FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor Visits Joint Field Office in Lincoln, Meets with Gov. Ricketts, NEMA and FEMA Staff
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.

Pete Gaynor, administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency was in Lincoln, Dec. 9 to meet with FEMA staff at the Joint Field Office as well as with Gov. Pete Ricketts, Region VII Administrator Paul Taylor and NEMA staff. It was a great opportunity to interact with national staff and get questions answered about the progress of response to DR-4420 our federal disaster from March 2019. We were also able to update the FEMA administrator on Nebraska’s largest natural disaster and the work NEMA and FEMA have done to work on our long-term recovery. We certainly appreciate the efforts of the many FEMA staff members who have spent time working on this disaster with us throughout 2019.

As we head into 2020, there are so many people to thank for the work they did to help Nebraska respond to a disaster that affected nearly all counties in the state. It was my honor to be a part of Gov. Pete Ricketts and First Lady Susan Shore’s Flood Heroes event at the Capitol on Dec. 17. The event highlighted the extraordinary efforts of first responders and other individuals who stepped up to help others in need. I believe that Nebraskans are always willing to help one another in times of adversity, and the people assembled at the Capitol affirmed that belief.

However, those responders are not the only people I’d like to recognize for their efforts in response to this disaster. Local emergency management agency directors and staff across the state spent long hours during the initial event and many hours afterward documenting destruction in their counties as the recovery phase began. City and county officials also helped us develop a clear picture of the many projects that will put this state back in order. For their efforts, I extend my thanks.

Our emergency support function representatives who spent many hours in the State Emergency Operations Center also deserve our appreciation. Teaming up with state agency staff, nongovernmental organizations and other partners makes our response to a disaster so much more effective. We could not do what we do without a team effort that includes all of our ESFs, voluntary organizations active in disaster, the Public Preparedness Partnership and many other volunteers. These groups and individuals were essential to the response and recovery efforts across the state.

Finally, the staff at Nebraska Emergency Management Agency worked together with our local, state and federal partners on this unprecedented disaster. I am proud of their efforts and appreciate the work they did and continue to do to help Nebraskans.

Happy holidays from all of us at Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Sincerely,

Bryan Tuma
NEMA Assistant Director

On the Cover: Top photo, FEMA and NEMA staff meet with FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor and Gov. Pete Ricketts. Bottom photo: Pictured from left are: NEMA Recovery Section Administrator Donny Christensen, State Coordinating Officer Earl Imler, Deputy Federal Coordinating Officer DuWayne Tewes, Federal Coordination Officer Constance Johnson-Gage, Gov. Pete Ricketts, FEMA Administrator Pete Gaynor, NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma, Deputy State Coordinating Officer Molly Bargmann and Region VII Administrator Paul Taylor.
Federal Coordinating Officer Constance Johnson Cage to Demobilize

NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma presents Federal Coordinating Officer Constance Johnson Cage with a Nebraska Navy Admiralship and a challenge coin from Gov. Pete Ricketts in recognition of her work in the state since the blizzard and flooding in March. Cage attended her last Command and General Staff meeting at the Joint Operations Center on Dec. 19 as she is demobilizing from the disaster. DuWayne Tewes, who has served as deputy federal coordinating officer will assume the federal coordinating officer position.

“Connie has done great work for the State of Nebraska,” Tuma said. “She was here during the disaster and we are very appreciative that her journey had her make a stop in Nebraska. You allowed us to be successful.” He thanked her for being a colleague and friend.

Public Assistance Unit Supervisor Honored by FEMA with Core Values Award

FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer Constance Johnson Cage recognized NEMA Public Assistance Unit Supervisor Patrick Conway on Dec. 19 with the FEMA Core Values Award. Johnson Cage said it was the first time the award has been given to someone who does not work for FEMA. The award is given to staff who exemplify FEMA’s core values of compassion, fairness, integrity and respect.

Conway was nominated for the award by the NEMA public assistance staff. One of the reasons the NEMA staff nominated Conway was that he helps to lighten the stress of working the disaster. The team wrote this about Conway in their nomination:

“Patrick puts in long hours every week to serve the State of Nebraska without overtime pay. He always makes time to listen to others concerns and goes above and beyond to solve problems of all sizes.

“He has demonstrated great patience while on-boarding a new team in the wake of the largest disaster Nebraska has ever seen, while also navigating his new role as unit supervisor.

“He has a strong set of values and is direct about advocating for applicants. Patrick navigates the bureaucracy of disaster recovery smoothly and with confidence. He exhibits patience and flexibility on a daily basis while balancing the competing interest of FEMA and applicants.

“He goes out of his way to make sure team is equipped to make applicants successful in the grant process and makes himself available for concerns big and small. The NEMA public assistance team holds great respect for Patrick.”
NEMA Staff Present at County Officials Annual Conference

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Staff were among the presenters at the annual Nebraska Association of County Officials Conference (NACO) held at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney Dec. 11-13.

NACO is a non-profit organization that serves to represent the interests of all elected and appointed county officials in the state.

Assistant Director Bryan Tuma updated emergency management directors at the conference on NEMA activities and Long-Term Recovery Manager Earl Imler spoke with county commissioners and supervisors about the state’s long-term recovery. Statewide Interoperability Coordinator and IT/COMMO Manager Sue Krogman, spoke about cybersecurity and the need for training at the county and regional level. In addition Chris Ulrick, exercise training officer, taught a course on the Knowledge Center logging system.

Maj. Ryan Carlson of the Nebraska National Guard’s Cybersecurity Unit and Statewide Interoperability Coordinator and IT/COMMO Manager Sue Krogman of NEMA address county commission-ers and supervisors. They talked about the Nebraska Nation Guard Cyber Protection Team which can assist communities facing cyber attacks. They also talked about the lack of and need for education and awareness at the Planning, Exercise and Training regional level.

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Assistant Director Bryan Tuma addresses emergency management directors at the Nebraska Association of County Officials Conference in Kearney on Dec. 12. In another session with emergency managers, NEMA’s Chris Ulrick led a Knowledge Center training.

Several dozen heroes who helped save lives during the 2019 flooding were recognized Dec. 17 by Gov. Pete Ricketts and First Lady Suzanne Shore at a ceremony in the State Capitol Rotunda in Lincoln. They were joined by Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac, adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard and director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma to present the awards.

“As Susanne and I traveled the state in the aftermath of the most widespread natural disaster in our history, we heard heartwarming stories of ordinary Nebraskans doing extraordinary work,” Ricketts said. “Nebraskans showed their strength, grit, and compassion in countless ways.”

Hundreds of nominations detailing extraordinary compassion and bravery were received.

“During the floods, Nebraskans rose to the challenge to protect their families and assist their neighbors,” First Lady Shore said. “Many worked overtime, risked their personal safety, and generously contributed their time and money to give aid to their communities. We have been inspired by the stories of these heroes in our midst. I am grateful for the opportunity to give them official recognition for their service to our state.”

James Wilke, a farmer from Columbus, was the first Flood Hero recognized. Wilke sacrificed his life while volunteering to save a stranded motorist. His mother Jan, wife Rachel, and children Julianne, Colton and Addie accepted the award on his behalf.

Nebraska National Guard air crew and coordinators rescued 112 people (66 by hoist rescues) and saved 13 pets. Those recognized include: Jeffery Caniglia, Nathan Dooley, Lawrence Lind, Joshua Pryor, Joshua Schaaf, Shane Varejcka and Aaron Winberg.

A group of brave men from the Fremont area were also honored for their heroism attempting to rescue a family when their boat overturned in icy flood waters. Matthew Baker, Logan Kahler, Wayne Krefels, Chris Lichtenberg, Nick Morris, Richard Osterloh and Rick Schutt were recognized for the heroism.

Other fire departments honored, but unable to attend the ceremony included: O’Neill, Pleasanton, Spencer and Wood River.

Two organizations were recognized for their contributions during the flooding. Nebraska Air Boater’s Association and Nebraska Task Force 1.

Individual honorees recognized at the ceremony include: Mark Arps, Sarah Bichlemeier, Brad Brown, David Brown, Matthew Carter, Mike Coyle, Andrew Elsberry, Brandon Evans, Randy Fujan, Larry Geiger, Matthew Gentry, Nathan Gillaspie, Jim Hassenstab, Justin Herring, Craig and Hollie Hittner, Dillon Horejsi, Mark Horejsi, Michael Ireland, Jr., Kyle Kern, Trent Kinney, Greg Kjeldgaard, Jim Kjeldgaard, Zachary Klein, Nir Levin, Brad Littrell, Terry Martensen, Dusty Menking, Jerry Motacek, Rudy Novacek, Kippton Oetter, Matt Prochaska, Daniel Quismondo, Cody Reynolds, Autumn Rock, Chris Schlosser, Steve Scigo, Scott Selko, Chuck Stanczyk, Anthony Totta, Kyle Wagner, Kim Wolfe, Kyle Woodgate and William Zoucha.

Short bios of the individuals recognized at the ceremony are available here. To watch the ceremony, click here. An album of photos from the event is also available by clicking here.
A week-long Incident Tactical Dispatcher training course was offered at NEMA the week of Dec. 9-13 and offered hands-on training for individuals qualified to operate away from the dispatch center in a command post, base camp or at the incident scene.

Incident Tactical Dispatchers leverage the multi-tasking, communication, accountability and documentation skills of successful Telecommunicators to provide public safety communications expertise and support at planned events and extended incidents such as hostage situations, multi-alarm fires, search and rescue operations, bombings, and active shooter incidents.

Steve Olson of Minnesota and Tom Boeckmann of Iowa instructed the course.

“"The facility worked great for us," Olson said. "The goal of the course is to teach experienced dispatchers how to dispatch in a non-traditional environment. We are confident that eastern Nebraska is well protected by the experience and professionalism displayed during our INTD class. All participants demonstrated a very high level of competency during the final exercise."
The Beacon – December 2019

Tanya Lyon joins Grants Unit

Tanya Lyon joined Nebraska Emergency Management Agency on Dec. 9 as a federal aid administrator in the grants unit.

Born and raised in Nebraska City, she attended Omaha School of Massage and received her massage therapy license in 2002.

Prior to joining NEMA, Lyon worked for two and one-half years for the State Building Division construction team as an administrative assistant and more than 10 years at HTI Plastics and Elster American Meter (Honeywell).

Lyon is engaged to Don Bourne and they have two children: McKenna, 6, and Evan, 5.

She enjoys spending time with her family and friends, going to concerts, and eating sushi at her favorite restaurant, Blue.

Planning is underway for a full-scale Vigilant Guard exercise in May which will include activities in multiple jurisdictions. Above, from left, emergency managers, Nic Kemnitz of Wayne, Tim Newman of Region 22, John McKee of Jefferson and Saline Counties and Mark Hoskins of Lancaster County attend the planning meeting, Dec. 11 at Doane University to discuss plans for the week-long exercise which include events in their areas.

Lt. Col. James Hewitt who is leading the Vigilant Guard project for the Nebraska National Guard address participants.

Snow and ice with high winds in early December downed several communications towers in Nebraska including this one near Lakeside belonging to the Panhandle Rural Electric Association.

Tanya Lyon joins Grants Unit

Lt. Col. James Hewitt

Planning is underway for a full-scale Vigilant Guard exercise in May which will include activities in multiple jurisdictions. Above, from left, emergency managers, Nic Kemnitz of Wayne, Tim Newman of Region 22, John McKee of Jefferson and Saline Counties and Mark Hoskins of Lancaster County attend the planning meeting, Dec. 11 at Doane University to discuss plans for the week-long exercise which include events in their areas.

Tanya Lyon joins Grants Unit

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 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.

www.nema.nebraska.gov

Like us on Facebook
Follow us on Twitter
Subscribe to YouTube
Visit us on Flickr