



July 8, 2016

# The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



## It's All About Cindy

### After 30 Years, Retirement Beckons





A Message from NEMA Assistant Director

Bryan Tuma

We envision safer, less vulnerable communities in Nebraska made possible through effective collaborative partnerships committed to saving lives and reducing the impact of disasters.

Our mission is to coordinate, support and serve Nebraska through an effective and relevant emergency management agency.

After 30 years with Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, Cindy Newsham is demobilizing from NEMA. She has chosen retirement over writing policy directives, attaining EMAP accreditation and being the receptacle of NEMA's institutional knowledge.

I have spoken with our director, Major Gen. Daryl Bohac, about whether or not it makes sense for NEMA to continue operations in light of this development. He said we must carry on despite our concerns about doing so without Cindy.

Cindy has served as the agency's population protection planner (a less scary name for what she actually did ... nuclear attack planning), REP planner, hazmat planner, planning section manager, response and recovery section manager and administrative assistant in her years since joining the agency on June 11, 1986.

Cindy's years teaching junior high school students prior to joining the agency gave her patience for dealing with other NEMA staff, local emergency managers and FEMA staff throughout her tenure here; and her work as a volunteer local civil defense director in Ceresco gave her understanding and empathy for local issues and concerns.

This special issue of NEMA's newsletter, The Beacon, is dedicated to the great service Cindy Newsham has provided NEMA and the citizens of Nebraska. This issue is all about Cindy and celebrates her career with us at NEMA. The entire staff of the agency sends our best wishes to her as she begins her retirement adventure. She will be missed by all of us.

Sincerely,

[Handwritten signature of Bryan Tuma]

NEMA Staff July 2016



Bohac Dahlman Tuma



Donny Christensen Dan Hiller Earl Imler Deb Kai Terri Kattes Sue Krogman Julie Mayers Phyllis McCown Cindy Newsham Dave Reisen Jon Schwarz Nikki Weber



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# Newsham Retires from Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

The disasters plus the projects, the exercises, the committees, the plans and the directives that **Cindy Newsham** has worked on in 30 years are too numerous to mention, but they all add up to one spectacular career at Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Newsham started at the State Civil Defense Agency (later NEMA) on June 11, 1986, and served in a variety of planning and management positions.

One of the first things Newsham worked on was creating a single state plan for emergency management.

“The plan was based on functional responsibilities rather than a separate plan for every hazard,” Newsham said.

Another one of the notable projects Newsham worked on was the state’s response to the U.S. passage of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act, or SARA Title III, in 1986.

She and **Dan Hiller**, who now serves as NEMA’s planning unit supervisor, traveled the state, working with local emergency managers to set up local emergency planning committees (LEPCs).

“We identified facilities that handled or stored hazardous materials as well as vulnerable places like schools and nursing homes,” Hiller said. “That was a large undertaking, but it gave us the information we needed to write plans, train and exercise so that we could respond to those potential threats.”

Hiller noted that Newsham was es-

sential to the agency in many ways.

“Cindy has the ability to read legislation and translate it into layman’s terms so that the rest of us could understand what it really meant for emergency management,” he said.

In addition to her work with the Legislature, Newsham worked to establish planning, exercise and training programs. She and other planners with the agency developed a series of exercises, including a final model city exercise that allowed locals to test their newly developed plans.

Newsham worked to put together the governor’s policy group, which still exists today, and administered grants from the Department of Justice.

“All of that first DOJ grant went to equip and train responders in eight cities as state assets to respond to hazardous materials spills or incidents.

Newsham served on a Y2K committee for 18 months prior to 2000.

“All the planning ahead of time made for a smooth transition,” Newsham said. “Nothing happened because of all the work we did.”

Things changed for emergency

management with the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Newsham said. The focus went to homeland security.

“For a while, the homeland security frenzy took over traditional emergency management and response to disasters became secondary,” Newsham said. “The disasters continued, but they took a way back seat. Homeland security was really driving everything.”

She also served as the state’s liaison for Hurricane Katrina requests for assistance.

Prior to her current position of administrative assistant, Newsham served as section manager for response and recovery. She managed the State Emer-



Cindy Newsham accepts the 2015 President’s Award from Nebraska Association of Emergency Management President Darrin Lewis of Buffalo County.



At home in the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). Pictured at left is the current SEOC at NEMA with Newsham seated at the left. Pictured at right is Newsham working in the SEOC in “the bunker” NEMA’s former offices.



[www.nema.nebraska.gov](http://www.nema.nebraska.gov)

(402) 471-7421

Toll Free (877) 297-2368

Fax: (402) 471-7433

Governor Pete Ricketts

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Lt. Governor Mike Foley

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 six times a year 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](mailto:jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov)



agency Operations Center for wildfires in western Nebraska, snow and ice storms across the state and multiple tornados.

Through her time at NEMA, News-ham said she learned that emergency management was all about stopping the chaos by getting organized quickly.

Earl Imler, NEMA operations manager, succeeded Newsham as response and recovery manager.

“Cindy hired me and has been my mentor and sounding board since I came here,” said Imler. “There is a lot of information walking out the door, but I have explained to Cindy that I have her on speed dial.”

Hiller agreed that Newsham’s institutional knowledge will be greatly missed.

“Cindy knows where all the bones are buried.”

Newsham said she will miss all the people she has worked with—NEMA employees, state agency staff, locals and federal people.

“Next time there is a disaster in Nebraska I will know you guys will be doing your job. I’m proud of Nebraskans because we work together. There isn’t fighting between agencies like I’ve heard about in other states. We can make order out of chaos because we have working relationships and plans in place and we exercise those plans for a response system the really works.”



Cindy Newsham updates local emergency managers at a workshop.



Newsham and Al Berndt, former assistant director share a few laughs.



Newsham and Roger Lemke, former adjutant general, attend a committee meeting.



At right, in red, Newsham walks along the Joint Field Office set up following the tornado that struck Hallam in 2004.



# Retirement Celebration

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