

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Strength.

July 2019



The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

# South Central Flooding

Kearney, July 10, 2019





*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.*

The end of July marks 145 days since the start of the severe weather in March that led to the declaration of DR 4420, the most widespread disaster that has hit the state of Nebraska since weather records were maintained. It also marked the beginning of a series of serious weather events that have continued into July. A review of the NEMA Watch Center's daily Situation Report since March shows that severe weather, storms, tornadoes and flooding have continued throughout the spring and summer.

Flooding in south central Nebraska during the second week of July had a negative impact on that area of the state, in many cases flooding areas that had already been hit by the March storms earlier in the year.

Local emergency managers, NEMA staff and contractors have been busy collecting damage assessments on the counties and communities affected during the latest weather events. We have asked FEMA to consider opening the incident period for DR 4420 to include the other events as part of an ongoing weather pattern. It is an unusual request, but given the circumstances, it seems to have some merit. However, we are prepared to submit a separate request for the subsequent damage sustained in May, June and July, if FEMA cannot re-open DR 4420.

Just after the last flood warning was lifted for south central Nebraska, another disaster struck in the western part of the state. An irrigation canal in Wyoming, that provides water for 55,000 agricultural acres in Nebraska, collapsed, putting crops at risk in Scotts Bluff County. The county issued a disaster declaration and **Gov. Pete Ricketts** approved a state declaration soon after. The tunnel along the Fort Laramie Canal located southwest of Fort Laramie, Wyo. partially collapsed causing a canal breach that resulted in water diversion flows from the Whalen Diversion Dam along the North Platte River. The growing season is well underway and the limited irrigation to support crop production at a

critical time will create an extreme economic burden on the impacted area.



After a tour of flooding in south central Nebraska on July 10, from left, District 38 Sen. Dave Murman, NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma, Governor Pete Ricketts, University of Nebraska at Kearney Senior Director of Communications and Marketing Todd Gottula, District 36 Sen. Matt Williams and District 37 Senator John Lowe speak at a news conference in Kearney.

In reviewing the numbers on DR 4420, as far as the public assistance program there have been 447 projects written accounting for \$353 million in funds. On the individual assistance side, there have been \$23.7 million with \$42.6 million in Small Business Administration loans and \$38.2 million in National Flood Insurance Program loans.

Sincerely,

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

Bryan Tuma  
NEMA Assistant Director



Gibbon, Nebraska

# July

## Timeline Snapshot

After torrential rains fell in south central Nebraska -- in some place more than nine inches -- flooding is reported in Adams, Brown, Buffalo, Clay, Custer, Dawson, Franklin, Frontier, Furnas, Gosper, Hall, Harlan, Hayes, Lincoln, Nuckolls, Phelps, Sherman, Thayer and Webster counties.

Wood River bridge overtopped north of Riverdale in Buffalo County; flooding reported in Odessa and Kearney; evacuations required in Kearney; flooding and sandbagging in Holstein in Adams County; road washouts reported in Hayes County; Lexington issues disaster declaration for flooding, citing disruption of utility services, street/home flooding and sewer backups; wind damage to trees in Oxford, severe damage to county roads throughout Furnas County; Brown County issues disaster declaration; Gosper County reports severe road damage; 36 power poles down south, southeast of Holdrege in Phelps County; a BNSF rail track washed out near Superior in Nuckolls County; a fatality is reported in Dawson County when a car rolls over into a flood ditch south of Cozad.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31

In Buffalo County, street flooding is reported in Gibbon; In Clay County, gravel roads begin flooding; Wood River in Hall County issues voluntary evacuation; In Thayer County, roads in and around Deshler begin flooding; In Custer County, irrigation pivots are blown over south, southeast of Callaway.

The last flood warning issued by the National Weather Service for south central Nebraska is cancelled. Damage assessments begin in affected areas.

An underground irrigation canal south of Fort Laramie, Wyo. collapsed. More than 100,000 irrigated acres in both Wyoming and Nebraska are affected. Scotts Bluff County declared an emergency, as did **Gov. Pete Ricketts**.

# Staff Changes

# Recovery Section Adds Staff



**Sue Krogman** was named Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) and manager of the IT/COMMO section which formerly was part of operations.



**Chad Boshart** replaces Sue Krogman as unit supervisor of the IT/COMMO unit. A new IT specialist will start in August.



**Sean Runge** was named interim manager of the preparedness section until the position vacated by Nikki Weber is filled.



**James Rashilla** was named unit supervisor for the technical hazards unit. His former position as State Emergency Response Coordinator is open.



**Walter Kirkland** was named technical hazards planning specialist leaving a planning specialist position in the planning unit open.



**Lexy Hindt** joined NEMA on May 28 as a planning specialist in the recovery section. She is working with the hazard mitigation unit.

Hindt spend the spring 2019 semester as an intern with NEMA, gaining valuable experience working the disaster that struck the state.

“There was a lot of multi-agency collaboration that occurred in the State Emergency Operations Center during the March disaster,” Hindt said. “It was really cool to see everything I learned in school come together in an actual disaster and not just in an exercise.”

She graduated in May with her bachelor of science in Emergency Management from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Her hometown is Sheldon, Iowa.

She enjoys spending time outdoors with her boyfriend, Zach, and dog, Sadie.



**Abby Schletzbaum** joined NEMA on July 8. She is working in the recovery section as a planning specialist in the public assistance unit.

Schletzbaum is from Lawrence, Kans.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in public administration and international studies from the University of Kansas.

Prior to working for the state, Schletzbaum was a local hire with the Federal Emergency Management Agency on DR4420.

She also worked at the Red Cross as a disaster program specialist for one and a half years.

She lives in Lincoln with her fiancé Issac, dog and two guinea pigs.

Schletzbaum says she loves learning new things and is currently learning to speak Hindi and French.

She is also learning how to play the piano and banjo.

She said she enjoys camping and travelling.



**Kyle Winchell** joined NEMA as a planning specialist in the recovery section on July 8 and is working in the public assistance unit.

Winchell’s hometown is Colorado Springs, Colo.

He earned a Bachelor of Science in Forensic Science and a Bachelor of Science in Entomology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Winchell said he was working at a local car dealership while looking for work that aligned more with what he wanted to do.

“Now, I am excited to be part of a team that not only serves my community, but the whole state,” he said.

He recently celebrated his first year of marriage to his wife, Kaitlyn and said they are excited to be settling down in Lincoln.

He is a big fan of the outdoors and likes to hike, bike, and camp. He enjoys eating at different restaurants and trying new foods.

# 2019 IPAWS National Test of the Emergency Alert System Scheduled, Aug. 7

**FEMA, FCC and State Broadcasters, in Coordination with Emergency Managers, to test the EAS**

FEMA, in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), will conduct a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) on **Aug. 7 at 1:20 p.m. CDT**. The test will assess the operational readiness of the infrastructure for distribution of a national message and determine whether improvements are needed.

This is the fifth EAS nationwide test. Previous EAS national tests were conducted in November 2011, September 2016 and 2017, and October 2018, in collaboration with the FCC, radio and television stations, and emergency management officials.

The intent of this year's test is to evaluate the readiness of the national alerting capability in the absence of internet connectivity. The 2019 test will begin with broadcast of the national test message from radio stations, called Primary Entry Point or PEP stations, that participate with FEMA in the National Public Warning System, a component of the IPAWS. Other radio and television broadcast and cable stations in each state that monitor PEP stations will receive and broadcast the test message so that within minutes the test message should be presented by all radio and television, cable, wireline service providers and direct broadcast satellite service providers nationwide.

The EAS is a national public warning system that provides the President with the communications capability to address the nation during a national emergency. The test is made available to EAS participants (i.e., radio and television broadcasters, cable systems, satellite radio and television providers, and wireline video providers) and

is scheduled to last approximately one minute.

The audio test message will be similar to regular monthly EAS test messages with which the public is familiar:

*"THIS IS A TEST of the National Emergency Alert System. This system was developed by broadcast and cable operators in voluntary cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Communications Commission, and local authorities to keep you informed in the event of an emergency. If this had been an actual emergency an official message would have followed the tone alert you heard at the start of this message. No action is required."*

The text displayed at the top or center of television screens will

read:

*"A Primary Entry Point system has issued a National Periodic Test for all of the United States beginning at 1:20 p.m. and ending at 1:50 p.m."*

Significant coordination has been conducted with EAS participants and emergency managers in preparation for this test. The test is intended to ensure public safety officials have the methods and systems that will deliver urgent alerts and warnings to the public in times of an emergency or disaster.

In the event of a national emergency, a national warning message would be issued at the direction of the President or his/her designee and activated by FEMA.

## **What is the Emergency Alert System?**

*The Emergency Alert System (EAS) is a national public warning system that requires EAS Participants (i.e. radio and television broadcasters, cable systems, satellite radio and television providers, and wireline video providers) to provide the President with the communications capability to address the nation during a national emergency. The system also may be used by state, local, tribal and territorial authorities, in cooperation with EAS Participants, to deliver important emergency information, such as weather information, AMBER alerts, and local incident information targeted to specific areas.*

*FEMA, in partnership with the Federal Communications Commission and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, is responsible for implementation, maintenance, and operations of the EAS at the federal level. The President has sole responsibility for determining when the national-level EAS will be activated. FEMA is responsible for national-level EAS, tests, and exercises.*

## **What is the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS)?**

*IPAWS is a national system for local alerting. It provides the means for disseminating authenticated emergency alert and warning messaging from emergency officials to the public through:*

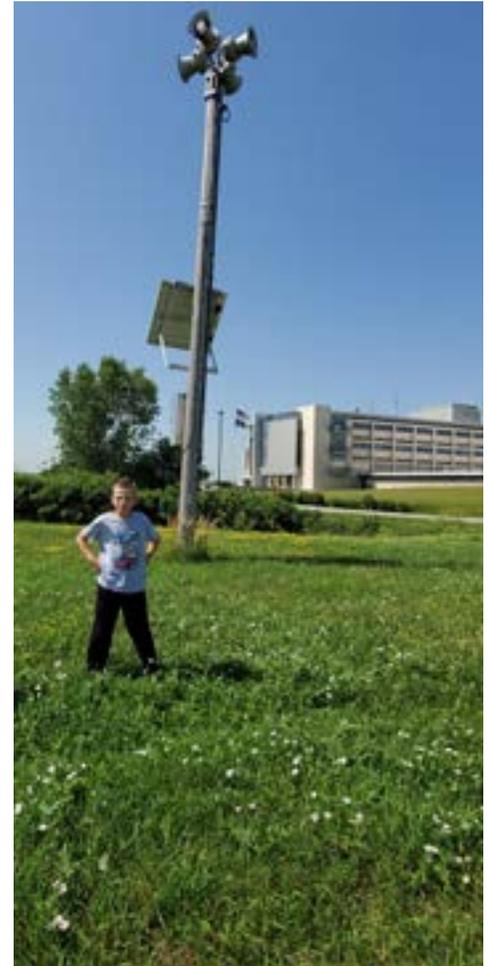
- Radio and television via the Emergency Alert System (EAS);
- Wireless phones via Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEAs);
- NOAA All Hazards Weather Radio via IPAWS-NOAA gateway; and
- Internet applications and websites via the IPAWS Alerts Feed.

*The FEMA IPAWS Program is responsible for implementing a national public alert and warning system, ensuring that the President can send alert and warning messages to the public under all conditions, and enabling its use by federal, state, local, tribal and territorial officials during local emergencies. Executive Order 13407 tasked the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to assign FEMA with developing, operating, integrating, and maintaining IPAWS, plus future connections alerting technologies.*



### Weber Leaves NEMA for Private Sector

NEMA Assistant Director Bryan Tuma recognizes Nikki Weber as she departs NEMA for a job in the private sector. During her tenure with NEMA, Weber served as an exercise training officer, grants unit supervisor and finally as Preparedness Section supervisor. Weber was with the agency for more than 14 years.



### For the Love of Sirens

**Michael Dowding** of Lincoln is interested in outdoor warning sirens, so much so, that his mother, Shelly, called Nebraska Emergency Management Agency with an unusual request. It seems Michael had visited all but one of the more than 100 outdoor warning sirens in Lancaster County. His mother had photographed him in front of every siren, except for just that last one. The last siren, located on the National Guard base just northwest of the Joint Force Headquarters, was in a secure location that Michael couldn't visit without special permission. With pins on a map, Michael faithfully marked each Lancaster County siren he visited. He treasures the map given to him by **Jim Davidsaver** and **Mark Hosking** of Lancaster County Emergency Management, and he was hopeful that NEMA could make the last siren visit possible. On July 3, he stuck his final pin in his map for his last siren visit and scored a tour of NEMA as well!



## Ricketts Declares Disaster After Irrigation Tunnel Collapse in Wyoming

**Gov. Pete Ricketts** issued an emergency declaration, July 24, following the collapse of a major tunnel that transports water from Whalen Dam in Wyoming to Scotts Bluff County on July 17. Disruption of the water supply, which is vital for irrigation, is having an adverse impact on agriculture producers in the Nebraska Panhandle as a result of the collapse.

"Our farmers in Western Nebraska have lost access to water at a critical time in the growing season," said Ricketts. "Since the canal failure, I have been in frequent communication with **Wyoming Gov. [Mark] Gordon, Sen. [Steve] Erdman, and Sen. [John] Stinner** about the situation both personally and through my staff and Director of Natural Resources. I've issued a disaster declaration in response to this significant hardship as we work together to get our farmers and ranchers the help they need."

Ricketts was in Scottsbluff, July 25, to meet with officials and producers about the breach.

Built in 1917, the tunnel is 14 feet in diameter and carries water one-half mile through a hill under rangeland.

"A big concern for the producers I've talked to is whether crop insurance is available or not, and that is still to be determined," he said.

The work on the tunnel is expected to take 20 days, but the irrigation districts are already repairing the breach, along the Ft. Laramie canal.



## Mass Casualty Tabletop Held in Omaha

NEMA exercise training officers, Larry Fichtner and Chris Ulrick, were among the participants in a tabletop exercise, held July 23 by the Omaha Healthcare Coalition, at the Scott Conference Center at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. The tabletop focused on: protection, response and recovery in the healthcare and medical system in the Omaha area. Ulrick said he learned about the legal restriction on transferring patients as well as their information between hospitals. The full-day tabletop offered an opportunity for participants to discuss critical issues, decisions, requirements and questions they would face in a large-scale mass casualty disaster. At the end of the day, a panel discussion was held featuring responders to the March Flooding disaster that struck Nebraska.



## Knowledge Center Training

State agency public information officers and communication staff participate in training for Knowledge Center, the state's new incident management software on July 25. It was the first course in a multi-year training schedule for PIOs which focuses on the Joint Information System, joint information center and using Knowledge Center to improve situational awareness among state agencies.



## Military Department Showcased to International Visitors

Maj. Gen. Rick Dahlman showcased the Nebraska Military Department to international visitors who were in Lincoln for a tour on July 19. The visitors represented Bosnia, Herzegovina, Denmark, Macedonia, Romainia, Slovakia, Slovenia and the United Kingdom and were sponsored by the Lincoln Mayor's Committee for International Friendship and the Lincoln Council for International friendship.

Brian Tuma, assistant director of NEMA, discusses emergency management operations in Nebraska with visitors to the United States through the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. The program exposes participants to the U.S. security and defense policy-making process. Tuma highlighted the flooding that hit the state in March and how local, state and federal government worked together with non-governmental agencies to respond.



Emergency Support Function coordinators and FEMA representatives meet in the State Emergency Operation Center to get an update on flooding that occurred following rainfall that exceeded nine inches in portions of south central Nebraska, July 8-9.



## Walsh Promotes Hazard Mitigation

State Hazard Mitigation Officer **Nicholas Walsh** presents at the first of three Nebraska Silver Jackets' workshops on July 10 in Nebraska City. He discussed a Mitigation stakeholders meeting that identified multi-agency coordination opportunities, leveraged information and data for mitigation and recovery efforts and developed mitigation strategies from the March and April flooding that resulted in Presidential Disaster Declaration DR 4420. Groups interested in hosting a Silver Jackets workshop can contact [nema.hazard-mitigation@nebraska.gov](mailto:nema.hazard-mitigation@nebraska.gov).

# Plan Now for September as National Preparedness Month

National Preparedness Month (NPM), is recognized each September to promote family and community disaster and emergency planning now and throughout the year. The 2019 theme is:

*Prepared, Not Scared. Be Ready for Disasters*

## 2019 Weekly Themes

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Week 1: Sept 1-7   | Save Early for Disaster Costs                 |
| Week 2: Sept 8-14  | Make a Plan to Prepare for Disasters          |
| Week 3: Sept 15-21 | Teach Youth to Prepare for Disasters          |
| Week 4: Sept 22-30 | Get Involved in Your Community's Preparedness |

## Hashtags

#NatIPrep #PrepareNow #FloodSmart #MidwestReady #NebraskaStrong

## Prepare Yourself, Family and Community for National Preparedness Month

National Preparedness Month is just around the corner. Here's your chance to to give yourself and family a refresh on Nebraska natural disasters and dangers that arise with storms.

## make a plan

Build a personalized plan for your family that answers question like "How will I let my family know I'm safe" if separated in a disaster.



## BE INFORMED

Know what kind of disasters your area is susceptible to. Know your community preparedness plan and how you'll become aware of emergency alerts.



## build a kit

Assemble or update your emergency preparedness supply kit. This should include food, water, clothing and other supplies to get you through a disaster.

# Northeast PET Region Hosts Flood Fight Operations Class

The G-361 Flood Fight Operations course was identified as an important class to offer by the Northeast Planning Exercise and Training (PET) Region, during the Threat, Hazard, Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) process, due to the flooding that occurred in the area in 2018, and the flooding experienced in 2019 confirmed the need for the course.

The Flood Fight Operations Course focuses on planning, preparing and managing the response to a flood.

Held in Pender on July 9-10, emergency managers, county commissioners and public health representatives discussed flood plans and operations.

“While this training emphasizes how to conduct a flood fight, it provides information to help communities decide if a flood fight is possible and worth the effort and cost,” said **Roger Conrad**, NEMA Exercise Training Officer, and one of the course instructors.

The 18 students participated in exercises that used diagrams with materials/equipment lists as well as labor requirements to deter-



Conrad



Ulrick

mine the various types of temporary flood protection that could be used to decide whether there is enough time and resources to protect a community.

“Participants discussed what options officials have when an entire community can’t be protected,” said co-instructor **Chris Ulrick**, an ETO at NEMA. “Of-

officials must decide where to concentrate efforts during a flood to protect some areas and evacuate or relocate others.”

The course offered insight into response and flood fight methods such as reinforcing levies, sandbagging, and building temporary dams.

“The course highlights the fact that if a flood fight is undertaken, it should be done quickly, safely and correctly or the effort will be wasted,” said NEMA ETO and co-instructor, **Larry Fichtner**.



Fichtner



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Governor Pete Ricketts

State Homeland Security Director

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 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).

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