



March 2014

The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



Above, Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, NEMA's director, and Al Berndt, NEMA's assistant director, were part of the judging panel for the annual Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest.

Left, Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman, presents the Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week Proclamation and honors John Kaslon of St. Paul Public School for his first place finish in the annual poster contest.

Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week, March 24-28

The devastating impacts of extreme events can be reduced through improved readiness. During Severe Weather Awareness Week, March 24-28, recognize the hazards that could strike in your area and be prepared on how to respond.

Then throughout the spring and summer months continue to be alert. Listen to weather forecasts on the radio or television or obtain a NOAA Weather Radio for weather updates. Severe weather comes in many forms and your emergency plan should include a response for all types of hazards.

Read [Severe Storms: A Guide to Survival](#) on the Nebraska Emergency Management Website for tips on being prepared.

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John Cook Named NEMA Planning Specialist



John Cook
Planning Specialist
Hazard Mitigation

John Cook joined the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency as a hazard mitigation planning specialist in the response and recover section.

Cook comes to NEMA from Crofton, Md., where he worked as a federal contractor for the Department of Homeland Security focusing on training and exercises.

Cook worked in the Georgetown and University of Maryland College Park in their emergency management programs and was a CERT instructor at Annapolis Arundel County in Maryland.

He served for 10 years on the Prince William County volunteer fire department in northern

Virginia.

Cook has a bachelor's degree in biology from East Carolina University and a master's in emergency management from the University of Maryland University College.

He is professionally certified in emergency management from the International Association of Emergency Managers and earned an associate business continuity professional certification through Disaster Recovery Institute International.

Cook said he enjoys reading science fiction and is a *Lord of the Rings* fan. He has a large extended family back east.

Lancaster County Emergency Management Director Retires

Doug Ahlberg is retiring as director of Lancaster County Emergency Management. He started his second career as an emergency manager on loan from the Lincoln Police Department.

As captain on the police force, part of Ahlberg's responsibilities were disaster preparedness. After a short time as interim director and 39 years on the police force, Ahlberg retired on March 31, 1999, to begin working as emergency management director on April 1, 1999.

"I've had two jobs my entire life," Ahlberg said. "I started with the police department a week out of high school."

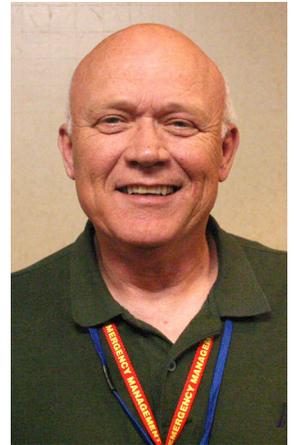
Ahlberg said he had three goals to achieve as the director. The first, upgrading the county's

outdoor warning sirens.

"The old Thunderbolts have been replaced," Ahlberg said. In addition, some of those older models were installed at state recreation areas and other outdoor venues in the county that previously didn't have sirens.

"In addition we sent a lot of our old surplus sirens out to western Nebraska communities in need of sirens," Ahlberg said.

Providing various resources in form of equipment to first responders in Lancaster County throughout the state was another goal of Ahlberg's.



Doug Ahlberg

Ahlberg ... continued on page 3



Mark Meints

Gage County Emergency Management Director Headed to Nebraska Department of Roads

After 13 years as director of the Gage County Emergency Management Agency, **Mark Meints** is joining the Nebraska Department of Roads as an Emergency Preparedness Specialist.

Meints said his favorite thing about the job he's leaving has been working with the public on programs to promote preparedness.

He has worked on 13 federal disasters and will miss working with colleagues and first responders.

"I was in my job nine days when I was baptized by fire with the Virginia Tornado," Meints said. Every house in the Nebraska town was damaged.

One of the most gratifying things he has done was working with **B.J. Fictum** of Saline county, and **John McKee** of Jefferson County to get the area covered by NOAA Weather Radios.

"All three of us worked hard on that project," Meints said.

Gage County was also one of the first three counties in the state to be identified as a Storm Ready County.

For 12 years, Meints lead the Nebraska Association of Emergency Management's Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest.

Ahlberg ...continued from page 2

Through various grants and through purchases made by the Lancaster County Board, Ahlberg has increased the agency's equipment.

At one point the county had five mobile operation centers. "We didn't need that many. We gave one to Nemaha County and one to Otoe County," he said.

Ahlberg said six decontamination trailers positioned throughout the county, a communication-on-wheels (COW), quick response trailers and equipment, a portable morgue trailer, and 21 generators are just some of the equipment available for emergencies in the county.

"These resources aren't necessarily only for Lincoln and Lancaster County," Ahlberg said. "We have shared the equipment with other counties. All it takes is a phone call."

The additional equipment allows the county to be better prepared for emergencies, Ahlberg said.

"When I started we had a hand-me-down Bronco and a 1973 Suburban."

Ahlberg's third goal was to improve the size and equipment of the county's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The Lincoln/Lancaster EOC moved out of the Hall of Justice where it had only 12 work stations to its new location at 233 S. 10th St. with 32 workstations.

"It's a quality place," Ahlberg said.

Leaving the county in good shape makes it easier to retire, but Ahlberg



Doug Ahlberg at Lancaster County Emergency Operations Center.

said he is really going to miss the people.

"Regardless of how you look at this particular job, the best resources are the people.

"Many changes have taken place in the last 15 years," Ahlberg said. "Emergency Management has blossomed, and the general public has placed a lot more importance on what an emergency manager does or does not do.

"When you look across the country who is the media interviewing now when it comes to emergencies?

"The local emergency managers," he answered.

"The focus now is how well the agency is prepared to respond or

assist, how well are we going to go through the recovery process."

One thing he won't miss: "people want stuff fixed right away."

Ahlberg said he plans to do some traveling with his wife who just retired from Lincoln Public Schools.

"All of my adult life I've had to make a lot of decisions," he said. "I don't want to make decisions anymore. I want to be responsible for just myself.

"I have been so fortunate with the county boards and the city councils I have worked with. These folks have been great. In 15 years I have been told to do something just once and that was 'you will buy a new mobile operation center.'"

7th Annual

NEBRASKA WILDLAND FIRE ACADEMY

Fort Robinson State Park April 26-May 4

Visit nfs.unl.edu for information

Register by March 28 for early discount

MARCH NEMA EVENT LOG

HAZMAT Spill/Furnas Co. March 3

An alcohol tank at an ethanol plant had overflowed into a drainage ditch.

Flooding/Kimball Co. March 6

Flooding near Kimball, due to heavy snow melt in Wyoming.

Brush Fires/Saunders Co. March 9

Multiple fires in Saunders County required the use of extensive mutual aid to bring under control.

Grass Fire/Custer Co. March 10

Approximately 200 acres burned near Comstock when a controlled burn from the previous day reignited.

Fire/Region 26 March 11

A fire occurred in difficult terrain near Arcadia and wind conditions did not allow for aerial suppression. Two homes were evacuated.

Fire/Cheyenne Co. March 13

A fire was indicated by NOAA satellite fire detection, north and west of Sidney. A call to Cheyenne County dispatchers

was made, and they said that it was a controlled burn.

Fire/Cass, Lancaster and Seward Counties March 15

Multiple fires across the area prompted calls to the NEMA Duty Officer, as well as interaction with FEMA Region VII Watch Ops.

Ft. Calhoun Nuclear/Reactor SCRAM March 17

A “hot shutdown” (a.k.a. “SCRAM”) of reactor was initiated after an error during maintenance. No emergency declared.



Fire near Branched Oak Lake on March 9.





ReadyCampus

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency is an ambassador in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather-Ready Nation Ambassador™ initiative.

It is an effort to formally recognize NOAA partners who are improving the nation's readiness, responsiveness, and overall resilience against extreme weather, water, and climate events.

As a WRN Ambassador, partners commit to working with NOAA and other Ambassadors to strengthen national resilience against extreme weather. In effect, the WRN Ambassador initiative helps unify the efforts across government, non-profits, academia, and private industry toward making the nation more ready, responsive, and resilient against extreme environmental hazards.

For more information on Weather-Ready Nation or how to become an ambassador check out [Weather-Ready Nation Ambassadors page](#).

On April 10, Citizen Corps will partner with the University of Nebraska – Lincoln and FEMA Region VII to bring ReadyCampus to UNL students.

ReadyCampus is a FEMA pilot initiative to engage college students in preparedness education and activities.

Each fall, college students across the U.S. leave the comfort and safety of home and head off to college. While they may be worried about navigating their way around campus, studying for exams, or finding the right major, most students don't give much thought to being prepared for a disaster.

ReadyCampus tries to change that mindset. Organizations and response agencies from around Lincoln will share information about being prepared for all types of disaster that may impact them as students on campus.

A Point of Distribution (POD) will be set up to show students how it would operate during a disaster. Students can go through the POD to receive some

supplies that they would need in the immediate aftermath of an event that impacts campus.

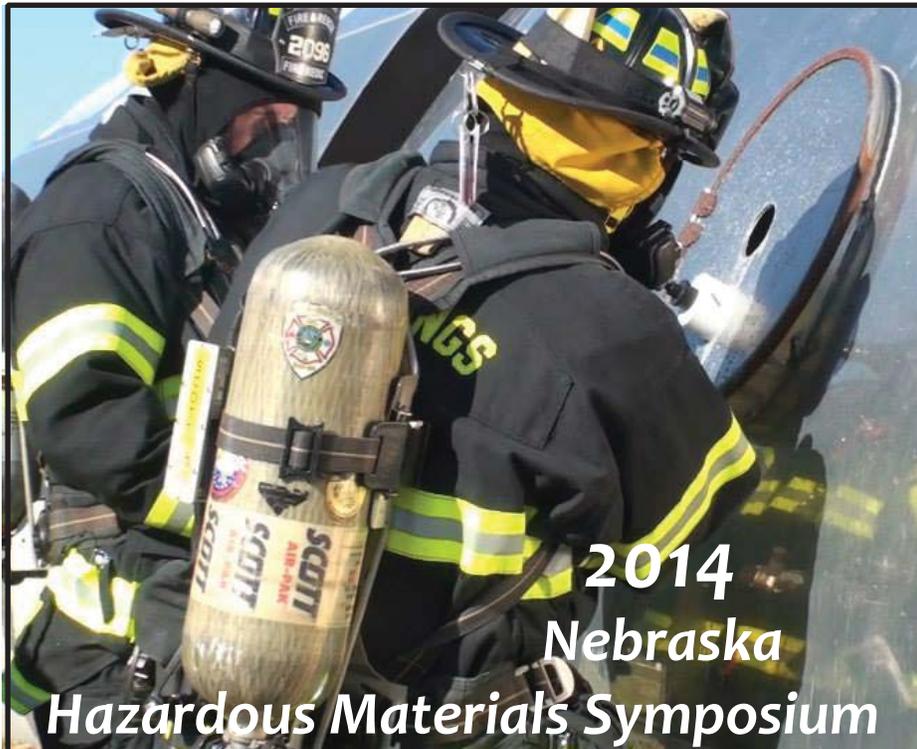
Citizen Corps is excited to be part of the ReadyCampus initiative at UNL.

Last fall, Kansas State University held their first ReadyCampus event. The success from that event has carried over and they are holding another this spring.

"We hope that UNL will be just as successful and beneficial to the students," said Ryan Lowry, Citizen Corps, planning specialist.

If you are interested in learning more about ReadyCampus at UNL, you can follow the Tweet chat that will take place on April 7 from 12 to 1 p.m. CDT.

Follow #ReadyUNL for information from UNL ReadyCampus preparedness partners.



April 4-6, 2014
Kearney Holiday Inn & Convention Center

Kearney, Nebraska



www.cccneb.edu

The Nebraska HazMat Symposium was established to provide knowledge, skills and resources to deal with hazardous materials for all emergency responders regardless of their level of training.



nebraskahazmat.org



The American Red Cross announced its new Flood App to help save lives and reduce losses from floods and flash floods.

This free app gives iPhone, iPad and Android smart phone users instant access to local and real-time information, so they know what to do before, during and after a flood. The content is available in English and Spanish based on the user's language settings on their mobile device. The app includes location-based, audible NOAA flood and flash flood watches and warnings – even if the app is closed.

“Floods are the most common natural disaster in the United States, and people can use the Red Cross app to create emergency plans so all household members know what to do if flooding threatens,” said Tina Labelarte, Region CEO. “The audible alerts in the app can save lives - even when users are away from a radio or TV.”

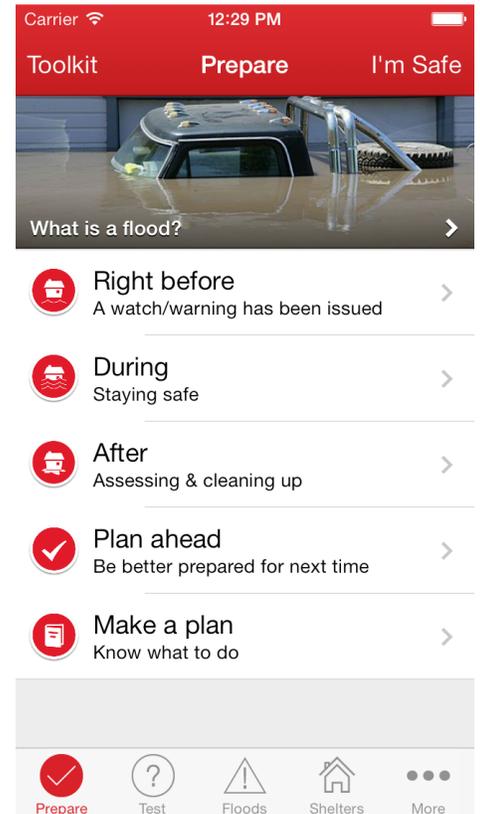
Other features of the app include:

- One-touch “I’m safe” messaging that allows users to send a message letting family and friends know that they are out of harm’s way;
- Preloaded content that gives users instant access to critical action steps, even without mobile connectivity;

- Toolkit with flashlight, strobe light and audible alarm to let others know where you are;
- Locations of open Red Cross shelters;
- Real-time recovery resources for returning home and cleaning up; and
- Badges users can earn through interactive quizzes and share on social networks.

The app is the latest in the series of Red Cross emergency preparedness apps that put lifesaving information right in the hands of people whenever and wherever they need it. The expert advice in Red Cross apps, which also includes apps for First Aid, tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes and other services, has been used to help save lives during disasters and medical emergencies. Red Cross apps have been downloaded on nearly 4 million mobile devices.

The Flood App, along with the others, can be found in the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store for Android by searching for American Red Cross or by going to redcross.org/mobileapps. Apps can help prepare people for disasters, but they are not a substitute for training. Red Cross First Aid and CPR/AED training empowers people to know how to respond to emergencies in case advanced medical help is delayed. People can visit redcross.org/takeaclass for course



information and to register.

The Red Cross responds to nearly 70,000 disasters each year and helps people get ready to respond to emergencies by providing these preparedness apps for free. The Red Cross needs the help of the public to continue this lifesaving effort. People can make a donation to the Red Cross by going to redcross.org, texting REDCROSS to 90999 or by calling 1-800-REDCROSS.

Spring Could Bring Severe Floods, Is Your Community Ready?

Towering snowpack and frozen rivers are more than just a reminder of a bitter-cold winter – they are a flood waiting to happen.

Prepare residents and infrastructure now for the possibility of flooding as the mercury rises.

During the spring, frozen land prevents melting snow and rainfall from seeping into the ground. A quick spring thaw can produce large amounts of runoff in a short period of time.

Each cubic foot of compacted snow contains gallons of water.

With nowhere else to go, the melted snow runs off the surface and flows into lakes, streams and rivers, causing excess water to spill over their banks.

Add rain storms to that mix, and the result can be serious, spring flooding.

Many rivers also froze this winter. When a rise in the water level or a thaw breaks the ice into large chunks, these chunks can become jammed at man-made and natural obstructions, resulting in severe flooding.

Floods are among the most frequent and costly natural disasters. Condi-

tions that cause floods include heavy or steady rain for several hours or days that saturates the ground. Flashfloods occur suddenly due to rapidly rising water along a stream or low-lying area.

Know the Difference

Flood/FlashFloodWatch—Flooding or flash flooding is possible in your area.

Flood/FlashFloodWarning—Flooding or flash flooding is already occurring or will occur soon in your area.



Gov. Dave Heineman declared March 24-28 Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week at the Nebraska State Capitol and honored post-contest winners. Pictures from left, Dan Hiller of Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Michele Woitalewicz of Howard County Emergency Management; Bill McPherson of Thayer County Emergency Management; Ensley Frame, Palisades Elementary; Takaylynn Hergott, Hebron; Joshua Jerabek, Farwell; John Kaslon, Ashton; Gov. Heineman and Lynn Marshal, Sarpy County Emergency Management director and president of NAEM; and Brian Smith of the National Weather Service.

2014 Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest Winners Honored at Capitol

John Kaslon, a fourth grade student from St. Paul Public School, in Howard County, earned first place in the 2014 Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest sponsored by the Nebraska Association of Emer-

gency Management (NAEM), the National Weather Service (NWS) and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

Kaslon's poster depicts a tornado approaching a farm, and includes an

inside look at a basement, with an emergency tote full of supplies that are ready should disaster strike.

The contest was open to all fourth grade students in Nebraska. The top four finishers were recognized by **Gov. Dave Heineman** at a proclamation signing for Severe Weather Awareness Week, at the State Capitol on Thursday, March 13, at 10:30 a.m.

Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week is March 24-28, and is observed to increase awareness of, and response to, severe weather hazards. A statewide tornado drill is scheduled as part of the week, on March 26.

"Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week is a time to prepare for the severe weather we face in the spring and summer months in Nebraska," said **Al Berndt**, NEMA assistant director.

"We hope all Nebraskans will make a safety plan and review proper safety precautions. The poster contest gives fourth grade students an early lesson on preparedness that they can share with their families."



Winners and representatives of Nebraska Emergency Managers Association, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and the National Weather Service at the Capitol for the Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week Proclamation signing, March 13. From left, Takaylynn Hergott, Hebron; Bill McPherson, Thayer County Emergency Management director; John Kaslon, Ashton; Michelle Woitalewicz, Howard County Emergency Management Director; Brian Smith, meteorologist, National Weather Service; Joshua Jerabek, Farwell; Dan Hiller, NEMA; Ensley Frame, Palisades Elementary; and Lynn Marshall, Sarpy County Emergency Management director and president of NAEM.

Severe weather can result in tragic losses that preparation and planning can prevent. Through the poster contest, fourth graders from across the state encourage Nebraskans to follow weather safety precautions.

In her second place poster, **Takaylynn Hergott**, 10, of Hebron, encouraged people to “Seek Shelter Immediately.” Her poster warned: “As Tornadoes Dance Across Nebraska ... Don’t be It’s Dance Partner.”

Joshua Jerabek, 10, of Farwell, had the third place poster, which caught the judge’s attention because it included advice on how to be ready for tornadoes. “Practice tornado drills,

listen to local news or NOAA radio, take shelter in a basement or interior room and have food, water and first aid in shelter.”

Ensley Frame, 10, of Omaha, listed tornado safety rules on her poster and included what to do when a tornado watch or tornado warning is issued. “Watch—don’t snooze, watch the news!” and “Warning—don’t be last, find shelter fast!”

Posters were judged on originality, effort and accuracy. The top prize is a \$125 gift card, second is \$100 and third \$75, all sponsored by NAEM. NWS provides a \$50 gift card for fourth place. Each of the winners will receive

a Weather Alert Radio courtesy of **B.J. Fictum**, Saline County Emergency Management director. NEMA provides certificates for all the students and has the four winning posters matted by the Nebraska Military Department.

For more information on severe weather awareness or preparing for severe weather visit:

[Omaha/Valley National Weather Service](#)

[North Platte National Weather Service](#)

[NEMA Storm Preparedness](#)

[Be Ready Nebraska](#)

[Ready.gov](#)



Above: Mark Meints, Director of Gage County Emergency Management, and Brian Smith of the National Weather Service in Valley tabulate results in the Severe Weather Awareness poster judging contest. Meints has been on the Nebraska Association of Emergency Managers Poster Contest Committee for 12 years.

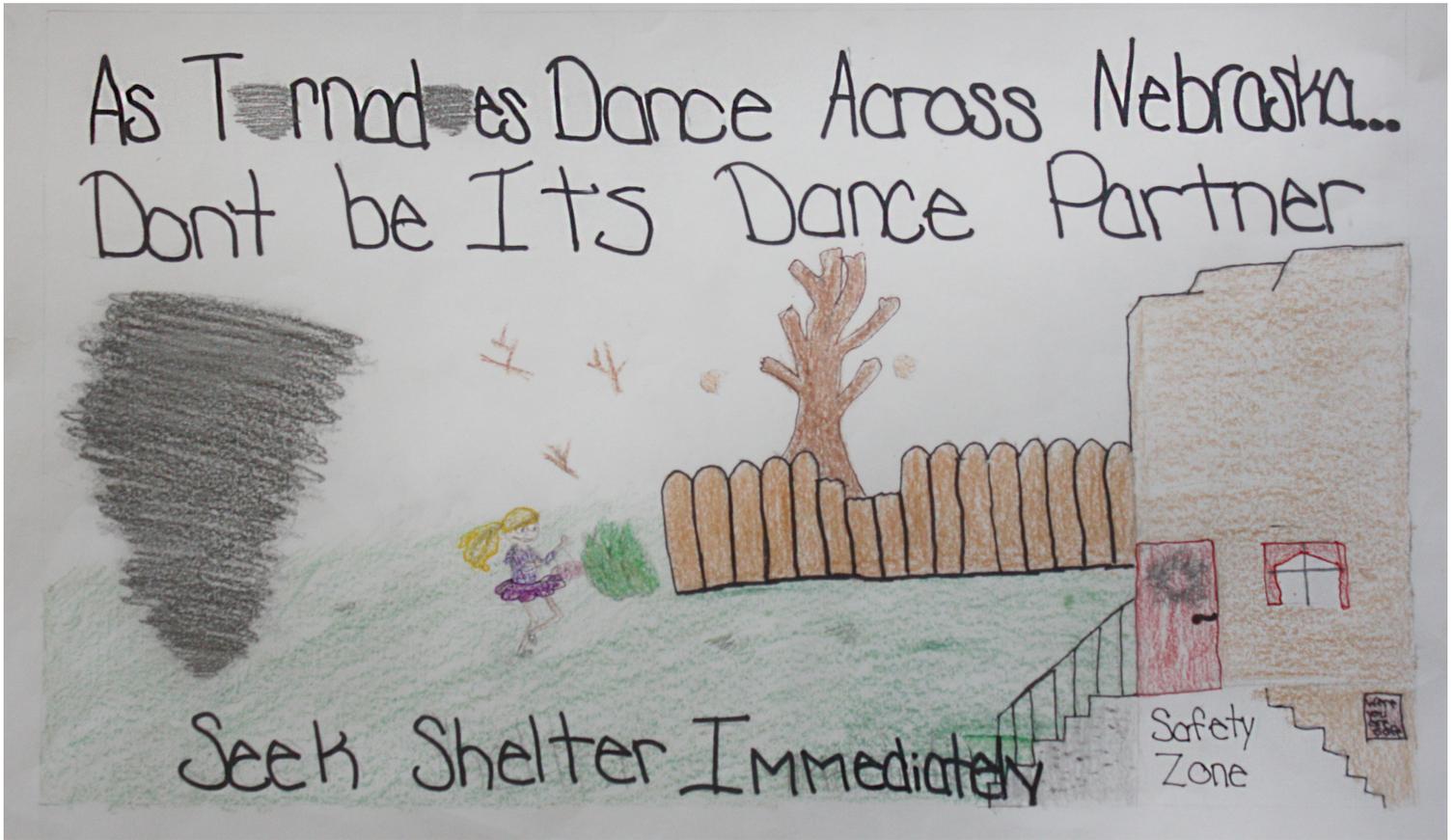
Right: Judging of posters is completed at NEMA.





First Place
John Kaslon,
of Ashton
St. Paul Public School,
St. Paul,
Howard County





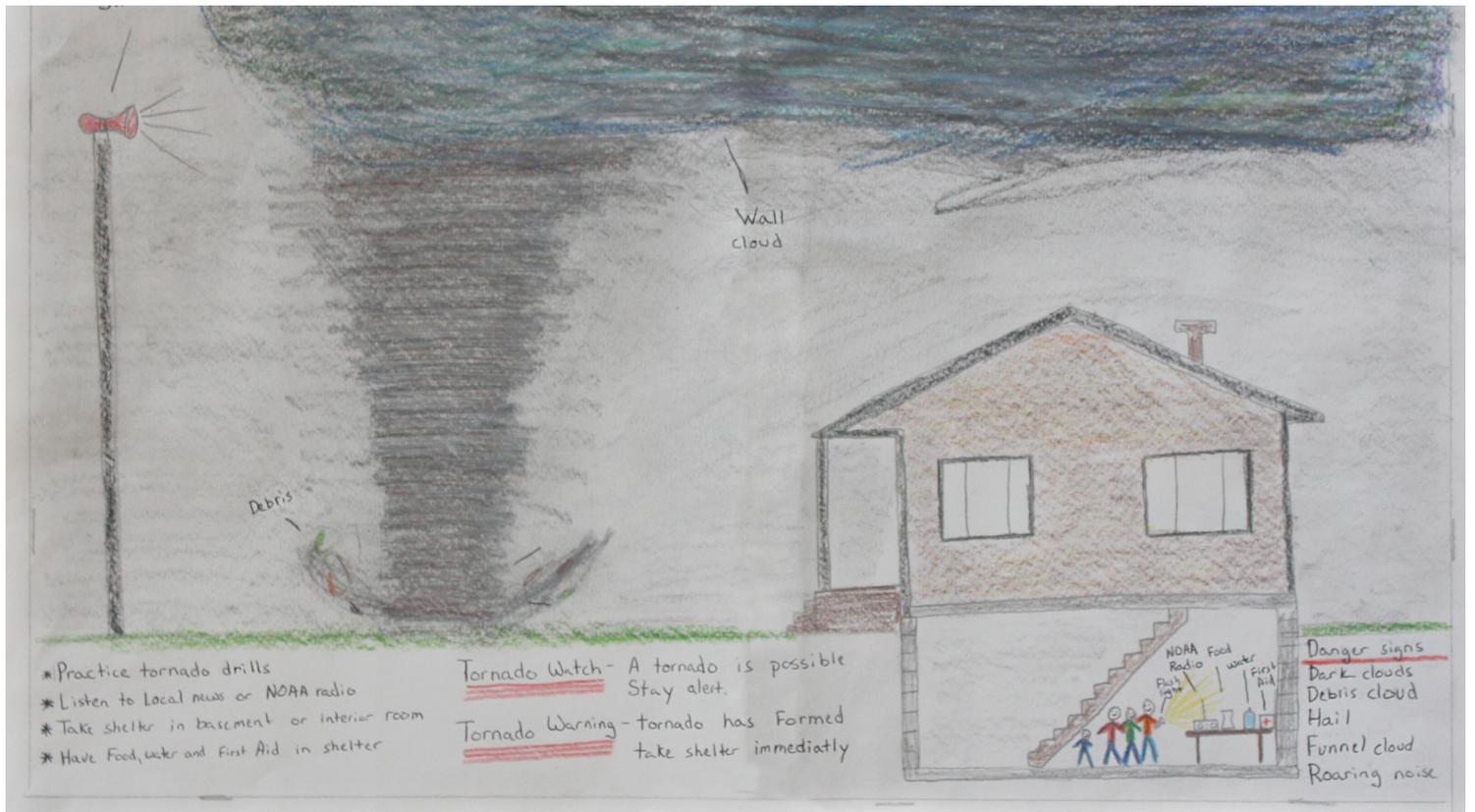
Second Place
Takaylynn Hergott,
of Hebron
Thayer Central School,
Hebron,
Thayer County

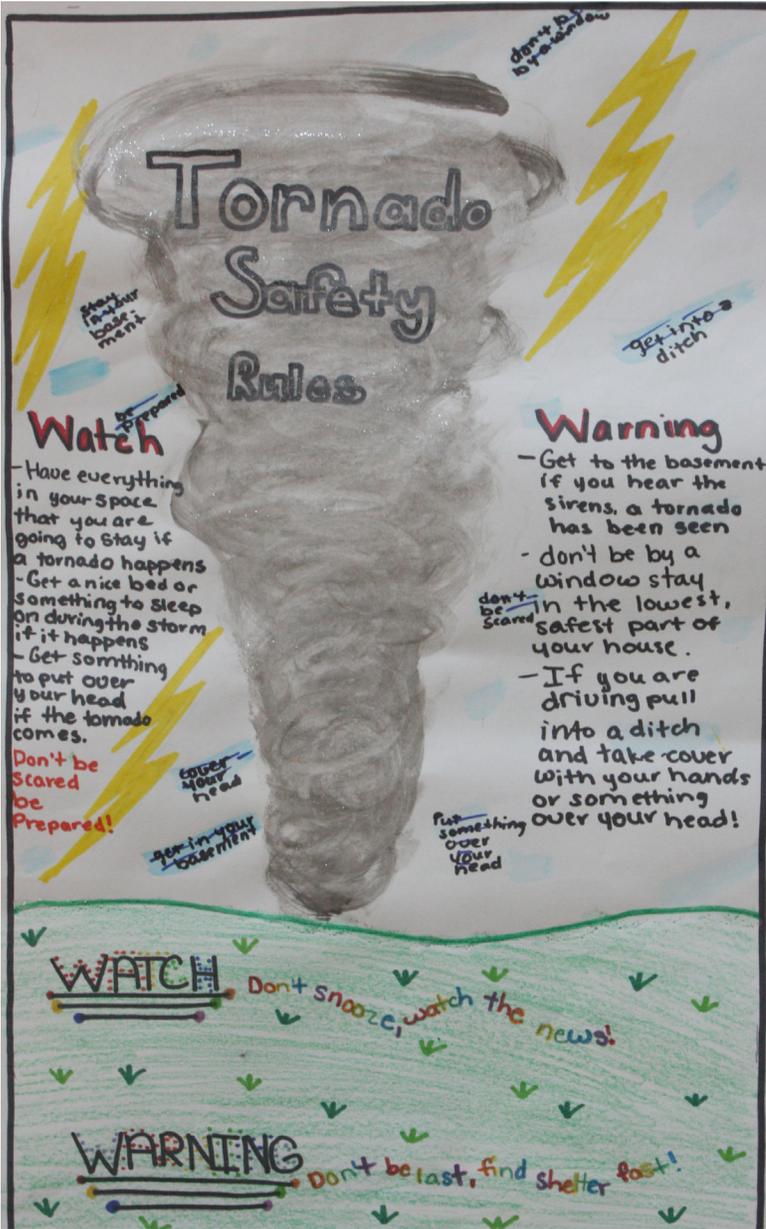
Also pictured:
Thayer County
Emergency Management
Director Bill McPherson



Third Place
Joshua Jerabek,
 of Farwell
 St. Paul Public School,
 St. Paul,
 Howard County

Also pictured:
 Howard County
 Emergency
 Management
 Director
Michelle Woitalewicz
 and **John Kaslon,** who
 is also from Howard
 County





Fourth Place
Ensley Frame
of Omaha
Palisades Elementary,
Omaha,
Sarpy County
Also pictured:
Sarpy County
Emergency Management
Director Lynn Marshall

Honorable Mention

Paige Aue, Auburn, Calvert Elementary, Nemaha County

Victoria Borrego-Casarrubias, Crete, Crete Elementary School, Saline County

Rachael Boslaugh, Bellevue, Anderson Grove Elementary, Sarpy County

Connor Bradley, Blue Springs, Southern Elementary School, Gage County

Justin Brewer, Falls City, Falls City South School, Richardson County

Taylor Broers, Hebron, Thayer Central School, Thayer County

Peter Friesen, Omaha, (no school listed), Douglas County

Darrek Lode, Blair, Arbor Park Intermediate, Washington County

Tee McKay, Ord, St. Mary's School, Loup County

Josephine Noble, Stromsburg,

Cross County School, Polk County

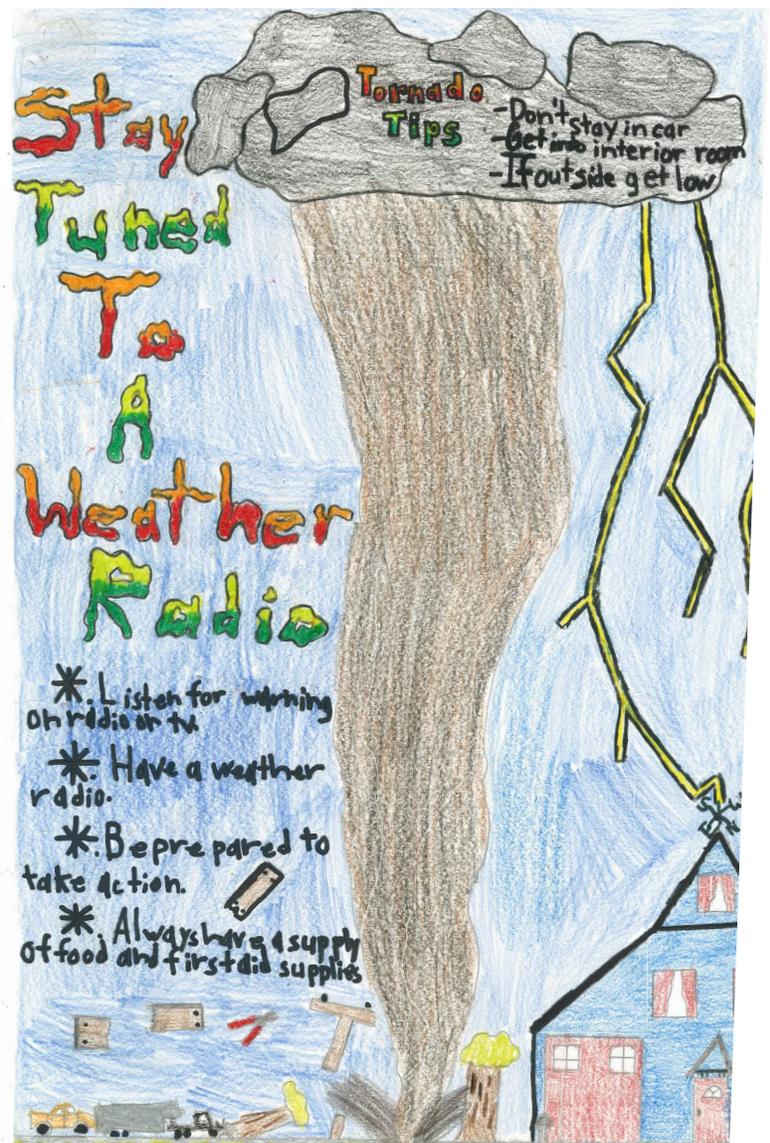
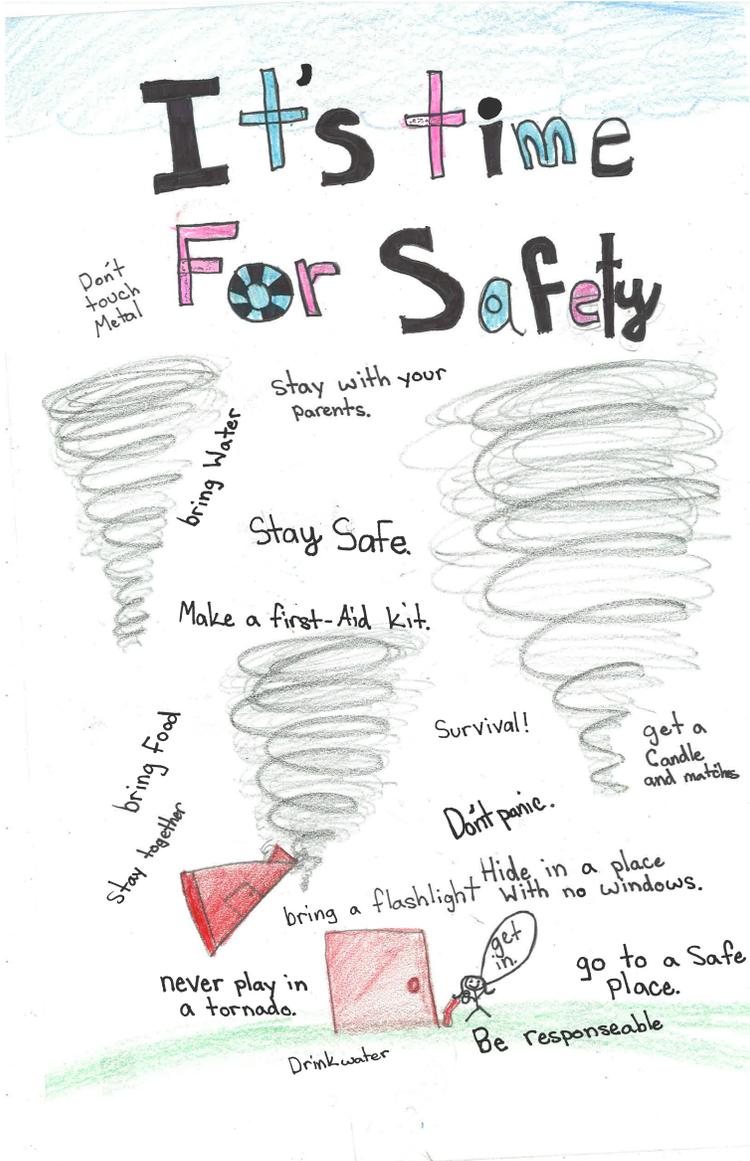
Talyn Saathoff, Blue Springs, Southern Elementary, Gage County

Grant Staats, Omaha, Boyd Elementary School, Douglas County

Jaycie Stout, Burwell, Burwell Elementary School, Garfield County

Courtney Swisher, Halsey, Sandhills Elementary School, Thomas County

Honorable Mention posters are displayed on the following pages.

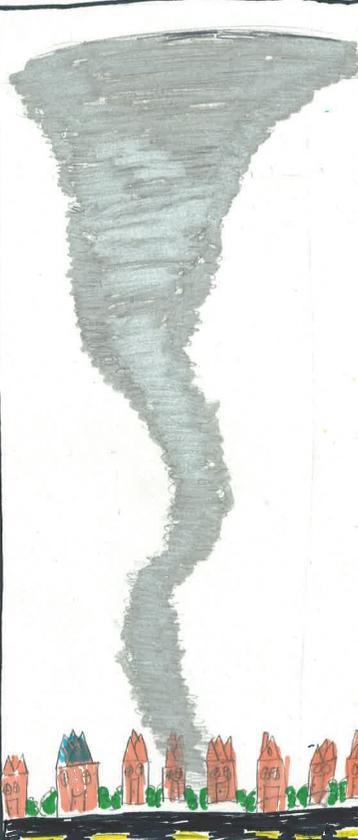


Victoria Borrego-Casarrubias, Crete, Crete Elementary School, Saline County

Connor Bradley, Blue Springs, Southern Elementary School, Gage County



Paige Aue, Auburn, Calvert Elementary, Nemaha County



Tornadoes

Fun Fact

Nebraska averages almost 50 tornadoes in a year!

Safety Tips

- ① Always be prepared by keeping a first-aid kit, spare shoes, radio, water and a helmet in a tornado safety kit.
- ② Get out of cars and mobile homes as fast as you can.
- ③ Have a family tornado plan at home and practice it once a year.

Tornado Safety Kit

Tornado Safety Kit

Things that go inside



Water bottle



First Aid Kit



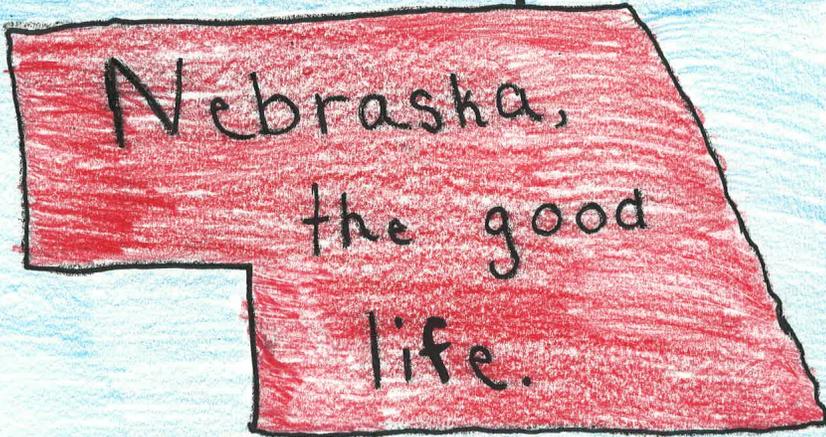
spare shoes



Radio

Rachael Boslaugh, Bellevue, Anderson Grove Elementary, Sarpy County

Nebraska May Mean "Flat Water,"



Nebraska,
the good
life.

* Don't drive unless absolutely necessary

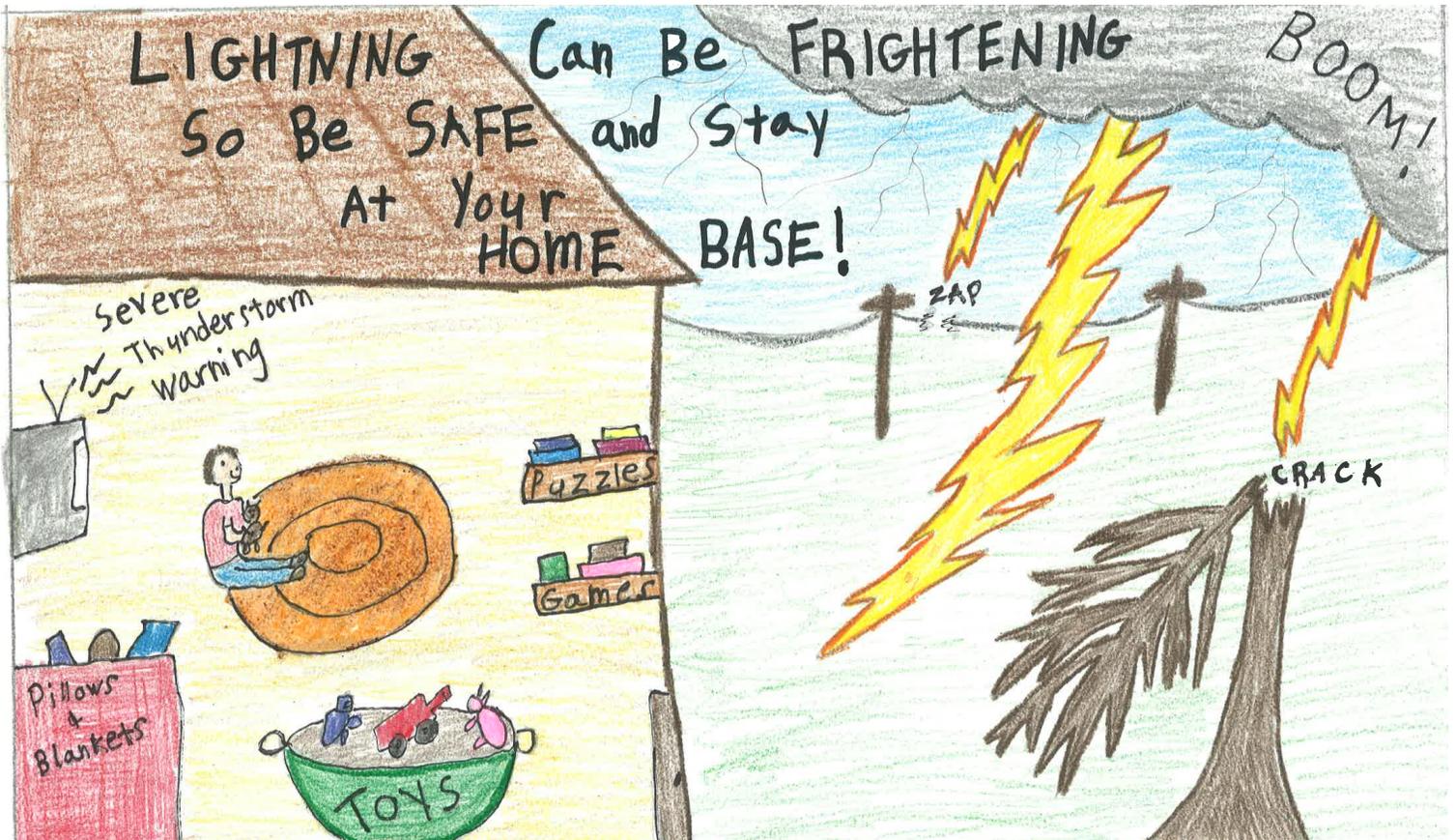
* Don't drive in flooded areas

* Even if the water appears shallow enough to cross, don't try it

* If your car stalls, abandon it immediately and climb to higher ground

But Flash Floods Don't Care!

Taylor Broers, Hebron, Thayer Central School, Thayer County



Justin Brewer, Falls City, Falls City South School, Richardson County



Peter Friesen, Omaha, (no school listed), Douglas County



Darrek Lode, Blair, Arbor Park Intermediate, Washington County



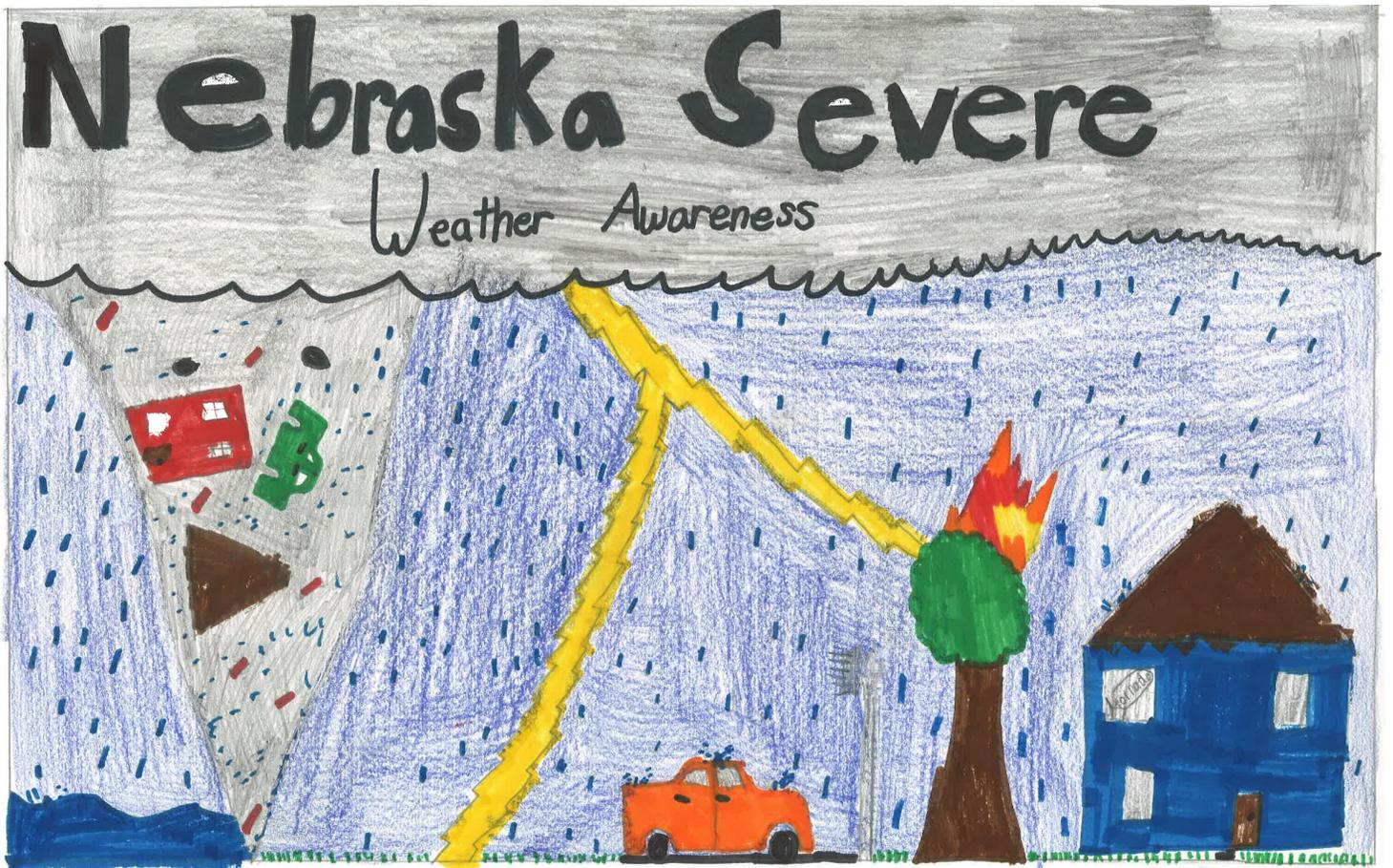
Tee McKay, Ord, St. Mary's School, Loup County



Josephine Noble, Stromsburg, Cross County School, Polk County



Talyn Saathoff, Blue Springs, Southern Elementary, Gage County



Grant Staats, Omaha, Boyd Elementary School, Douglas County

L I G H T N I N G

- Can cause fires.
- Always be aware of a storm.
- Make sure you check the weather before you go outside



If you think the weather man is wrong, then look at the sky. Don't get struck by lightning you can die from it.



Jaycie Stout, Burwell, Burwell Elementary School, Garfield County



Courtney Swisher, Halsey, Sandhills Elementary School, Thomas County



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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:

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



2014

Nebraska Association of
Emergency Management
Conference
Grand Island
Mid-Town Holiday Inn
April 2-4

NEMA Training Schedule

Check out the [NEMA Training Calendar](#) for emergency management related courses in Nebraska.

To register for a training course, click on the course name or registrar's email. Follow the link in the details column for more information. Students unable to attend a course they have enrolled in must notify the registrar.



International Visitors at NEMA

Al Berndt, left, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency assistant director, visits with international visitors touring the State Emergency Operation Center, March 25. The visitors are invited to the United States under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. As part of a tour of the Nebraska Military Department, the visitors toured NEMA. Also pictured are: from left, Brig. Gen. Rick Dahlman deputy adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard, Gizem Acar, managing editor foreign news desk, Milliyet, of Turkey; Vincent Vives, staff member, foreign affairs committee, National Assembly, France; Lauynas Jonavicius, adviser, foreign policy group, office of the president, Lithuania; and Parvana Bayro-mova, correspondent, Turan News Agency of Azerbaijan. The visitors learned about how NEMA works with the Nebraska National Guard and other state agencies to respond to disasters. In addition to visiting Nebraska, the visitors were visiting, Washington, D.C., Washington State and Texas.