Rwandan Ambassador Visits NEMA
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A Message from
NEMA Assistant Director

Erv Portis

Nebraska Receives Presidential Declaration

On Feb. 23, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. approved Gov. Pete Ricketts’ request for a federal disaster declaration related to the severe storms, straight-line winds and tornadoes that struck Nebraska, Dec. 15, 2021. The storm system downed power lines, broke tree limbs, damaged small structures and agricultural equipment and caused power outages.

Approval of DR-4641-NE is good news for the state and for the villages, cities, counties, power districts and other nonprofit entities that suffered extensive damage. Beatrice, Bradshaw, Columbus, Fairbury, Geneva, Guide Rock, Syracuse, Tecumseh, Red Cloud and Wymore all experienced damage to the city electrical distribution infrastructure and/or excessive debris issues. Farmers Mutual of Nebraska, the state’s largest farm insurer, reports the storm represents the largest loss caused by a December storm in more than 130 years. The event accounts for more than 4,000 claims accounting for $30 million in damage.

The declaration authorizes Public Assistance (PA) for Adams, Buffalo, Burt, Cass, Cuming, Fillmore, Gage, Hamilton, Harlan, Jefferson, Johnson, Kearney, Nemaha, Nuckolls, Otoe, Pawnee, Platte, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Sarpy, Saunders, Thayer, Washington and Webster counties. Communities are eligible to apply for assistance for emergency work and the repair or replacement of disaster-damaged facilities.

Private property damage from the storm did not meet the threshold to trigger a request for Individual Assistance (IA). Nebraska rarely qualifies for IA, which means insuring your property is of paramount importance.

The federal disaster declaration also makes funds available through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. These federal funds, available to communities anywhere in Nebraska, can help to share the costs of public projects undertaken to decrease the risk of future damages from natural disasters. For more information on the federal disaster declaration, visit FEMA’s website.

NEMA staff have begun work to schedule applicant briefings in the coming weeks where impacted public entities and other potential applicants will receive high-level information about the PA program.

In order to qualify for PA funding, eligible private nonprofits must provide either critical services (for example, education, emergency or medical) or essential non-critical services (including community centers, food banks or libraries).

Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loan assistance may be available for entities that don’t qualify for PA. SBA may lend private nonprofits up to $2 million to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory and other business assets. SBA can also lend additional funds to help with the cost of improvements to protect, prevent or minimize the same type of disaster damage from occurring in the future. Applicants may apply online for the SBA loans at https://disasterloanassistance.sba.gov/ela/s/.

Sincerely,

Ervin L. Portis
Assistant Director
Rwandan Ambassador to U.S. Visits NEMA

Mathilde Mukantaban, the ambassador of Rwanda to the U.S. (fourth from left), visited Nebraska Emergency Management Agency as part of her tour of the Joint Force Headquarters and Nebraska Military Department on Feb. 18. Mukantaban and her staff met with NEMA Director Daryl Bohac, who is also the Adjutant General of the Nebraska National Guard, NEMA Assistant Director Erv Portis. Mukantaban discussed planning for emergencies and disasters with NEMA staff including Sean Runge, administrator for preparedness and operations, right.

Recovery from Disaster: The Local Community Role

Top left, Patrick Conway, the State Public Assistance Officer with NEMA, led G205 Recovery From Disaster: The Local Community Role, Feb. 23-24. The two-day course was delivered online and in person simultaneously from Kearney. It provided an introduction to disaster recovery principles and included current recovery practices and policies. Activities were included in the course to support engaged and participatory learning. A variety of resources for recovery planning were provided and taught in the course, including a FEMA online Community Recovery Management Toolkit (CRMT) and a resource section associated with the Pre-Disaster Recovery Planning Guide for Local Governments that contains links to model plans, templates, tools, lessons learned, best practices, and a range of supplemental reference materials and related pre-disaster planning and disaster recovery resources. Top right, NEMA public assistance program specialists from left, Andrew Allen and Elizabeth Huggins, as well as bottom left, from left, Buffalo County Director Darrin Lewis and NEMA hazard mitigation program specialist John Cook attend the class in person. Other students attended virtually.
Sanders Attends Homeland Security Training

State Emergency Response Commission Coordinator Alyssa Sanders, of Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, completed training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), in Anniston, Ala., during February.

CDP is operated by the United States Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency and is the only federally-chartered Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) training facility in the nation.

“This training was a great opportunity to collaborate with instructors from a variety of different roles in the emergency response field,” Sanders said. “Training in a small group that is hyper-focused on improving in a particular skill set is very valuable. We completed a semester worth of training and education in four days.*

CDP develops and delivers advanced training for emergency response providers, emergency managers, and other government officials from state, local, and tribal governments. More than 40 courses focusing on incident management, mass casualty response and emergency response to a catastrophic natural disaster or terrorist act are offered.

Training at the CDP campus is federally funded at no cost to state, local, and tribal emergency response professionals or their agencies.

Resident training at CDP includes healthcare and public health courses at the Noble Training Facility, the nation’s only hospital dedicated to training healthcare professionals in disaster preparedness and response.

A number of resident training courses culminate at the CDP’s Chemical, Ordnance, Biological and Radiological (COBRA) Training Facility. COBRA is the nation’s only facility featuring civilian training exercises in a true toxic environment using chemical agents.

Responders participating in CDP training gain critical skills and confidence to respond effectively to local incidents or potential WMD events.

Information about CDP training programs can be found at http://cdp.dhs.gov. Visit the “News & Media” tab at the top of the site to download images, share CDP training articles, and find out what others are saying about CDP training.

For more information about CDP, contact the CDP External Affairs Office, at (256) 847-2212/2316 or e-mail: pao@cdpemail.dhs.gov.

Smith Joins IT Unit


Smith earned an associate degree in general studies from Metropolitan Community College in Omaha with an information technology certificate. He also earned an associates degree in liberal arts from Mid-plains Community College in North Plate.

He worked on the information technology help desk at Bank of the West in Omaha prior to joining NEMA.

He’s married to, his wife, Jamie, and they have a daughter name Adah who is 2 and are expecting their second child in June.

He enjoys video games like Stardew Valley and Age of Empires, taking walks with his wife and daughter, and watching sci-fi movies.

Gassmann Completes Leadership Development Program

NEMA Hazard Mitigation Unit Supervisor John Gassmann was recognized by Gov. Pete Ricketts for his completion of the leadership Program. The 12-month leadership development program features a cohort of state employees from multiple agencies. This training prepares future supervisors for new assignments and allows current supervisors to hone in their skills.
DHS Issues National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas issued a National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) Bulletin on Feb. 7 regarding the continued heightened threat environment across the United States. This is the fifth NTAS Bulletin issued by the Department of Homeland Security since January 2021.

"DHS remains committed to proactively sharing timely information and intelligence about the evolving threat environment with the American public," said Mayorkas. "We also remain committed to working with our partners across every level of government and in the private sector to prevent all forms of terrorism and targeted violence, and to support law enforcement efforts to keep our communities safe."

The U.S. remains in a heightened threat environment fueled by an online environment filled with false or misleading narratives and conspiracy theories, and other forms of mis-dis-mal-information.

DHS has renewed its commitment to ensure all efforts to combat domestic violent extremism are conducted in ways consistent with privacy protections, civil rights and civil liberties, and all applicable laws.

This NTAS Bulletin will expire on June 7 and provides the public with information about the threat landscape facing the United States, how to stay safe, and resources and tools to help prevent an individual's radicalization to violence. The public should report any suspicious activity or threats of violence to local law enforcement, FBI Field Offices, or a local Fusion Center. Read the current NTAS Bulletin here.

NEMA REP Team Meets With New Leadership

NEMA radiological emergency preparedness staff met with the new leadership of the 72nd Civil Support Team to discuss REP response in Nebraska. Pictured from left, SFC Rosalba Amezcue, First Lt. Jason Warrick of the Nebraska National Guard, Senior Planning and Training Specialist Deb Robinson, Radiological Planning and Training Specialist Mack Johnson and Radiological Planning and Radiation Calibration Specialist Terry Miller of NEMA.
**Hazard Mitigation Training Held in Weeping Water, Other Classes Scheduled**

Top left, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation Program Specialist John Cook facilitates a discussion on hazard mitigation during G393 Mitigation for Emergency Managers held in Weeping Water, Feb. 8-10. The course enables the non-technical emergency worker to acquire skills in the use of mitigation. The course provides training in how to perform mitigation activities fundamental to reducing and eliminating long-term risk from hazards. It addresses the important roles of the emergency program manager (or other local government representative) in mitigation: motivator, coordinator and monitor in local implementation of the National Mitigation Strategy. The course is scheduled in March at Norfolk, in April at Grand Island and in May at Beatrice. To register visit NEMA’s Training schedule at [https://nema.nebraska.gov/operations/training-schedules](https://nema.nebraska.gov/operations/training-schedules).

**Incident Management Team Emergency Medical Technician Training Held in Lincoln**

Emergency managers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians attend S-359 Medical Unit leader Training at Lincoln’s Municipal Service Center, Feb. 22-24. The course provided local- and state-level emergency responders with understanding of the duties, responsibilities and capabilities of an effective MEDL on an All-Hazards Incident Management Team (AHIMT) or local Incident Management Team. NEMA’s Larry Fichtner was among those who completed the course.
Ice-jam Tabletop Held in Columbus

An ice-jam tabletop exercise was held Feb. 17 in Columbus by the East Central Planning Exercise and Training Region to exercise their emergency response plan. Tim Hofbauer, Platte County emergency management director, led the exercise.

Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week

March 21-25

Preparedness can minimize the effects of severe weather.

Be Informed
Make a Plan
Build a Kit

Know Your Risk,
Take Action,
Be a Force of Nature

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.