



The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

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Cover Photo

The Joint Force Headquarters on the Nebraska National Guard Airbase in Lincoln was dedicated Oct. 2 and is the new home of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.



Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, right, adjutant general for the Nebraska National Guard address dignitaries, special guests and building staff at a dedication ceremony for the new Joint Forces Headquarters in Lincoln. Pictured from left, State Senator Bill Avery, Mayor Chris Beutler, Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, Senator Ben Nelson and Gov. Dave Heineman.

Joint Force Headquarters Dedication Held

A sunny October morning greeted dignitaries, special guests, National Guard representatives, State Patrol staff and Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) staff for a dedication ceremony of the Nebraska National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters in Lincoln.

Sunlight streaming through office windows is a new experience for NEMA staff, who worked in an underground bunker, but more importantly, the new offices provide updated equipment which will help the state and military in

the emergency response effort, said **NEMA Assistant Director Al Berndt.**

NEMA personnel and emergency support staff from other agencies will work in the new operations center that includes a giant wall of monitors, computers, communications equipment and an executive conference room.

The TV wall allows officials to see aerial views of a wildfire or other disaster in real time.

Berndt led federal, state and local leaders on a tour of NEMA's new

17,000-square foot home on the north side of the new structure south of the Lincoln Airport. Other tenant-partners are the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and a Nebraska State Patrol dispatch center.

During a ribbon-cutting ceremony, **Gov. Dave Heineman** said the shared facility will allow closer coordination of services to provide immediate and faster response times.

"It will be an important tool in maintaining our readiness, allowing all three agencies to work and train together,"



Sen. Ben Nelson speaks at the dedication ceremony in this composite photo.



The ribbon is cut for the Joint Forces headquarters.

Heineman said.

NEMA's offices are designed to effectively coordinate response efforts during natural disasters and other emergencies.

The operations center also serves as the building's tornado shelter.

U.S. Sen. Ben Nelson, who began working on the project in his first term,

called the new headquarters an exceptional building. He said he and others had to overcome many hurdles before Congress appropriated the bulk of the funds in 2010.

Much of the money -- \$23 million -- came from the Army National Guard. The Air National Guard contributed \$1.5 million; the Federal Emergency

Management Agency, \$1.9 million; and the state of Nebraska, \$2.3 million.

More than 350 people -- military and civilians -- will work inside the headquarters. Construction began in February 2010.

Berndt said the bunker will be turned over to the University of Nebraska in 2015.



Assistant Director Al Berndt, right, leads a tour of the State Emergency Operation Center for, from left, Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, Federal Emergency Management Agency Regional Administrator Beth Freeman, State Sen. Bill Avery, Maj. Gen. Judd Lyons, Sen. Ben Nelson, Rep. Jeff Fortenberry and Gov. Dave Heineman.



With the publishing of the October Beacon, optimistically we can look to an end of the fire season. This has been the most active fire season I have witnessed since I came into NEMA 12 plus years ago. There were more than enough fires and activities to keep everyone occupied this year and it's time we hopefully can all catch a breather. The first winter weather has now made it into the state and our focus can change over to planning for winter events. As each of you know, the emergency management field, just like our other first responders, has been challenged over the past several years with the floods and fires we have experienced.

Within NEMA, in addition to all of the fire activity across the state, the agency business has been pretty hectic. Programmatically, the Response and Recovery Section has been closing out several old disasters as well as concentrating on the fire reimbursements. The Preparedness Section has been continuing with statewide planning as well as completing the Threat/Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, the State Preparedness Report and the Exercise, Planning Workshops. Preparedness has also completed the disbursements of the fiscal year 2012 homeland security grants. The Technical Hazards Section continues to work with the counties and the state's two nuclear plants to integrate new planning and exercising requirements coming from the Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program's new planning standards. All this activity has been accomplished while responding to the continuing fire situation across the state and moving into our new building. After action reviews of the fire season are leading to more changes coming at the state and agency level. NEMA has been in conversations with the State Fire Marshal's Office and the Nebraska Forestry Service on developing training, to be presented at both fire school and the wildfire academy, focusing on incident management; strengthening training, credentialing and capabilities at both the state and local level. Based on the long-term forecasts, we could continue being in the same situation we have been in this year.

Our new building, 2433 N.W. 24th St, located on the campus of the Nebraska National Guard Base adjacent to the Lincoln Airport, is a welcomed change from all the years staff spent in the bunker. Several local emergency managers (EM) have already made it to the building, and the invitation is open for anyone visiting Lincoln to come out to see the facility. The procedures for getting on the base are a little different than the old facility. If coming out for business or to visit, you will need to call ahead to NEMA so we can obtain your name information and forward it to the guard gate. This is a controlled facility and the "open door" policy on a more informal basis is no longer the norm.

The first week of this month I attended the annual National Emergency Management Association Meetings in Seattle. This is a time when state directors come together to meet and talk about various aspects of the state and national emergency management programs. This meeting also brings in representatives from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as well as congressional staffers from oversight committees. An overall tone that seemed to come out during the week centered around the all-encompassing issue of the federal budget and the effects of sequestration, if it should occur. As each of you, as a local EMs, interacts with your governing boards, you should see that clear cuts to the programs are going to continue. We will see more weaving of programs together as eligible activities under single funding streams with less money. I fully expect we will see the same level of cuts for the FY2013 grant programs, as we saw this year with the FY2012 grant programs. With the election and then the coming federal budget that will have to be passed, I believe we will not be seeing any federal grants until mid-year next year. The EMPG is the one grant that has seen excellent support from Congress; it is in our best interests to continue to support and report on this grant to show the good work that is taking place across our state as it is the one grant that fully supports both state and local emergency management.

I continue to be amazed daily by the level of hard work and commitment exhibited by our state's emergency managers. Please keep up the good work, and thank you.



www.weather.com

During the upcoming 2012-13 winter season, The Weather Channel will name noteworthy winter storms to better communicate the threat and the timing of the significant impacts that accompany these events. A storm with a name is easier to follow, which will mean fewer surprises and more preparation.

Hurricanes and tropical storms have been given names since the 1940s. Weather systems, including winter storms, have been named in Europe since the 1950s. Important dividends have resulted from attaching names to these storms:

- Naming a storm raises awareness.
- Attaching a name makes it much easier to follow a weather system's progress.
- A storm with a name takes on a personality all its own, which adds to awareness.
- In today's social media world, a name makes it much easier to reference in communication.
- A named storm is easier to remember and refer to in the future.

Coordination and information sharing should improve between government organizations and the media, leading to less ambiguity and confusion when assessing big storms that affect multiple states. It will even make it easier and more efficient for social media to communicate information regarding the storm. And, on the occasion that different storms are affecting separate parts of the country, naming storms will allow for clearer communications.

Summer Fire Cost Updates

FEMA denied the initial request for a state disaster declaration associated with the Region 24 Fire Complex. In the denial, the state received a 30-day window to file an appeal that would give "new" information supporting why a declaration should be given. Staff at NEMA are working on the governor's appeal. The cost estimate is in excess of \$5.4 million.

The current cost estimate for the Region 23 Complex is \$6 million, however, for these fires, the state was able to obtain a Federal FEMA Fire

Management Assistance Grant, FMAG. This grant assists with paying for 75 percent of the eligible emergency fire suppression costs with the state being responsible for the 25 percent cost share. The state and the Forest Service had an Interagency Fire Management Agreement in place which jointly shares the costs associated with fighting fire on federal, state and local property.

None of the figures take into consideration the cost of any infrastructure damage or loss in any of the counties -- roads, bridges, electrical grid or personal private property.



Left: NEMA duty officer staff, from left, Chuck Chase and Leo Larkin work in the communications room to monitor fires that struck the state due to high winds and dry condition Oct. 17-18. Below: PIO Jodie Fawl (standing) and Region 24 Director review a news release on the fires in the State Emergency Operations Center.



NEMA Hosts Workshop

Participants Identify Risks and Hazards, Plan for State Preparedness Report

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency hosted the the 2012 Threat/Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and State Preparedness Report (SPR) Workshop Oct. 16-17 In Lincoln.

Representatives from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), the American Red Cross, several state agencies, local health departments and emergency managers from around the state were

included in the meeting.

“The meeting was held in order to complete the THIRA and the SPR, which are required in order for the state to be eligible for homeland security grant funding through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security,” said **Logan Lueking**, a planning specialist with NEMA.

“We thought that the best way to get this done, while making sure that we had as much involvement from as many agencies and levels of govern-

ment as possible, was by bringing everyone together for one meeting.”

The THIRA and SPR are part of an effort to determine the state’s emergency management capabilities and level of preparedness.

The information gathered will be compiled, along with information from the rest of the states, to determine the nation’s level of preparedness as a whole. That national preparedness report will be presented to Congress next year.



Multi-year Training Plan Developed at Annual Workshop

The annual Training and Exercise Planning Workshop (TEPW) was conducted Oct. 18 and included participants representing the eight planning exercise and training regions and several state agencies.

The purpose of the TEPW is to develop the multi-year training and exercise plan for the state.

The participants provided input to the priorities established at the Threat and Hazardous Identification Risk Assessment. They began laying out and de-conflicting a plan for exercises and training events across the state for the coming years.

Left: NEMA’s Earl Imler addresses TEPW participants.



Region 11 Director Faythe Petersen shared these pictures from the Signet North America 80-hour hazmat tech course in Norfolk. The instructors were Don Angell and Mike Becker and there were 22 students in the class sponsored by the Norfolk Fire Division and Region 11 Emergency Management.



Hazard Mitigation Section Works to Reduce Risks

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) hazard mitigation section works to reduce the impact of disasters on lives and properties. The section provides guidance and assistance to communities to mitigate for everything from tornados, fires and floods to any other natural hazard which puts Nebraskans at risk each year.

“We can’t eliminate all risks to a community, but we can do our best,” said Sheila Hascall of NEMA.

It may be a while before the impact of improvements to a flood prone community can be seen, because it may be a while before Mother Nature strikes again. But the difference can be dramatic.

Total costs associated with these disasters and other related hazards to cities and counties in terms of response costs are also reduced. Hazard mitigation saves taxpayer dollars by removing the potential for more claims.

The hazard mitigation section has had several successes in recent years, involving the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) administered by NEMA.

- Reduction of power outages due to storms
- Property buyouts of homes that have been repeatedly flooded
- Flood reduction projects
- Wind/tornado safe rooms
- Backup power to critical infrastructure
- Warning systems

After a federal disaster declaration, HMGP money is made available to state and local governments to encourage implementation of long-term initiatives that will reduce the loss of lives and property, Hascall said.

After the flooding, severe storms and tornadoes of 2011 the state will receive \$17,894,142 in funding available for eligible applicants to apply for HMGP funding. This would be a 75 percent federal share with a 25 percent local match.

“If you or your community has considered developing a mitigation plan, updating your current mitigation plan or are ready to implement some of your identified projects from your approved mitigation plan, now is the time to contact us,” Hascall said.

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The Governor’s Disaster Recovery Task Force will tentatively be meeting in January to evaluate applications completeness, eligibility and to prioritize all eligible applications. The ranking will be in accordance with the established criteria for funding of projects or better known as the “state priorities.”

The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

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Governor Dave Heineman

State Homeland Security Director

Lieutenant Governor Rick Sheehy

Director: Major 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 and includes emergency management news and activities from across the state. Forward story ideas or photos for inclusion to:

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