



# The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

May 2012



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[Training Information is Available by Clicking Here](#)



## Exercise Tests Corrections Staff

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Assisted the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services (NDCS) with a full-scale exercise May 10 at the Greenleaf Training Center outside of Hastings.

NEMA's exercise training staff worked with the incident commander and operations chief to assure equipment needed was available. NEMA staff also assisted when exercise injects required supplies such as a first aid kit requested by simulated convicts. The agency's Mobile Operations Center was used as the command post.

The exercise was designed to test trainees for both the Crisis Negotiator Team (CNT) and the Special Operations Response Team (SORT). NDCS staff posing as inmates took correctional officers hostage during the simulated incident to test participants' responses.

**Cover, top:** CNT trainees surrounded by representatives of the Correctional Emergency Response Team (CERT) begin negotiations.

**Cover, bottom** SORT members respond during the exercise.

**Above:** A correctional officer being held hostage gives negotiators a message from the simulated inmates.

**Above, right** Corrections staff posing as inmates make demands to the negotiation team.

**Middle, right** NEMA exercise training officer, Dave Reisen (right) provides information to controllers and evaluators. NEMA's MOC served as command post and NEMA exercise and training staff provided support.

**Bottom, right** SORT trainees from Nebraska and Wyoming participate in the exercise.





CNT trainees monitor communications with inmates who took hostages during an exercise.



Dawn-Renee Smith, legislative and public information coordinator, talks with command staff.



Representatives of the negotiations team and SORT meet with public information officers and command staff in NEMA's Mobile Operations Center, which served as a command post during the NDCS exercise. NEMA's public information officer was on hand to provide information about how a Joint Information Center works during a disaster.



Stations for 28 staff were included in the new Lancaster County Emergency Operations Center.

## Lancaster Co. Gets New EOC

A larger Emergency Operation Center (EOC), new office space and up-to-date equipment in the basement of Lincoln's old police station has expanded the effectiveness of the Lancaster County Emergency Management Office.

The new EOC has room for 28 staff, as opposed to 12 in the old center, said Doug Ahlberg, county emergency manager. It includes lockerrooms and showers and two conference rooms.

Ahlberg said the county spent less than \$160,000 on the new space with the largest cost going to the audio-video equipment.

"If you have a pet monkey and it can read it can run this place," Ahlberg said.



Lancaster County Emergency Manager Doug Ahlberg works with equipment in his EOC.



A view from the back of Lancaster County's new Emergency Operation Center in Lincoln.



Emergency Support Function personnel from various state agencies listen to Al Fluman (standing) of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute (EMI).

## *State Plans for September Training and Exercise Course*

The Integrated Emergency Management Course (IEMC) is coming to Nebraska in September and participants are getting ready.

**Al Fluman**, a Federal Emergency Management Agency representative at the Emergency Management Institute (EMI), was in Lincoln May 1-3 to work with the state's emergency support function representatives.

"This pre-course visit allows us to gather information on state policies, plans and procedures and to specifically design a program for the state of Nebraska," Fluman said.

NEMA exercise and training, planning and operations staff met with Fluman to begin the process.

The IEMC is a four-day exercise-based training activity that places Emergency Operations Center (EOC) personnel under realistic crisis situations within a structured learning environment.

"The course will give us more information and hands-on practice at managing our EOC," said **Dave Reisen**, exercise and training unit supervisor.

IEMC is designed to build awareness and skills needed to develop and implement policies, plans and procedures in an EOC to protect life and property through applications of sound emergency management principles in all phases of emergency management.

For the exercise portion, each participant is assigned a role similar to their real-life position in an emergency operations center (EOC).

"This will give us a great opportunity to test the new State Emergency Operation Center shortly after we have moved into the facility," said **Earl Imler**, response and recovery division supervisor. "Both the EOC and the Joint Information Center will be tested in this exercise."

According to the EMI website, elected and appointed officials are an important audience to an IEMC. In addition, mid-level management, supervisory and operation personnel from various disciplines benefit from the experience.

The Integrated Emergency Management courses are also designed for personnel who fill specific emergency support positions within their community.

IEMCs are a combination of classroom lectures, discussions, small-group planning sessions, and functional exercises which expose participants to new ideas, and increase their awareness of the necessary coordination among other agencies and organizations.

As planning continues for the event, potential participants will be notified. Questions about the IEMC can be directed to Reisen at (402) 471-7177.

# Nebraska Medical Reserve Corps Not Slowing Down This Summer

by Ryan Lowry  
State Citizen Corps  
Coordinator

The Nebraska Citizen Corps Program (CCP) seems to have taken its cue from the weather, as both have been very active this spring.

It looks as though the Medical Reserve Corps (a partner program of Citizen Corps) will continue this active streak well into the summer with a number of events, exercises, and conferences planned in the next couple of months.

In May, several Medical Reserve Corps unit coordinators will be heading to Nashville, Tenn., to attend the Integrated Medical, Public Health, Preparedness and Response Training Summit.

There, MRC coordinators from across the region and country will get together to discuss topics such as volunteer management, sustainability, recruitment and retention and proposal development among others. There will



Ryan Lowry

also be a series of workshops for new and seasoned MRC leaders.

June provides a wealth of events for MRC volunteers in Nebraska.

Volunteers in the Omaha area will be assisting with a Safety Expo and the Women's Triathlon June 2-3.

Lincoln will host an exercise where volunteers will be putting together a portable hospital to test readiness dur-

ing a disaster on June 9.

Central and Western Nebraska volunteers will be on hand to assist first aid stations at the Kearney Archway June 15-16 as visitors come through for tours.

MRC volunteers in the Panhandle will be on hand to assist with the Nebraska Mission of Mercy dental clinic in Alliance July 13-14.

And, rounding out the summer, are the Cornhusker State Games in July. This will be an opportunity for a large number of volunteers to assist with first aid stations for athletes and Games' staff.

It's clear that in only the first couple of weeks into the summer, the Nebraska MRC will be very busy working with volunteers and other organizations around the state. These events are a great way for volunteers to connect with others and refresh their skills as medical and non-medical professionals.

Reach Ryan Lowry at 402-471-7424 or [ryan.lowry@nebraska.gov](mailto:ryan.lowry@nebraska.gov).



## Points of Contact

### Tri-County/Dodge

Vacant  
United Way of the Midlands Director  
1805 Harney St.,  
Omaha, NE 68102  
402-522-7930

### Southeast Region

**Wayne Svoboda – Director**  
Volunteer Partners  
215 Centennial Mall S Ste. 340  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402-441-7441  
[director@volunteerpartners.org](mailto:director@volunteerpartners.org)

### East Central Region

**Tim Hofbauer - Director**  
City of Columbus\Platte County  
Emergency Management  
2610 14th St., Columbus, NE 68601  
402-564-1206 [pccem@megavision.com](mailto:pccem@megavision.com)

### North Central Region

**Lynn Beland**  
343 G St.,  
Burwell, NE 68827  
308-214-0790 [beland@nctc.net](mailto:beland@nctc.net)

### South Central Region

**Jon Rosenlund - Director**  
City of Grand Island/Hall County  
Emergency Management  
100 E. First St.,  
Grand Island, NE 68803  
308-385-5362 [jonr@grand-island.com](mailto:jonr@grand-island.com)

### Panhandle Region

**Jessica Davies**  
Wellness/Volunteer Coordinator  
Panhandle Public Health District  
808 Box Butte Ave.,  
Hemingford, NE 69348  
308-487-3600 [jdavies@pphd.org](mailto:jdavies@pphd.org)

# Your Questions

## About Residential Safe Rooms **Answered**

*When extreme weather threatens, individuals and families need protection from the extreme weather. Having a safe room in your home can protect your family and save the lives of those you care about.*

### **Q. What is a safe room? What are the design requirements for a FEMA safe room?**

**A.** A safe room is a hardened structure specifically designed to meet FEMA criteria and provide “near-absolute protection” in extreme weather events, including tornadoes and hurricanes. To be considered a FEMA safe room, the structure must be designed and constructed to the guidelines specified in FEMA P-320, *Taking Shelter from the Storm: Building a Safe Room for Your Home or Small Business* (FEMA, third edition, 2008a) (for home and small business safe rooms).

### **Q Should I have a safe room?**

**A** Pages 6-10 of FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) provide background information to help homeowners decide if a safe room is needed in their home. Homeowners and small-business owners should also refer to the Homeowner’s Worksheet, *Assessing Your Risk* (Table I-1) in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a); this is an easy-to-use matrix that helps users decide whether a safe room is a matter of preference, should be considered, or is the preferred method for protection from extreme winds.

### **Q. My house has a basement. Do I need a safe room?**

**A.** Some tornadoes have resulted in loss of floor framing, collapse of basement walls and death and injuries to individuals taking refuge in a basement. What constitutes an acceptable level of protection is an individual decision. A basement may be the safest place to seek shelter for homes without a safe room, but it will not provide the same level of protection as a safe room unless it has been designed and constructed to provide the level of protection in accordance with FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) and FEMA P-361 (FEMA, 2008b). A basement is a good location to install a shelter or build a safe room, but access for handicapped or physically challenged individuals may be limited. The flood risk of your location may also affect whether it is appropriate to place a safe room in your basement. If your house is prone to flooding, the basement may not be an appropriate location for taking refuge.

### **Q Where can I find information about obtaining FEMA funding to construct a safe room? Are there any funds available in my area?**

**A** For project eligibility and financial assistance questions, contact your local emergency manager. Your emergency manager can advise you on what information must be provided for your project to be considered for funding, as well as any applicable federal, state and local design requirements.

### **Q Can I still apply for FEMA funding after I have begun construction of a safe room or purchased a safe room?**

**A No.** You **must** apply for funding **before** the purchase of a safe room or before beginning any construction.

### **Q. What costs are eligible for funding under a safe room grant?**

**A** Allowable costs for safe room projects funded under FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) are those components related to, and necessary for, providing life safety for building residents in the immediate vicinity during an extreme-wind event. The funding covers design and building costs related to structural and building envelope protection. The funding covers both retrofits to existing facilities and new construction projects, and applies to both single- and multi-use facilities. Eligible costs are only those consistent with FEMA-approved performance criteria as provided in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a). These criteria are summarized in Table 6 of the *2011 FY FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance* (FEMA, 2010).

### **Q Does FEMA certify any products?**

**A No.** Federal policy does not allow FEMA to approve, endorse, certify or recommend any products. Products may be listed as “in compliance with FEMA design guidance.”

### **Q What is the recommended square footage per person for a residential tornado and hurricane safe room?**

**A** For one and two-family dwellings the minimum recommended usable floor space per occupant is three square feet. In other residential situations it is five square feet.

**Q What is the cost of installing a safe room in a new home or small business?**

**A** Costs for construction vary across the United States. The cost for constructing a safe room that can double as a master closet, bathroom, or utility room inside a new home or small business ranges from approximately \$6,600 to \$8,700 (in 2011 dollars). This cost range is applicable to the basic designs in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) for an 8-foot by 8-foot safe room (approximately 64 square feet of protected space). Larger, more refined designs for greater comfort cost more, with 14-foot by 14-foot safe rooms ranging in cost from approximately \$12,000 to \$14,300. The cost of the safe room can vary significantly, depending on the following factors: size of the safe room; location of the safe room within the home; number of exterior home walls used in the construction of the safe room; type of door used; type of foundation on which the safe room is constructed; location of the home or small business within the United States. For additional cost information for small safe rooms in a home or small business, see FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a), Section II, page 34.

**Q Can I build the safe room on my own?**

**A** A homeowner who builds a safe room should be skilled in building construction. Some pre-fabricated safe rooms are available that require less building construction experience to successfully install. In purchasing any safe room, the homeowner should obtain sufficient documentation to determine that the safe room is built to the FEMA safe room design and protection criteria.

**Q Can I install a safe room in an existing home?**

**A** Yes, though installing a safe room in an existing home or small business is typically more expensive and challenging than installing one in a new building. Modifying the walls or foundation of an existing building for the construction of a safe room is more complicated than constructing those elements new and, as a result, some of the prescriptive safe room designs provided in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) are not practical for some existing homes. Typically, installing a safe room in an existing home costs 20 percent more than installing the same safe room in a new home under construction.

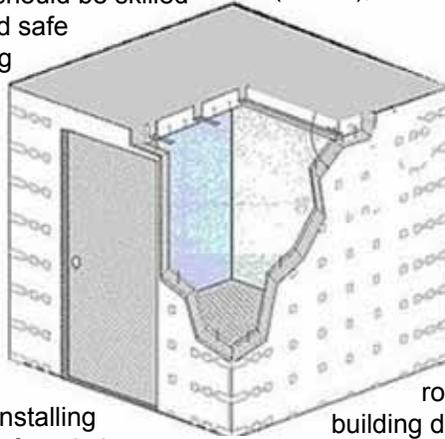
Due to the technical challenges involved in retrofitting an existing home for a safe room, an architect or engineer should be consulted to address the structural issues and the wind-borne debris protection criteria, even when not required by the local building department. As such, homeowners must balance the desire to have protection within their home with the practicality of constructing a safe room outside the footprint of their existing home or structure for less money. For more information on retrofitting existing buildings with a safe room, see FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a), Section II, page 25.

**Q Is an underground safe room safer than one above ground?**

**A** As long as a safe room is designed to meet or exceed the criteria in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) and FEMA P-361 (FEMA, 2008b), it will offer the same near-absolute protection whether it is above or below ground.

**Q. Where is the best location for the safe room?**

**A** There are several possible locations in or near your home or small business for a safe room. The most convenient location in many homes is in the basement. If there is no basement within the home, or if the walls of the basement do not meet FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) design criteria, an in-ground safe room can be installed beneath a concrete slab-on-grade foundation or concrete garage floor. In-ground and basement safe rooms provide the highest level of protection against missiles and falling debris because they are typically shielded from direct forces of wind and debris; however, above-ground designs, such as the prescriptive designs provided in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) or any solution following the criteria set forth in FEMA P-361 (FEMA, 2008b) will provide near-absolute protection. Many individuals prefer to build within their homes or buildings so they have some level of protection while attempting to access their safe room. For an existing home or small business, this convenience must be balanced with the challenges of retrofitting the building. For more information on selecting the location of a safe room within your home or small business, see FEMA P-320 (2008a), Section II, page 27.



**Q Are inspections required?**

**A** Obtaining proper building permits and inspections is important for all construction. The builder or homeowner should ensure the safe room is built according to the plans in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) or to plans that, through testing and engineering, have been determined to meet the safe room design criteria in FEMA P-320 (FEMA, 2008a) or FEMA P-361 (FEMA, 2008b). The level of construction needed for a safe room typically requires a permit from the local building department. Further, to verify compliance with the FEMA or International Code Council (ICC)-500 (ICC, 2008) criteria, additional quality control inspections for community safe rooms, and often for residential safe rooms, may be needed

**Q If the storm shelter costs \$6,000 can I get more than \$2,000 reimbursed?**

**A** No, the Hazard Mitigation Program only allows reimbursements up to 75 percent of the approved costs.

**Q I need to have my storm shelter money up front to pay my contractor. Is this possible?**

**A** No, The money is only available as a reimbursement, after construction is completed and you have submitted signed and notarized documentation from your contractor stating your Storm Shelter meets or exceeds the specification set forth in FEMA Publication 320.

**Q If I am eligible to receive the \$2,000 rebate, do I have to consider that money was income for State and Federal Income Tax purposes?**

**A:** No, in accordance with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, these funds are considered free from tax liability under Federally funded assistance programs.

# The Beacon

## Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

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

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

**Governor Dave Heineman**

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

**Director:  
Brigadier General Judd Lyons**

**Assistant Director:  
Al Berndt**

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:

**Jodie Fawl**  
Public Information Officer  
1300 Military Road  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
(402) 471-7428 or  
[jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov](mailto:jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov)



**Mayers**

## Mayers Named Grants Monitor

**Julie Mayers** has joined NEMA as federal aid administrator (grants monitor). She came to the agency from the Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services, division of public health's office of health disparities and health equity, where she worked in community health education.

Mayers has worked in various State of Nebraska departments including Environmental Quality, Labor, Public Institutions, Corrections and Administrative Services.

A California native, Mayers parents hail from Omaha. By age 12, as an "army brat," she had lived in six different countries and was able to hold basic conversations in seven different languages. She met husband, Crispin, (at the time a recent Doane graduate) while a student at UNL. She describes herself proudly as a Marine Corps wife. She moved back to Lincoln in 1994, from their last active duty station in Hawaii, with their sons Crispin III and David. An avid crafter, she enjoys swimming and bowling. She is making preparations for her first grandchild arriving at the end of summer.

## Wireless Emergency Alerts Available Soon

The wireless industry, Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will roll-out a wireless emergency alert system this year.

Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), also know as Commercial Mobile Alert System (CMAS) or Personal localized Alerting Network (PLAN) is a national emergency alert system.

Three different kinds of alerts are included:

- Presidential Alerts – Alerts issued by the President or a designee;
- Imminent Threat Alerts – Alerts that include severe man-made or natural disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc., where an imminent threat to life or property exists; and
- AMBER Alerts – Alerts that meet the U.S. Department of Justice's criteria to help law enforcement search for and locate an abducted child.

The National Weather Service will start using the WEA system by pushing extreme weather warnings over the system in June.

Tornado warnings, flash flood warnings and several other high-end warnings will go direct to wireless users in an affected county automatically if their device is compatible.

**Note: rollout dates vary by wireless carrier and a CMAS/WEA capable phone is required. Cellular customers should check with their wireless carrier for details.**

**The International Association for the Wireless Telecommunications Industry (CTIA) just released a one-stop web page that points to WEA information for each of the participating wireless carriers.**

<http://www.ctia.org/wea>

Information is also available on the National Weather Service Omaha/Valley website:

[WEA page](#)

