



CERT Volunteers Practice Skills at Annual Conference

Members of Nebraska community emergency response teams (CERT) gathered at Homestead National Monument Park, Aug. 9-10 for the Third Annual CERT Conference.

In addition speakers from the Lincoln Fire Prevention Bureau and bomb squad, the convention included a training exercise meant to prepare participants for potential emergencies.

Participants split into teams at the park west of Beatrice to practice incident command, search and rescue, triage and transport. The exercise involved hikers caught in an explosion at the park which threw people into trees and along creek beds resulting in simulated deaths and injuries.

Members of the Civil Air Patrol volunteered as victims.

CERT responders began looking for survivors, treating the wounded on site and transporting injured to hospitals.

Gage County Emergency Management Director **Mark Meints** said responding to an explosion at a public place is a priority.

"We wanted to do a training they hadn't done before and that was an explosion," Meints said. "We chose something that has been happening in a real world situation and we looked at what a CERT would be doing."

Through the whole exercise, emergency management directors took notes and evaluated the performance of the first responders.

[Continued on Page 3](#)



CERT Conference Continued

“We’re looking to see if the procedures they are doing are being carried out properly, treatments being done properly,” Clay County Emergency Management Director **Loren Uden** said. “They are just lightly medically trained, so when they have more critical patients we want to make sure they are treating them properly and that they are choosing the right triage.”

The fourth annual Nebraska Community Emergency Response Team conference and training will be held in North Platte in 2014.

CERT representatives would like to give special thanks to **Drew Hughes** with the National Parks Service, **Donald Gross** with the City of Lincoln Fire Prevention Bureau and **Carl Buller** with Bryan Health’s StarCare Air Ambulance service for making the conference and exercise a success.

CERT exercise tests volunteers.

Pictures provided by Jon Rosenlund, Grand Island/Hall County Emergency Manager.



10 Cities Available to Serve as Hazmat Resources

This is the fourth in a series of four articles on hazmat response capacities in Nebraska.

Specialized teams in 10 Nebraska cities have letters of agreement with Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to serve as possible resources for the state in the event of a hazardous materials event.

Cities include: Beatrice, Omaha, Bellevue, Norfolk, Columbus, Grand Island, Hastings, Red Willow Rural, North Platte and Scottsbluff.

Team members have received training as hazmat technicians and command and general staff in the Incident Command System as well as other specialized response training.

Possible response equipment includes hazmat ID, decontamination tents/trailers, monitoring and detection equipment and ICS response boards.

If there is a large hazmat incident in the state, local emergency managers can request a state emergency response team (SERT) by contacting the team point of contact.

Following activation, emergency managers will fill out a incident status report and submit it to NEMA.

Contact **Tonya Ngotel**, SERC coordinator at (402) 471-7176 or tonya.ngotel@nebraska.gov with questions pertaining to the hazmat cities or this information.

Points of Contact

Beatrice

Fire Chief Brian Daake (402) 228-5246

Bellevue

Fire Chief Perry Guido (402) 293-3052

Columbus

Fire Chief Dean Hefti (402) 564-8127

Grand Island

Fire Chief Cory Schmidt (308) 385-5444

Hastings

Fire Capt. Darin Clark (402) 461-2350

Norfolk

Fire Chief Scott Cordes (402) 844-2050

North Platte

Fire Chief Dennis Thompson (308) 535-6762

Omaha

Fire Capt. Brad Hildebrandt (402) 444-7626

Red Willow

Rural Chief Bill Elliott (308) 345-4333

Scottsbluff

Fire Chief Dana Miller (308) 630-6231

This September: You Can Be the Hero

September is National Preparedness Month (NPM). It is a time to prepare yourself and those in your care for emergencies and disasters.

Emergencies can happen unexpectedly in communities just like yours, to people like you. Tornado outbreaks, river floods and flash floods, historic earthquakes, tsunamis and even water main breaks and power outages in U.S. cities affect millions of people for days at a time.

Police, fire and rescue may not always be able to reach you quickly in an emergency or disaster. The most important step you can take in helping your local responders is being able to take care of yourself and those in your care; the more people who are prepared, the quicker the community will recover.

This September, please prepare and plan in the event you must go for three days without electricity, water service, access to a supermarket, or local services for several days. Just follow these four steps:

✓ **Stay Informed:** Information is available from federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial resources. Access Ready.gov to learn what to do before, during, and after an emergency.

✓ **Make a Plan:** Discuss, agree on, and document an emergency plan with those in your care. For sample plans, see Ready.gov. Work together with

neighbors, colleagues, and others to build community resilience.

✓ **Build a Kit:** Keep enough emergency supplies - water, nonperishable food, first aid, prescriptions, flashlight, and battery-powered radio on hand - for you and those in your care.

✓ **Get Involved:** There are many ways to get involved especially before a disaster occurs. The whole community can participate in programs and activities to make their families, homes and places of worship safer from risks and threats. Community leaders agree that the formula for ensuring a safer homeland consists of volunteers, a trained and informed public, and increased support of emergency response agencies during disasters.

By taking a few simple actions, you can make your family safer.

- Consider planning a Ready Kids event in your community to encourage families to get prepared with their children.
- Volunteer to present preparedness information in your child's class or in PTO/PTA meetings.
- Invite officials from your local office of emergency management, Citizen Corps council, or first responder teams to speak at schools or youth events.
- Use local emergency management resources to learn more about preparedness in your community.

- Contact your local emergency management agency to get essential information on specific hazards to your area, local plans for shelter and evacuation, ways to get information before and during an emergency, and how to sign up for emergency alerts if they are available
- Contact your local firehouse and ask for a tour and information about preparedness
- Get involved with your local American Red Cross chapter or train with a community emergency response team (CERT).

For more information, check out:

Ready.gov/be-informed

Ready.gov/make-a-plan

Ready.gov/build-a-kit

Ready.gov/get-involved

On Twitter follow:

[@Readygov](https://twitter.com/Readygov)

Email:

ready@fema.gov or

citizencorps@dhs.gov

Monthly text messages:

Text PREPARE to 43362 (4FEMA) to receive monthly preparedness tips. (msg/data rates apply)

Order publications: call 1-800-BE-READY, 1-888-SE-LISTO, and TTY 1-800-462-7585



Construction of Wind/Tornado Safe Room in Columbus Approved

Columbus' East Central District Health Department (ECDHD), sponsored by the city of Columbus, has been approved for funding through the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program under disaster 4013 to construct a wind/tornado safe room within its new facility. This project has a total cost of \$525,413.

This safe room will allow for near to absolute life safety protection of up to 265 individuals, both staff and visitors, in the event of severe weather. It will be a multi-purpose room, and will function as an educational room during normal weather conditions.

Columbus does not currently have a safe room which meets FEMA standards, nor does Platte County, or any of the four counties in the ECDHD service area. ECDHD hopes this project will also serve as a model for other community health centers and health departments in Nebraska on what facilities can do to protect the staff and clients they serve.



Participating in the kickoff meeting for the project are back row from left: Tim Hoffbauer, Platte County Emergency Management director; Jerry Hilton, East Central District Health Department (ECDHD) facility manager; Rebecca Rayman, ECDHD executive director; and in front, Joe Mangiamelli, Columbus city administrator.

New Policy Announced for 2013 Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Applications

Last week, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released a new policy that will significantly streamline the time frame and paperwork for benefit-cost analyses for flood mitigation acquisition and elevation projects.

"This policy is a game changer not only for the FY13 Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) grant cycle (that includes

the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program) but appears to be applicable to all FEMA hazard mitigation grants going forward," said **Sheila Hascall**, Nebraska's state hazard mitigation officer.

"It is our understanding that the policy was released now to help ease the paperwork and effort burden for the FY13 HMA grant applications since

the application period is so short."

Contact Hascall at (402) 471-7217 or sheila.hascall@nebraska.gov, for additional information and state specific deadlines for the 2013 HMA Grant Application Period. For a list of other state contacts, [click here](#).

To read last week's letter to FEMA Regional Administrators, [click here](#).

Mulloy Joins NEMA Technical Hazards Section

Cody Mulloy has joined the Technical Hazards Staff of NEMA as a radiological emergency planning specialist. His primary duties will include working on the state's radiological emergency response plan.



Mulloy worked with the City of Irving Office of Emergency Management in Texas as a planner and exercise training officer near Dallas before joining NEMA.

Mulloy has a bachelor's degree in history, philosophy and emergency administration and planning.

He enjoys sports and fishing and was born and raised in Levelland, Tx.



Severe wind, Aug. 6, caused damage at two grain bins at the Huntsman Crossroads Elevator in Cheyenne County. The estimated loss was \$200,000. Huntsman is an unincorporated town north of Sidney on Highway 385.

Photo by Ron Lehl, Region 21 Emergency Management Agency.



Local Emergency Planning Committee Conference

The Region 7 Local Emergency Planning Committee Conference was held July 26-27 at the Overland Park Marriott in Kansas City, Kans. Four LEPC's were recognized for their outstanding efforts. All pictures include Keith Hansen SERC Chair.

Winners from left are:

Small LEPC -- Hamilton County sits along the I-80 corridor which serves as one of the largest routes for radiological material in the Midwest. The emergency manger and the LEPC work hand in hand to ensure that the citizens are safe, the plans are kept up to date and meetings are productive. The LEPC incorporates exercise and training into their meetings and works with surrounding counties to establish a regional credentialing system.

Mid-Sized LEPC -- Elkhorn Valley LEPC is a regional LEPC that encompasses six counties reaching a population of more than 90,000. This LEPC is chaired by a safety manager from Affiliated Foods Midwest and is represented by all six counties. They meet on a regular basis, host a regional hazmat team and conduct trainings on a regular basis. The six counties represented are Antelope, Cuming, Madison, Pierce, Stanton and Wayne.

Large LEPC, -- Douglas County LEPC The largest metro city in Nebraska, Omaha resides in Douglas County. The LEPC is chaired by a safety director from the University Medical Center and co-chaired by a volunteer in emergency management. They meet four times a year and try to hold the meetings at facilities and incorporate a tour into the agenda. They are active in community outreach and attend the local fairs and other event promoting shelter in place material and other safety information.

Website -- Region 5/6 LEPC and Emergency Management received the regional award for outstanding web site design and promotion of the community right to know information.



Nebraska Emergency Management Agency
is inviting participants for the first
**Nebraska Hazardous
Materials Challenge,**
Sept. 19-20
at the
Public Safety Training Center in Omaha

The two-day training and exercise event is designed to test the skills of participants in the demonstration of hazardous materials response. Teams will compete in hands-on scenario props, will demonstrate the use of chemical monitoring equipment and computer modeling programs. The winners of the challenge will have the opportunity to represent Nebraska at the 18th Annual New Mexico Nation Challenge in 2014 Open to any Nebraska technician level hazmat team.

Contact Tonya Ngotel at tonya.ngotel@nebraska.gov to register.

All participants MUST carry a certification as a hazmat technician as outlined in OSHA 1910.120 and NFPA 472 code. NO EXCEPTIONS.

Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) for Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Submitted by State Hazard Mitigation Officer Sheila Hascall
For more information contact: sheila.hascall@nebraska.gov

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT

ISSUED BY

U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [FEMA/Risk Reduction Division]

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 97.047

CFDA Title: Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM)

Funding Opportunity Announcement Title: The FY 2013 Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant Program

Authorizing Authority for Program: Section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended, (42 U.S.C. 5133)

Appropriation Authority for Program: The Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act, 2013 (Public Law 113-6)

FOA Number: DHS-13-MT-047-000-99

Key Dates and Time:

Application Start Date: 7/19/2013

Notification of Intent to NEMA Due Date: 9/6/2013

Sub-Application to NEMA Due Date: 9/30/2013 at 1:00 p.m. CST

Final Application from NEMA to FEMA Due Date: 10/18/2013 2:00 CST

Anticipated Funding Selection Date: 12/19/2013

Anticipated Award Date: 02/19/2014

Cost Share or Matching funds

For the PDM Grant Program, federal funding for project and planning activities is generally available for up to 75-percent of the eligible activity costs. The remaining 25-percent of eligible activity costs are derived from non-Federal sources. Small impoverished communities may be eligible for up to a 90-percent Federal cost share. Indian Tribal Grantees meeting the definition of a small impoverished community are eligible for a non-Federal cost share of 10-percent for management costs.

For detailed information on cost share requirements of the PDM Grant Program, please see Section 203 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. 5133 or visit <http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance> and download the Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance. The current Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance is available in the FEMA Library and applies to the FY13 PDM application cycle.

I. Funding Opportunity Description

Program Overview and Priorities

The PDM Grant Program was created by Section 203 of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. 5133 with the goal of reducing overall risk to the population and structures from future hazard events, while also reducing reliance on Federal funding from future disasters. The PDM Grant Program is designed to assist States, Territories, Indian Tribal governments, and local communities to implement a sustained pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation program to reduce overall risk to the population and structures from future hazard events, while also reducing reliance on Federal funding from future disasters.

Program Objectives — The PDM Grant Program is designed to assist States, Territories, Indian Tribal governments, and local communities to implement a sustained pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation program.

II. Funding Information

Award Amounts, Important Dates, and Extensions

Available Funding for the FOA:	\$23,700,000
Projected number of Awards:	35
Projected Award Start Date(s):	TBD
Projected Award End Date(s):	TBD
Period of Performance:	Maximum 24 months – extensions to 48 months possible at FEMA's discretion

Period of Performance

Extensions to the Period of Performance is permitted.

The POP is the period of time during which the Grantee is expected to complete all grant activities and to incur costs. The POP for the PDM Program begins with the opening of the application period and ends no later than 24 months from the close of the application period. FEMA will not establish activity completion timeframes for individual sub grants. Grantees are responsible for ensuring that all approved activities are completed by the end of the grant POP.

Requests for extensions to a grant POP will be evaluated by FEMA but will not be approved automatically. The Regional Administrator can extend the POP for up to twelve months

with justification. All requests to extend the grant POP beyond 12 months from the original grant POP termination date must be approved by FEMA Headquarters.

Continued on page 8

III. Eligibility Information

Eligibility Criteria

Entities eligible to apply for PDM grants include the emergency management agency or a similar office of the 50 States (e.g., the office that has primary emergency management or floodplain management responsibility), the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands, and Indian Tribal governments. Each State, Territory, Commonwealth, or Indian Tribal government shall designate one agency to serve as the Applicant for each HMA program. For the definition of the term Indian Tribal government refer to 44 CFR Section 201.2.

Eligible activities for the PDM Grant Program include:

Property Acquisition and Structure Demolition or Relocation

Structure Elevation

Dry Flood-Proofing

Minor Localized Flood Reduction Projects

Structural Retrofitting of Existing Buildings

Non-structural Retrofitting of Existing Buildings

Safe Room Construction

Infrastructure Retrofit

Soil Stabilization

Wildfire Mitigation

Hazard Mitigation Planning

Management Costs

IV. Funding Restrictions

Restrictions on Use of Award Funds:

Up to \$3 million Federal share may be requested in a sub-application to implement a mitigation project.

The cumulative Federal award for sub-applications awarded during a single application cycle to any one Applicant shall not exceed 15 percent of the total appropriated PDM Grant Program funds for that application cycle.

For detailed information on ineligible activities and other funding restrictions for the PDM Grant Program, please visit <http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance> and download the Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance.

The current Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance is available in the FEMA Library and applies to the FY13 PDM application cycle.

VII. Contact Information

FEMA encourages Applicants and sub-applicants to seek technical assistance early in the application period by contacting their appropriate FEMA Regional Office. Contact information for each State Hazard Mitigation Officer (SHMO) is provided at <http://www.fema.gov/state-hazard-mitigation-officers>.

VIII. Other Critical Information

Additional Information

For detailed information on all applicable requirements for the PDM Grant Program, please visit www.fema.gov/government/grant/hma/index.shtm and download the Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance.

The current Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance is available in the FEMA Library and applies to the FY13 PDM application cycle.

IX. How to Apply

Applications and sub-applications for PDM are submitted via the e-Grants system <https://portal.fema.gov/famsVuWeb/home>. If a sub-applicant does not use the e-Grants system, the Applicant must enter the paper sub-application(s) into the e-Grants system on the sub applicant's behalf. Blank applications that conform to the e-Grants format are available for printing from the e-Grants system <https://portal.fema.gov/famsVuWeb/home>. Supporting documentation that cannot be electronically attached to the e-Grants application (e.g., engineering drawings, photographs, and maps) must be submitted to the appropriate FEMA Regional Office. The entire application, including all paper documentation, must be received by the appropriate FEMA Regional Office no later than the application deadline.

X. Application and Submission Information

Applicants will obtain FOA Overviews and Full Announcement information from the [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) website where the full FOA is posted.

The grants.gov user manual can be found at:

http://www07.grants.gov/assets/GrantsGov_Applicant_UserGuide_R12.2.0_V2.0.pdf

For a hardcopy of the full announcement, please write or a request to: HMAProgram@fema.dhs.gov or contact your State Hazard Mitigation Officer.

Applications will be processed through the e-Grants System.

Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) Number. The applicant must provide a DUNS number with their application. This number is a required field within <http://www.grants.gov> and for SAM. Organizations should verify that they have a DUNS number, or take the steps necessary to obtain one, as soon as possible. Applicants can receive a DUNS number at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS Number request line at (866) 705-5711.

System for Award Management (SAM). The application process also involves an updated and current SAM registration by the applicant at <http://www.sam.gov>. Please ensure that your organization's name, address, DUNS number and EIN are up to date in SAM and that the DUNS number used in SAM is the same one used to apply for all FEMA awards. Future payments will be contingent on the information provided in SAM; therefore it is imperative that the information is correct.

In addition, the following Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD) and/or Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) number available for this Announcement is: (800) 462-7585.



NEMA Presents... IPAWS via Paraclete

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Joint Interagency Training Center (JITC) will be testing the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS) Sept. 4 from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) at NEMA, 2433 N.W. 24th in Lincoln, will be open to the local emergency managers and communication staff for a presentation, demonstration and informal closed circuit required weekly test (RWT).

“All of this is to test our ability and get ready for our formal statewide open circuit RMT (required monthly test) on Sept. 17,” said NEMA Program

Specialist **Alisia LaMay**.

Schedule:

8:30 a.m. - Introductions - FEMA IPAWS Program Personnel and Joint Interoperability Test Command (JITC)

9 a.m. Identifying Partners, Testing Procedures and Results EAS Device Configuration and Lessons Learned

10 a.m. - IPAWS RWT (required weekly test) to go out at 1000, via Paraclete.

Questions and Wrap up.

11 a.m. – A brief discussion on “Where we go from here,” the state plan, local procedures and the required monthly test scheduled statewide for Sept 17.

“All of this is for the benefit of county use,” LaMay said. “It is not a requirement. It is merely an avenue to see the IPAWS tool through Paraclete in action, ask questions of the testing facility first hand and understand the equipment and software capabilities a little better. This is open to any one who would be using this equipment.

“We appreciate your cooperation and patience, while we we’re fully testing this software option.”

RSVP to alisia.lamay@nebraska.gov with your name and what agency you work for so she can get a list to the guard gate, granting access to the airbase.

Veterinarians, Emergency Responders Attend Annual Training on Livestock Emergency Disease Issues

HASTINGS – Nearly 100 veterinarians and emergency responders from across Nebraska teamed up with the veterinarian staff from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) and the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service Veterinary Service (APHIS/VS) to attend the annual Livestock Emergency Disease Response System (LEDRS) meeting held in Hastings last week.

The two-day meeting provided attendees with updates on homeland security issues, foreign animal diseases, responder credentialing and animal disease traceability and surveillance.

The LEDRS Veterinary Corps also

completed a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved course that focused on agroterrorism and how animal emergency responders integrate into the overall response structure with other response entities, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

“The annual LEDRS training provides the Corps with the opportunity to review and practice for livestock disease scenarios they may encounter,” said State Veterinarian Dr. Dennis Hughes. “If Nebraska would ever experience a foreign animal disease outbreak, the LEDRS veterinarians would assist the Nebraska Department of Agriculture in

responding.”

The LEDRS program began in 2002 in response to biosecurity and agroterrorism concerns. LEDRS is the statewide system NDA officials will use to coordinate and execute a rapid response to the outbreak (or potential outbreak) of a foreign animal disease.

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency’s Exercise and Training Unit Supervisor **Dave Reisen** led a training course at the event on credentialing agriculture personnel. Exercise Training Officer **Chuck Chase** was on the planning committee and set up an area to help veterinarians sign up for FEMA student identification numbers.



www.nema.nebraska.gov

(402) 471-7421

Toll Free (877) 297-2368

Fax: (402) 471- 7433

Governor Dave Heineman

State Homeland Security Director

Lt. Governor Lavon Heidemann

NEMA Director

Major General Daryl Bohac

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

The Beacon is published monthly and includes emergency management news and activities from across the state. Please forward story ideas or photos for inclusion to:

Jodie Fawl

Public Information Officer

2433 N.W. 24th St.

Lincoln NE 68524

402-471-7428

jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov



[@NEMAtweets](https://twitter.com/NEMAtweets)

Regional Social Media Collaboration Group Steps up Coordination For Better Emergency Management

If your organization is interested in joining this group, email Amanda Bicknell at Amanda.Bicknell@fema.dhs.gov

Featured in the PS7 Review from Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VII

On all of planet Earth, there's no faster or better way to monitor global events than to use social media. Participles like Facebooking and Twittering are so commonly used globally many people know exactly what the words mean even if they're not in the dictionary—yet! Social media is so powerful that it's transforming every aspect of life as humans have come to know it. Every person who uses social media can now participate in any event on the planet through discussions about it. This is why every human is now an emergency manager and it's why the field of emergency management has forever changed. This means organizations have to change too.

Like many emergency management agencies at the local and state levels, FEMA has been expanding its use of social media for monitoring crises and providing valuable, timely information. But sometimes there's just so much information and resources are limited! For this reason, in March 2013, a first-in-the-nation forum was created that voluntary organizations, agencies, media and private sector entities could join to collaborate on strategies, messaging and the amplification of messages before, during and after emergencies. The forum is called the Social Media Collaboration Group (SMCG) and it utilizes Basecamp, an online discussion board. Today the group has 126 members, representing about half that many organizations, from the states of Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

So far, St. Louis County has sent out the only two requests for help monitoring and reporting. Both times it was for severe weather that was impacting the city and both times dozens of group members stepped up and helped out. The group will be used for similar events in the future, but it can be helpful in many other important ways. For instance, our organizations have followers, so we can amplify messages relevant to our audiences faster. Also, in the unfortunate event of a large earthquake in the region, we may know who's "alive" and tweeting faster than asking our organizations and could use this information to help rescuers, but also the public, get accurate, timelier information faster than without the group.

All member organizations must, as part of routine operations, be generators of crisis messaging to assist the public and be willing to assist other members of the group occasionally, when asked, during specific events. To make it easier and faster to determine which members would most likely be able to assist (due to location and possible resources), the SMCG utilizes a map depicting where each member organization is located within the region.

Here's where you—as a member of the private sector—come in! If your organization tweets important information to the public related to crises, or could, and is willing to support other organizations in the group, please let FEMA Region VII know and we'll invite you to join the SMCG. Please note that although we helped launch the group, it is by no means a FEMA-lead effort. It is what its members make it. The group is growing and we'd like you to be a part of it.