing water on the fire.

The Nebraska State Patrol plane was launched for communications

and to monitor progress of the blaze.

Dawes County sent a 6,000 gallon water tanker and maintainers to the fire, and the Red Cross served meals to the firefighters.

Cover Photos

Clockwise from top left: a hot spot smolders in a charred area of the Cottonwood Fire on June 20; Nebraska Emergency Management Agency's Mobile Operations Center is positioned outside the Harrison Rural Fire District; a National Guard Blackhawk arrives at Cottonwood Fire helispot; and an incident briefing is held.

Right: Smoke from wildfires fills the air in Sioux County in northwestern Nebraska.

Photos by Brent Curtis, Dave Reisen and Al Berndt





Nebraska Army National Guard crew with a UH 60 Blackhawk helicopter and a Bambi Bucket flew missions to drop water on the fire in Sioux County.

Cottonwood Fire Facts

- 4,500 acres were affected northeast of Harrison
- The Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Wildland Incident Response and Assistance Team (WIRAT) of five crew members responded
- 150 personnel including a strike team out of Scottsbluff and a hand crew out of Pine Ridge Job Corps fought fires
- The American Red Cross fed firefighters
- 23-25 state employees responded including a four-member team from NEMA with the agency's Mobile Operation Center (MOC)
- A National Guard UH 60 Blackhawk Helicopter with crew and a Bambi bucket dropped water on the fire
- A National Guard Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck (HEMTT) with crew provided refueling.
- The State Patrol fixed-wing aircraft provided spotting services
- 12 mutual aid fire departments fought the fire
- Two tanker flights from South Dakota dropped water



Responders assemble in the western staging area.



Fire resources congregate at the helibase.



The green to black line of the Cottonwood fire.



Smoke fills the air from the Cottonwood fires.



The green to black line of the Cottonwood fire.



A back burn area was created to prevent the fire from spreading.



Firefighters work on hotspots.

Medical Reserve Corps Assists With Portable Hospital Exercise

by Ryan Lowry
State Citizen Corps
Coordinator

The Southeast Nebraska Medical Reserve Corps recently teamed up with the Southeast Nebraska Medical Response System and Lancaster County Emergency Management to train on the set-up of a portable hospital that can be used in a disaster or emergency. MRC volunteers took time out of their busy schedules to work together and assemble a 20-bed portable hospital, complete with lighting and HVAC.

After completing the training, MRC volunteers felt comfortable that they would be able to assemble the portable hospital in about 45 minutes in the event of an emergency or disaster. They expressed interest in conducting another training later in the year, then follow that with an exercise where the portable hospital would be deployed.

Reach Ryan Lowry at 402-471-7424 or ryan.lowry@nebraska.gov.

Photos courtesy of Mitchell Snyder



MRC volunteers get instructions for set up of portable hospital



Volunteers begin to inflate the hospital.



Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers roll out the portable hospital.



The fully assembled portable hospital took 45 minutes to assemble.



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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 to share news about the agency and emergency management activities throughout the state. Forward story ideas or photos for inclusion in *The Beacon* to:

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NEMA Staff Participate in Cooper Station “Dress Rehearsal” for Evaluated Exercise



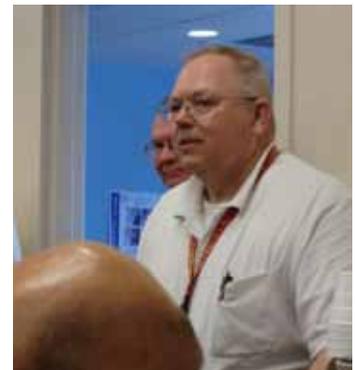
During the exercise, local, state and federal agency staff discuss ideas for relocation of people in the radiological deposition area.



A “hand-shake meeting” was held prior to the ingestion pathway portion of the exercise which was held June 20.



NEMA staff at the Joint Information Center on June 19 included Vicki Hessheimer, who served as communications specialist and Public Information Officer Jodie Fawl who served as spokesperson for the state.



NEMA Technical Hazards Manager, Jon Schwarz served as the Governor’s Authorized Representative (GAR) during the exercise.