



The Beacon

November 2014

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



REACCREDITATION

Assessors from the Emergency Management Assessment Program (EMAP) did a site visit the week of Nov. 10-13 at NEMA to evaluate the state's emergency management program. Pictured above, from top left, NEMA's Kathleen Silva and Cindy Newsham prepare files for the assessment; 64 areas were reviewed; and all NEMA staff meet with the assessors.

In This Issue

Page	
2	A Message from Assistant Director Bryan Tuma
3	Reaccreditation Process Underway
4	Civil Air Patrol Teams Up with NEMA
5	Volunteers Plant Trees in Pilger
6	Lower Platte River Summit Offers Insight and Tour
7	Text First, Talk Second
8	Ingestion Pathway Training Held in Four Counties
9	Course Offers Insights to UNL Veterinary Students
10	NEMA Calendar, Staff Update

**FEMA Closes Area Field Office
Transition Meeting
Focuses on Continuing
Steps to Recovery**



**A Message from
Bryan Tuma**
NEMA Assistant Director

The first disaster recovery I've worked on as assistant director of Nebraska Emergency Management Agency has been an effective and cooperative venture between local, state and federal partners. I heard nothing but good feedback from state and local entities as they have worked with our federal partners.

As the Federal Emergency Management Agency prepares to close its area field office (AFO) in Lincoln, it's a good chance to reflect on how successful the response here has been. FEMA certainly played a vital role in supporting Nebraska and local governments in rebuilding and recovery following the three 2014 disasters. The local field offices, which closed last month, provided a great point of contact for local jurisdictions applying for funding of recovery projects. Those local offices gave applicants a local place to go to ask questions and get answers.

We are extremely satisfied with the progress toward recovery. As FEMA leaves the state, we can rest assured that work will continue on the remaining projects FEMA staff are completing.

Response and Recovery Section Manager **Earl Imler** was very impressed with the FEMA field team that came to Nebraska. He remarked it was one of the better collaborations he has been a part of between federal, state and local entities. Federal Coordinating Officer **Chris Van Alstyne** and FEMA representative to Nebraska **John Brogan** have worked effectively.

Closing the AFO is just another step along the way to recovery. With the Lincoln office closed, work will continue from the FEMA Region VII offices in Kansas City, Mo. As grant recipient of the federal recovery funds, NEMA will continue to work with subgrantees to make sure work is completed and payments are made on recovery and mitigation projects.

If we must have disasters in the state, then an effective and cooperative response is our best answer to them. The FEMA team came to work in Nebraska as a team alongside their local and state partners, and we thank them for their service.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Tuma".



Federal Coordinating Officer Chris Van Alstyne of FEMA listens to NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma at a transition meeting, Nov. 18. FEMA is closing its area field office in Lincoln and will continue remaining work from its offices at FEMA Region VII in Kansas City, Mo.



State Coordinating Officer Earl Imler of NEMA makes a point during a transition meeting.

Reaccreditation Process Underway for NEMA

When Nebraska Emergency Management Agency earned accreditation by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) in 2009, it was a significant achievement for the state's emergency management program.

Accreditation demonstrated that Nebraska's program adhered to accepted emergency management standards.

Now, five years later, reaccreditation is being sought, and the process means just as much today as it did five years ago.

"The accreditation process shows a willingness on the part of the agency to be open to assessment," said Bryan Tuma, NEMA assistant director. "It gives us an opportunity to evaluate our program compared with the accepted professional standards for emergency management."

To achieve accreditation, NEMA documented compliance with a set of 64 industry recognized standards — the Emergency Management Standard — and underwent a peer review assessment by EMAP trained assessors.

Six assessors from around the country were in Lincoln, Nov. 10-13, to review documents that showed compliance with the standards.

Preliminary feedback was positive

as the Nebraska program received a "Yes" for compliance in all categories. The peer review team will forward its results to the Program Review Committee which will make a recommendation to the EMAP Commission for final action.

"You guys did an outstanding job," said **Carlos Garcia** of Purdue University, who led the team of assessors. "It takes a lot of time and energy to put it all together and you demonstrated great commitment to the process."

Cindy Newsham, administrative assistant, and **Kathleen Silva**, planning specialist of NEMA were the accreditation managers for NEMA. They prepared for the site visit by working with NEMA staff and other state agency staff to prepare material for review, a process that required months of preparation.

Compliance to standards is shown through written documents, interviews and demonstrations.

"It is great affirmation of all the components of our program," said Silva. "Assessment measures our strengths and show us places where our program could be enhanced."

The assessment covered not only NEMA, but key supporting state agencies.



NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma thanks Carlos Garcia and the EMAP assessment team that visited NEMA during a final meeting. The assessment team discussed the process and gave NEMA staff an overview of their findings.

EMAP is an independent nonprofit organization that fosters excellence and accountability in emergency management and homeland security programs by establishing credible standards applied in a peer review accreditation process.

The assessment team that visited Lincoln included independent assessors from Florida, Indiana, Michigan, North Dakota, Utah and Washington.

They spent four days at NEMA reviewing state, local and county emergency plans, and gave an unbiased assessment of Nebraska's emergency management plans, programs and policies.

Once reaccredited, a five-year cycle begins again which includes annual self assessments and a full assessment by the assessors cadre every five years.



An Emergency Management Assessment Program team assesses Nebraska's emergency management program for reaccreditation.

Civil Air Patrol Teams Up with NEMA

The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) have a long history of working together on disaster response.

CAP has worked with NEMA, in various capacities, for the last 40 plus years.

Leo Larkin wears three hats in this disaster response arena. He is a:

1. NEMA planning specialist;
2. Squadron commander for the 155th Composite Squadron CAP unit in Lincoln; and
3. Disaster Relief Officer for Nebraska Wing CAP.

Active with CAP in weekly training and meetings, Major Larkin runs a local CAP squadron and is a Disaster Relief Officer for the Nebraska Wing.

“Working in both worlds helps me appreciate how each organization works,” Larkin said. “It gives me a better understanding of how all work together in the emergency management world.”

CAP works in communities following disasters, does fire detection fly overs and assists law enforcement agencies with search and rescue.

CAP works and conducts its operations both state wide and Nationwide.

Larkin said the response in Hallam after the 2004 tornado was a prime example of how CAP provided services during a disaster when requested by local emergency management or NEMA.

In Hallam, CAP worked with the citizens aiding in cleanup, communications setup and contact with the local emergency management officials.

NEMA and CAP have a memorandum of understanding to accomplish the fire detection mission in the Chadron, Crawford and Pine Ridge area. Volunteer CAP pilots fly predetermined



Squadron Commander Leo Larkin reviews a sectional chart with Cadets Hannah Compton and Derrick Hall of the Civil Air Patrol. Larkin says he works to instill the following lesson learned from an old, crotchety field forester: “A bad day in the field is better than a good day in the office.”

routes, after lightning storms, to detect possible fire starts.

“As an active pilot, ensuring that CAP is available each year as a fire detection resource ensures CAP continued relevance in the emergency management world,” Larkin said.

CAP can fly as low as 1,000 feet above ground level, which is beneficial in detecting a fire. The pilot and observers can get GPS readings, orbit a fire and then make contact with volunteer fire departments and state or federal resources on pre-established air-to-ground frequencies to report on active fires. The aircrew stays in the area until released by the incident commander.

CAP has 16 squadrons in Nebraska, including a Legislative Squadron in Lincoln, with a total of 460 members, seven aircraft and numerous fixed, mobile and handheld P25 compliant radios that can assist in communication.

“As a squadron commander, one of my goals is to get CAP involved more with the other volunteers in the state,” Larkin said. “CAP, with its aircraft and personnel, can assist in many ways as one of the few volunteer organizations

with an airlift capability.”

Another goal for CAP would be to increase its work with Citizen Corps through its volunteer organizations.

An example could include CAP involvement in the distribution of resources in a disaster, Larkin said.

Law enforcement agencies and emergency managers can request CAP assistance for non-law enforcement activities

including search and rescue or photo missions. For instance, CAP pilots flew aerial photo missions for Sarpy County from in 2014 to monitor ice jams and flooding on the Missouri River and its tributaries.

“I would like to continue the tradition of CAP and NEMA working together with volunteers,” Larkin said. “Volunteers are a force multiplier for any disaster response. In Nebraska, where there are miles and miles between communities and many people who live in rural settings, using volunteers is just good emergency management.”

Coupling the resources of CAP, the Single Engine Air Tanker program and the volunteer fire department response keeps fires small, Larkin said.

“My experiences employing aviation assets as a forest technician and an incident commanders, have taught me the benefit of rapid initial deployment of aircraft,” Larkin said. “This early attack can save rural grassland, eastern red cedar and Ponderosa pine forest resources that could eventually disappear or be altered due to the severity of wildland fires.”

Winter Weather Awareness

If Winter Weather Awareness Day on Nov. 6 wasn't enough of a reminder that it was time to get ready for cold, snow and ice, then maybe the dropping temperatures and first snow of the season did the trick.

Most Nebraskans know it's never too early to start thinking and preparing for winter weather.

Getting "weather-ready" and

preparing for the inevitable impact of a Nebraska winter is a yearly occurrence.

To assist with the preparation, the National Weather Service has prepared a packet of winter weather information tailored to the state, which contains road report contacts, winter weather facts, winter weather terms, information about safe winter practices, summaries of the 2013-14 Nebraska winter

and many other topics.

Information in the packet is intended for citizens, schools, businesses, and media to use in their winter weather preparations.

[Click here for the 2014-15 winter weather information packet.](#)

Another useful link is the [Winter Outlook, 2014-15.](#)

National Weather Service offices that serve the citizens of Nebraska can be reached at the following links:

- [Central Region Headquarters Valley, Nebraska](#)
- [Hastings, Nebraska](#)
- [North Platte Nebraska](#)
- [Goodland, Kansas](#)
- [Cheyenne, Wyoming](#)
- [Sioux Falls, South Dakota](#)



Volunteers Plant Trees Given to Pilger Residents



The Arbor Day Foundation and Black Hills Energy worked together, Nov. 8, to help Pilger residents replace trees lost in last summer's devastating tornados.

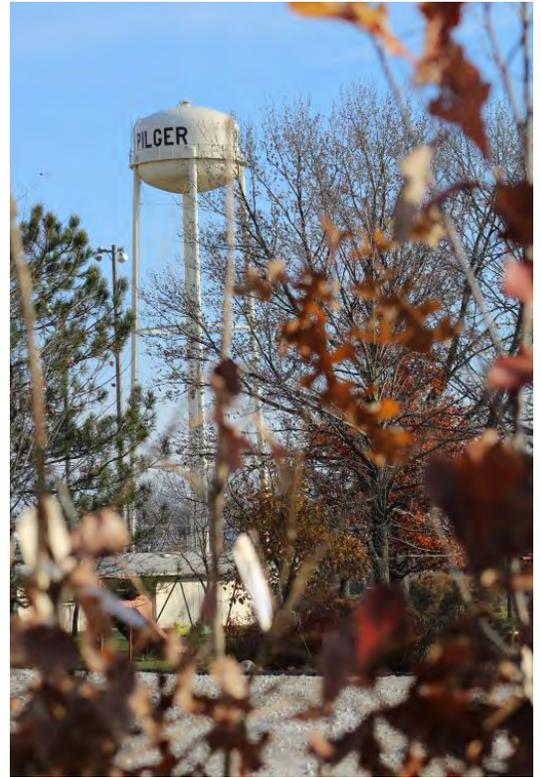
Volunteers planted 46 trees for Pilger residents who reserved a free tree through the Energy-Saving Trees

initiative. Trees help homeowners conserve energy and reduce energy bills. They also increase curb appeal and property values, clean the air and halt erosion.

Residents used the online Energy-Saving Trees tool to quickly determine where to plant their tree to gain the

most energy-saving benefits.

"The Village of Pilger is very thankful to BHE and the Arbor Day Foundation for providing and planting these trees," said Kim Neiman, village clerk and treasurer. "It is a great start to replacing the almost 300 trees lost during the tornados."





Paraclete Training Held

Above: Gary Weaver of Cherry County, Brian Woldt of Dawson County, Leo Medino of First Wireless and Harry Gilway of Kimball County (and right) Kirt Smith of Hamilton County and Terry Miller of Saunders County work on Paraclete as part of technician training at NEMA on Oct. 30.



Chuck Schroeder, executive director of the Rural Futures Institute, addresses attendees at the lower Platte River Summit.



A tour of the Kennedy Farm, a partner in the Nebraska Land Trust, was included in the summit.

Lower Platte River Summit Offers Insight and Tour

State Hazard Mitigation Officer **Mary Baker** attended the 2014 Lower Platte River Summit on Nov. 6.

For the day-long conference, attendees listened to keynote speaker, **Chuck Schroeder** as he addressed *Rural Resiliency* followed by a panel discussion over land-use planning.

Small groups then played “Plainopoly” before going on a bus tour of the Kennedy Farm and the Historic Downtown Plattsmouth area.

Schroeder, executive director of the Rural Futures Institute, spoke on

the Rural and Urban interface and the need to be supporting visionary leaders in small town Nebraska.

“These are the leaders who want to build their small town into the best community it can be, to keep our youth in the state as well as bring business and growth to their area and our state,” Baker said.

The afternoon tour highlighted the Kennedy Farm, near Schram Park, a recent partner with the Nebraska Land Trust in its endeavors to help protect and preserve our state’s working

farms.

“It was encouraging for me to meet so many individuals who care about our state, our communities and the preservation of our way of life,” Baker said.

“We call it the ‘Good Life’ and tend to take for granted what being from Nebraska means and what it has taught us. As a farmer’s daughter I get the special connection that we have with our agricultural roots, it’s unique and extraordinary, and we need to protect it.”



Above left, Wade Greening, an intelligence analyst with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, speaks with attendees at the 2014 Agriculture Homeland Security and Emergency Response Workshop, Nov. 4, at the Nebraska Information Analysis Center in Lincoln. Above right, Mark Meints of the Nebraska Department of Roads and Afua Kwarteng of NEMA were among the participants. The workshop was presented by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Earl Imler attends National Fire Compact Meeting

NEMA Response and Recovery Manager Earl Imler attended the Alliance of Forest Fire Compacts meeting, Oct. 28-29 in Madison, Wisc. It was Nebraska's first time attending the national meeting of forest fires compacts since joining the Great Plains Fire Compact this year.

"Nebraska is already engaged in sharing its single engine air tanker resources," Imler said, "but this meeting provided information on ways other compacts are working together. This was a great learning experience."



Katy Goolsby-Brown gives NEMA's Leo Larkin pointers in a FEMA L276 Benefit Cost Analysis course held at NEMA on Nov. 5 as NEMA's John Cook works in the background. The course focused on evaluation of hazard mitigation projects.

Text First, Talk Second

Lt. Gov. John Nelson and First Lady Sally Ganem are encouraging Nebraskans to use texts when contacting family members or loved ones during a disaster. Cell phone service is not always available in an emergency situation.

Nebraskans are encouraged to use text messages to "talk" with those important to them and not use bandwidth that may be needed for 911 calls and emergency responders.

"Families are not always in the same location when an emergency strikes," said Ganem. "The desire to call loved ones after an emergency or disaster is understandable, but disasters can cause massive mobile phone service disruption for millions of Americans. A simple message such as 'R-U-OK' to check on those you care about, and 'I-M-OK' to confirm you are safe, can bring relief as well as keeping other lines of communication open for emergency responders and people needing to call 911."

"It can be scary to watch an event unfolding a town or a state away, and not know how it is affecting someone you care about," Nelson said. "In today's environment, it is critical for people to be prepared to stay in touch. This is especially true when phone lines are overtaxed. Texting is a good alternative to voice communications in non-emergency situations and should be a part of every family's preparedness."

Both First Lady Ganem and Lt. Gov. Nelson stressed that if an individual is in need of immediate assistance, they should call 911 immediately. It is important to note that text messaging to 911 is not yet available in Nebraska, and is currently being discussed by the state's Public Service Commission.

More information on emergency preparedness communications can be found on the Safe America Foundation's website (<https://safeamerica.org/>) and www.bereadynebraska.com, a site, which is run by local emergency managers, that provides emergency planning for families, pet owners, senior citizens and others.



A Traffic Incident Management class on Nov. 18 was presented in Exeter by Mark Meints from the Nebraska Department of Roads and Loren Uden from Clay County. There were 31 people from Fillmore, Seward, Thayer and York counties in attendance.

Photo submitted by Jim Dunker Fillmore County Emergency Management director



Jon Schwartz, NEMA technical hazards manager, provides training in Richardson County on the ingestion pathway.

Ingestion Pathway Training Held in Four Counties

NEMA's technical hazards staff delivered yearly training on radiological planning and the effects of radiation in Richardson, Johnson, Otoe and Nemaha counties.

The training was designed to deliver information to emergency managers and officials in the counties within the 50-mile emergency protective zone of Nebraska's two nuclear power plants. Information covered basics of radiation, effects of radiation on the body, how to guard against radiation and contamination versus exposure.

Old Safes Could Hold Hidden Danger

A recent discovery in a Loomis bank highlighted a hazardous materials issue that should be noted by local emergency managers across the state.

According to State Emergency Response Commission Coordinator Tonya Ngotel, a decades old bank safe is at the heart of this story.

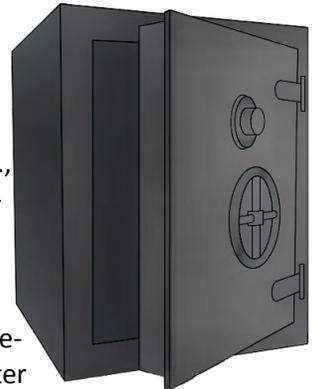
When a locksmith was called to gain access to a safe inside a recently purchased bank, two vials of unknown chemicals were discovered.

Emergency Manager **Gene Mahon** reached out to **Bill Elliott**, chief of the Red Willow Rural Fire Department, who dispatched his hazmat team.

Elliott, in turn contacted NEMA who coordinated the involvement of the 72nd Civil Support Team out of Lincoln.

The 72nd, working with Red Willow Rural, identified the chemical as Chloropicrin.

Based on information about the Badger Safe Protector Co., which manufactured the safe, it appears the device was designed to deter any unwanted attempts to gain entry.



any unwanted attempts to gain entry.

"If not opened properly, the glass vials would break, the chemicals in the vials would mix and the gas vapors would incapacitate anyone attempting to break into the safe," Ngotel said.

"Please call attention to this issue by letting your counterparts know of the potential hazardous materials issue. The response to this event shows the outstanding support and coordination between our teams in Nebraska."

Course Offers Emergency Management Insight to UNL Veterinary Students

Emergency managers have learned that the safety of people often depends on evacuation plans made for their pets.

“We know that before, during, and after a disaster there are people who will not evacuate without their pets,” said **Chuck Chase** to a crowd of 40 plus students, veterinarians and vet techs. “It doesn’t make any difference if we feel this is foolish or if we empathize. All that matters to emergency managers is that this is reality, and we need to prepare for it. That is one of the reasons why vet techs are cutting edge in the emergency management world.”

Chase was approached by **Dr. Glenn Jackson** from the University of Nebraska’s Agricultural Tech College in Curtis to give a presentation after talking with him at the Livestock Emergency Disease Response Systems Veterinary Corps annual conference.

“I kept hearing of the program Chuck did for the Henry Doorly Zoo, and I thought it would be appropriate for our annual conference,” Jackson said.

FEMA recently released the federal standards for animal workers in disaster, including veterinarians and animal technicians.

“I didn’t just want to give them the typical Incident Command System/National Incident Management System course, I wanted to make it real to them, show them how and where they would fit into the ICS structure and how they could get involved now.”

Chase took the standard FEMA PowerPoints and created a ‘Prezi’, a new type of presentation software that is more fluid in its appearance.

“I like the way that a Prezi can show the big picture, always showing the student where they have been and where they are going.”



Chuck Chase, a Nebraska Emergency Management exercise training officer, receives a tour of the Veterinarian Tech Facility at the University of Nebraska Ag. Tech School, in Curtis.

It took some research to gear the material to professionals in animal medicine.

“I contacted federal agencies, national organizations, and our own animal response leaders in Nebraska,” Chase said. “The result was not only a presentation of the ICS structure but also included several examples of potential operations branch structures for a foreign animal disease incident, and a two-hour presentation of national response organizations, what they do, and how to become involved.”

Chase said not only would the students be able to complete beginning ICS course tests (IS-100 and IS-700) after completing this course, but they also learned how to get involved in state and national animal response organizations.

Chelsea Schaaf, a professional vet technician attending the class, said she appreciated the information she learned during the course.

“Chuck related it to our occupation, which gives you a true feeling and better understanding,” said Schaaf.

Chase was excited to do the research on the topic of animals in disaster.

“Nebraska is on the front line and the whole topic is so cutting edge,” Chase said.”

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture recognized the federal credentialing standards for several of the animal disaster ICS positions (including animal technician) the Thursday before the course was offered in Curtis.

“I have seen ICS/NIMS presented several times, this was the first time it was interesting,” said Jackson.



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 John Nelson

NEMA Director

Major General Daryl Bohac

Assistant Director

Bryan Tuma

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



Like us on
Facebook

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



Calendar of Events

- Dec. 2-5** L-289 State Volunteer and Donations Management class, Lincoln.
- Dec. 10-12** Nebraska Association of Emergency Management (NAEM) at NACO Conference, Omaha
- Dec. 11** Nebraska Association of Emergency Management (NAEM) portion of NACO Conference, Omaha
- Jan. 20-22** Emergency Management 101, Lincoln.
- April 1-3** NAEM Conference, Grand Island
- Aug.-Sept.** TERREX seminars, tabletops. Winnebago, Fremont, Tecumseh, Lincoln.

To register for classes visit [the NEMA Training Calendar page](#).

NEMA Staff UPDATE

Julie Mayers was promoted to federal aid supervisor within the Preparedness Section. Here job focuses on the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grants.

She will be responsible for managing and tracking the Regional PET, the MOU Hazmat Team and the state agencies grants and projects.

“Julie will be my ‘right hand’ when dealing with this grant,” said Nikki Weber, preparedness section manager. “She is very knowledgeable on how this grant is administered and tracked, and will do a fantastic job.”



Brent Curtis, program specialist for NEMA’s response and recovery section, received a ceremonial coin from **Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac**, the Adjutant General of the Nebraska Military Department, for his efforts on the response and recovery following the tornado in Pilger. Curtis has served as the point of contact for NEMA to the Village of Pilger, to the long-term recovery committee and to the area as a whole.