



September 2012

The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



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Cover Photo

A Wellnitz Fire morning briefing at the Rushville Fire Department.

For more 2012 Nebraska Fire pictures visit NEMA's fire album at:

[Facebook Fire Album](#)

Type II Incident Management Teams Respond to Nebraska Fires — Region 23 and Wellnitz



It was been a busy summer for emergency managers across the drought-stricken United States. Fire has consumed many acres this year.

Our state was no exception Nebraska Emergency Management Agency staff and other state assets responded to fires on approximately 275,000 acres across the state. That number doesn't include the many fires fought by local volunteer fire departments that didn't require the assistance of a state response.

I am impressed with the professionalism with which Nebraskans responded to adverse conditions and would like to extend my sincere appreciation to everyone who has worked to protect the assets of this state.

In addition to the fires, which brought three incident management teams to the state, NEMA had some other pressing business to attend to this summer.

NEMA shut down "The Bunker," where it had been housed for nearly 60 years, moved in to new facilities at the Joint Forces Headquarters on the Nebraska National Guard Airbase, participated in an evaluated exercise for the Cooper Nuclear Station, continued a fire watch and carried out business as usual.

I am proud of the staff at NEMA for their dedication to the agency and appreciate the work they did this summer to respond to emergencies while continuing their daily work.

The outstanding support we receive from the Nebraska National Guard, other state agency personnel as well as the exceptional work of local emergency managers across the state allowed us to successfully manage multiple priorities this summer, and we appreciate the help that allows us to do our jobs.

Hundreds of mutual aid fire departments responded to fires in Dawes and Sheridan Counties in late August and early September stressing local resources to their utmost.

Two Type II Incident Management Teams (IMTs) were called in to manage the fires that burned nearly 74,000 acres in the Region 23 Complex (West Ash and Douthit fires) and the 44,354 acres on the Nebraska portion of the Wellnitz Fire .

The Rocky Mountain Area IMTs A and C are interagency regional teams that responded to the fires at the request of the State of Nebraska. Their purpose was to provide additional resources not available locally working in cooperation with state and local agencies.

The teams worked with NEMA, the Nebraska National Guard and other state resources as well as mutual aid departments and units resourced by the IMT's.



Fire engulfs wooded area in the Region 23 Complex fire.

According to **Earl Imler**, response and recovery manager for NEMA, the Region 23 IMT brought in approximately 600 staff while the Wellnitz team brought in 300.

Early cost estimates of both fires is \$12 million — \$6 million for Region 23 and \$6 million for Wellnitz.

For more 2012 Nebraska Fire pictures visit NEMA's:
[Facebook Fire Album](#)



NEMA Assistant Director Al Berndt (left) and Gov. Dave Heineman (center) get an update from Rushville Deputy Chief Jerry Kerns, who was the initial incident commander for the Wellnitz fire.



The Wellnitz Fire burns.



From left, Incident Commander Joe Lowe of the Rocky Mountain Area IMT C, Adjutant General Judd Lyons and Lt. Gov Rick Sheehy attend a Region 23 briefing.



Region 23 Fire burns near Crawford.



A community meeting in Crawford.



Burned ground in Region 23.



Wildfire Response Provides Reminders of Best Practices for All-Hazards Response

Lightning strikes. A wildfire begins. Local firefighters respond. It happened more than once this summer in Nebraska, and, in every case, an incident commander took control.

At what point in any fire does the on-scene incident commander (IC) need to move to an incident command post to manage the fire off site?

“In order to remain effective, the incident commander must leave the scene once the fire gets too big for a local response,” said **Earl Imler**, response and recovery section manager for NEMA.

An IC needs to oversee the response, said **Dave Reisen**, training and exercise unit supervisor for NEMA.

“Once the fire grows, it can’t be done on the fireline,” Reisen said. “We found that the IC needs to leave the scene and start managing the operation from offsite about the time outside resources beyond the normal mutual aid agreements are needed. Another sign it’s time for the IC to leave the scene is when a decision is made to go to multiple operational periods.”

Is self deploying to a fire ever a good idea?

No. Self-deployment prevents an IC from effectively coordinating operations. When developing the incident action plan, incident command must be cognizant of all available resources. Tactical objectives are based on the plan for resources and staff, Imler said.

Managing incoming personnel and resources at a large incident can be difficult. Arrival of unexpected resources at an incident can make it more difficult to manage. Accounting for, and managing, firefighters who self-deploy from other jurisdictions adds to the confusion of an already hectic scene.

Imler said fire departments that self deploy may not be compensated for equipment or fuel costs, and they may be turned away from the fire response. Firefighters who self-deploy to a wildfire may not covered if they are injured.

“You don’t want an unaccounted-for resource in the field to get hurt with no one knowing they were even on the scene,” Imler said.

Established contingencies for bringing resources to the scene of a major incident are part of every successful emergency management plan.

“These contingencies first rely on mutual-aid agreements for initial assistance,” said Reisen. “When a wildfire grows in size and the need for additional resources is apparent, then local and state emergency management agencies have contingencies for bringing in those additional resources.”



Be Prepared Award winners with the Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy, from left are: Whitney Shipley (accepting on behalf of Tri-County Citizen Corps); Jenny Steventon (accepting on behalf of Sarpy/Cass County Department of Health); Tom McMahon (accepting on behalf of Lorette Teal); Lt. Gov. Sheehy; Nimansha Jain; and Barry Baldwin.

Lt. Gov. Sheehy Presents 2012 Be Prepared Awards

Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy announced the recipients of this year's 'Be Prepared' awards, recognizing volunteers and community organizations for excellence in emergency preparedness and disaster response.

Presented during National Preparedness Month, the Be Prepared awards program is in its fifth year of honoring Nebraskans who volunteer their time and energy to support preparedness in Nebraska communities. The awards are presented by Lt. Gov. Sheehy who serves as Nebraska's Director of Homeland Security, and are sponsored by the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency in partnership with the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center.

"These individuals are a tremendous asset to our state and I'm pleased to recognize a few of the many volunteers who contribute to Nebraska's readiness efforts," said Lt. Gov. Sheehy. "This

year's honorees have trained Nebraska communities to be equipped to respond to all kinds of emergencies. They work closely with local officials and first responders and are available to help Nebraskans and their families year round. I want to thank them for their compassion and commitment."

The Citizen Corps Council of the Year award was presented to **Tri-County Citizen Corps**. Citizen Corps groups increase the preparedness of citizens to respond in emergencies and the number of volunteers who are trained to support first responders.

The Tri-County Citizen Corps is being recognized for its efforts to integrate multiple agencies and organizations into its Citizen Corps Council. Tri-County consistently holds meetings with representatives from law enforcement, fire, emergency management, and nonprofits, as well as all Citizen Corps programs.

These meetings foster an environment where collaboration with multiple agencies is welcomed. Often multiple agencies and organizations use the Tri-County Citizen Corps as a platform to organize trainings, exercises, and public education events. The Tri-County Citizen Corps has been an integral part of making sure citizens of Douglas, Sarpy, Washington, and Dodge counties are educated and prepared for any disaster.

Randy Kleager of Scottsbluff received the 2012 Local Hero Award, which recognizes extraordinary service in helping residents in an emergency situation.

Kleager was recognized for his outstanding service to the Scotts Bluff County Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT), in particular for his role in an extensive search for a

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missing girl in September 2011. Kleager took on the role of incident commander as the search began with local officials. It did not take long before the incident grew and members of the Nebraska State Patrol and the FBI became involved. Even as these agencies brought their resources to assist, Kleager remained incident commander. His professionalism, knowledge, and ability to lead a complex search was recognized by all agencies involved.

The Excellence in Community Preparedness award was presented to **Nimansha Jain** of Omaha, for all of the volunteer work she does to make sure her community and peers are prepared for disasters or emergencies.

As a member of the Ralston Fire Explorers and a volunteer with American Red Cross, she routinely trains for fire or medical emergencies. Jain also works with other students at the University of Nebraska Medical Center Student Advisory Group to ensure youth are prepared for any disaster or emergency. Jain was also recently selected to represent FEMA Region VII on the national Youth Preparedness Council.

The Citizen Corps Partner Program of the Year was presented to **Sarpy/Cass County Health Department** for the outstanding work they do to educate their community about disaster preparedness as well as their collaboration with Citizen Corps to train volunteers to be prepared to respond to emergencies.

In March 2012 the Sarpy/Cass County Health Department partnered with the Eastern Nebraska/Western Iowa Medical Reserve Corps to train volunteers to staff a Point of Dispensing site. Sarpy/Cass County employees directed volunteers to set up the Point of Dispensing site at Bellevue West High School.

Volunteers were able to take direction from health department staff and practice their role during an actual event. By partnering with the Medical Reserve Corps, Sarpy/Cass County Health Department reinforces the importance of multiple agencies to work together during training or exercise so that in the event of an actual disaster or emergency, volunteers and staff will be familiar with processes and procedures to ensure the incident is well managed.

The Citizen Corps Volunteer of the Year award was presented to **Tyler Kleager** of Scottsbluff. Tyler was recognized for his volunteer work with Scotts Bluff County Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Kleager is a team leader with his local CERT, and works with other CERT leaders as a trainer for the Basic CERT class. In addition, Kleager has worked to enhance Scotts Bluff County CERT's website for its members. Kleager has integrated Mission Manager software with the CERT. This software allows team leaders to track volunteer hours, notify and deploy volunteers when needed, store all necessary documents that are used during an incident, and even integrate GPS tracking to monitor volunteers that may be called out to search a large area. Kleager volunteers his time to make sure that the Scotts Bluff CERT is well equipped and prepared to be called out at any time for any emergency.

Barry Baldwin of Columbus received the Excellence in Risk Communication award. Baldwin was recognized for his 30+ years of service with Platte County Civil Defense and Emergency Management.

In that time, Baldwin has worked with emergency workers in his area to

keep his community safe on a number of different disasters. As a volunteer storm spotter, Baldwin has used his training to notify emergency management and other local agencies of impending severe weather. Baldwin's commitment to keeping his community safe is evident in the number and type of emergencies he has responded to over the years. As a long-time member of emergency management, Baldwin has been integral making sure his community is well informed of any disasters that may come their way.

Lorette Teal of Omaha was recognized with the Excellence in Preparedness Education and Outreach award for her work with the North Omaha Community Care Council project.

Teal spearheaded a project to provide disaster preparedness education to the community of North Omaha. The initial project was focused on fire prevention, but expanded to include other disaster preparedness education about tornados and floods, and included training on how to prepare a disaster kit and make a household disaster plan. Teal has worked with a number of organizations to make this a successful project, including the Omaha Metropolitan Medical Response System, Douglas County Emergency Management Agency, the American Red Cross and the Omaha Fire Department.

Teal plans to include other organizations in the future to expand the project to raise awareness of the community's disaster response partners and strengthen relationships between organizations. This is only one of the many projects that Teal works on to make sure her community is educated and well-prepared in the event of a disaster or emergency.

FEMA Announces 2012 Community Resilience Innovation Challenge

WASHINGTON — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced that the application period is open for a new funding opportunity to build local resilience, through a Whole Community approach, in communities across America: the Community Resilience Innovation Challenge.

Though National Preparedness Month comes to a close at the end of September, FEMA and its partners know that preparedness must continue in communities year-round. This new monetary opportunity is designed to continue to move community preparedness forward and assist local areas in building and revitalizing community-based partnerships to advance the nation's resilience to disasters.

"The best resiliency ideas originate in our states and communities — not from Washington, D.C.," said FEMA Administrator **Craig Fugate**. "The goal of this program is to empower communities to collaborate and develop innovative ways to effectively respond to disasters."

The opportunity is provided through the Rockefeller Foundation and FEMA and will be administered by the Los Angeles Emergency Preparedness Foundation who will act as a third-party intermediary to encourage local communities to engage in creative activities that enhance disaster resilience. Funding levels will range, with a maximum award of \$35,000, and applications are open to most local, state, and tribal agencies and governments;



business entities; associations; organizations and groups. Submissions will be accepted through October 26.

Key assessment areas for the awards will be the applicants' demonstration that their approach to community resilience is innovative, collaborative with community stakeholders, sustainable, repeatable—in that the approach enables other communities to replicate their successful outcomes—and beneficial to the community in measurable ways.

FEMA recognizes that a government-centric approach to disaster management is insufficient to meet the challenges posed by a catastrophic incident. To meet our Nation's preparedness goals, the Whole Community must be actively involved in all

phases of the preparedness, response, and recovery cycle. These awards are designed to invest in and enhance the Whole Community effort.

Additional information on the Challenge program criteria and application process can be found at:

www.fema.gov

www.ResilienceChallenge.org

FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Stay informed of FEMA's activities online: videos and podcasts are available at: <http://www.fema.gov/medi-alibrary> and www.youtube.com/fema.



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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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CHECK OUT NEBRASKA PREPAREDNESS SITE

A new website designed to enhance preparedness skills and knowledge in the areas of medical preparedness, first responder preparedness, public health preparedness and business/industry preparedness through affordable, needs-based training, customized organizational assistance and comprehensive resources is now online at:

www.bereadynebraska.com

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ROADS (NDOR) UPDATE

The NDOR mobile site now has views from almost all existing NDOR cameras across the state, including Omaha and Lincoln metro views at:

www.ndortraveler.mobi

A few more views will be added in the future as cameras that are now of-line become available.

The cameras are not new...they were on the existing 511 web site – camera layer, but NDOR did not have them all on the mobile site till now.

There's also a new link on the Mobile site to a special area that the National Weather Service has provided for Nebraska specific info.

The Mobile site also works on PCs.



An instructor presents information to participants in the All-Hazards Communications Technician (COMT) training course.

Course Focuses on Communication

An All-Hazards Communications Technician (COMT) training course in Lincoln, Sept. 10-14, offered participants information on the basic functions of the Communication Unit and the duties and responsibilities of the communications technician in emergency response.

The 17 trainees learned about arriving at an all-hazards incident with proper equipment, gathering information, assessing the assignment and beginning initial planning.

The course focused on assisting in planning, as well as implementing, managing and demobilizing the communication unit.



Bob Eastwood gives a tour of NEMA's Mobile Operations Trailer.

