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.

This has been a challenging year for all of us. The consensus seems to be that most of us will not be sorry to say "so long" to 2020. As Gov. Pete Ricketts wrote in his farewell message to 2020:

"When the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Day, many are going to be glad to have 2020 in the history books. It's not been easy to endure the pandemic, but I'm inspired by the way Nebraskans have pulled together to fight the virus. Even though it's been a tough year, Nebraskans have shown great resilience as a state, and we've made vital contributions to the nation's response to the global pandemic."

I agree with Gov. Ricketts' statement that we can be proud of how our state has come together during such a difficult time and that our work together will allow us to emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever in 2021.

This month, congress passed and President Donald J. Trump signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. It provides $900 billion for additional COVID-19 support to address vaccinations, testing, contact tracing and Unemployment Insurance. There are two primary aspects of the COVID relief package that will affect emergency management including:

- The deadline for the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) established in the CARES Act is extended to Dec. 31, 2021, and;
- $2 billion in assistance through states for families with funeral expenses due to COVID through Dec. 31, 2020. The 25 percent cost share is waived only for purposes of the funeral expenses.

During 2020, we changed the culture of how we interact with one another — virtual meetings are in and handshakes are out. It's likely some of those changes will continue for a while into the future. The rapid development of two vaccines so far is a bright spot in this year of difficulty; however, how long immunity will last following those vaccinations is yet to be determined. We need to be prepared for any scenario. It's possible annual surges of COVID infections may continue for a while. We will continue to work together to get through this pandemic.

We started 2020 focused on rebuilding following Nebraska's largest ever disaster — the flooding of 2019 — and we have continued our work on that recovery in spite of the hardships and loss caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Sincerely,

Bryan Tuma
Coronavirus Relief Package 4 - HR 133

- Enacted 12/27/2020
- Provides $900B for additional COVID-19 support to provide a new round of stimulus checks to eligible individuals, address vaccinations, testing, contact tracing, unemployment insurance, and other critical programs to combat the impacts of COVID 19.
- Extends the US Treasury CRF deadline to December 31, 2021 for incurring already appropriated CRF funds. No additional flexibility or funding is provided in the bill for CRF.
- Provides $25B in Emergency Rental Assistance through Treasury to provide to state and local government entities
- Extends the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 264), entitled “Temporary Halt in Residential Evictions To Prevent the Further Spread of COVID–19”.
- Provides 8.75B to plan, prepare for, promote, distribute, administer, monitor, and track coronavirus vaccines to ensure broad-based distribution, access, and vaccine coverage. Of this amount, $4.5 billion goes directly to states, localities, and territories.
- Provides $22.4B for testing, contact tracing, and surveillance. Of this amount, $2.5 billion is for high risk and under-served populations.
- Provides $4.25B for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Grants.
- Provides $3 billion in additional grants for hospital and health care providers to be reimbursed for health care related expenses or lost revenue directly attributable to the public health emergency resulting from coronavirus.
- Provides $638M in grants to States and Tribes for a Low-Income Utility Assistance Program that will help low-income families cover the costs of their drinking water and wastewater utility bills.
- Restores the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) supplement to all state and federal unemployment benefits at $300 per week, starting after December 26 and ending March 14, 2021.
- Extends Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) to March 14, 2021 and allows individuals receiving benefits as of March 14, 2021 to continue through April 5, 2021, if the individual has not reached the maximum number of weeks.
- Provides up to $2 billion in assistance through States for families with funeral expenses due to COVID through December 31, 2020. It requires FEMA to provide this assistance and waives an otherwise required 25% state match.
- Provides for additional support for various Labor, CDC, HHS, Education, and Transportation COVID 19 related programs.

Note: The above updates were retrieved from Deloitte’s December 27, 2020 Analysis for COVID 19 Updates Impacting State and Local Governments.
FEMA Releases 2020 National Preparedness Report

FEMA released the 2020 National Preparedness Report, which deals with actions taken in 2019. In its ninth year, this report presents an updated, risk-focused approach to summarizing the state of national preparedness.

The National Preparedness Report published in 2021 will explore the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and evaluate the response to it, reflecting the data that becomes available as the incident continues.

As an annual requirement of Presidential Policy Directive 8 and consistent with the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act reporting responsibilities, the National Preparedness Report (NPR) has assessed the nation’s preparedness posture since 2012. This report provides partners across the nation with insights into risks, vulnerabilities, and capabilities to support decisions about program priorities, resource allocations and community actions.

The 2020 NPR takes an updated, risk-focused approach to summarizing the state of national preparedness in 2019. The report presents a discussion of the risks the nation faces and how those risks drive the nation’s capability requirements, as well as how the nation uses capabilities to manage risks, including a high-level overview of the nation’s current capabilities. Also, the report includes initial results for the National Risk and Capability Assessment (NRCA). The NRCA meets requirements of the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018, which requires “tiered, capability-specific performance objectives” to assess national preparedness.

The 2020 report found that although affected communities may not be fully prepared to respond to nationally catastrophic incidents, an analysis of shared national capabilities indicates the nation as a whole is closer to achieving its national goals though some significant capability gaps still remain.

The report also highlights some of the persistent challenges the nation faces, how the nation is working collectively to solve those challenges, and what the nation must continue to do to build on those successes. It also provides a deeper assessment of four identified focus areas: vascading impacts, public-private partnerships, vulnerable populations, and housing.

Technical Hazards Unit Supervisor James Rashilla, left, recognizes Walter Kirkland on Dec. 29 for his more than four years of service with NEMA. Kirkland, who served as a planning specialist for radiological emergency preparedness, is headed to the Nebraska State Patrol to work as a state trooper.

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 in the newsletter to: Public Information Officer Jodie Fawl, 402-471-7428 or jodie.fawl@nebraska.gov.