



June-July 2016

# The Beacon

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency



## Basic Academy



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*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.*

A couple of national reports recently released have provided some important information that is useful for emergency management professionals across the country.

**National Preparedness Report** — The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and its partners released the 2016 National Preparedness Report (NPR) on June 1 which evaluates and measures the nation's progress toward reaching the National Preparedness Goal of a secure and resilient nation. The findings provide practical insights into preparedness and can help the states make decisions about future program priorities, resource allocations and community actions. For a summary of the report, fact sheets and a copy of the full report [visit this link](#).

**National Emergency Management Association Biennial Report** — The 20th Anniversary issue of the National Emergency Management Association 2016 Biennial Report, released May 9, 2016, has some valuable information about the state of emergency management across the nation. A few findings include:

- Public health outbreaks such as Ebola and the avian flu are resulting in emergency declarations outside of “traditional” disasters.
- More states are creating emergency support functions to help combat the growing cyber threat.
- And while mitigation is tried-and-true in reducing hazards, many states are stymied in their efforts by lack of staff, insufficient expertise, lack of buy-in from elected officials and insufficient funding support.

The report is a comprehensive compilation of state emergency management data highlighted results from an in-depth survey NEMA concluded in early 2016. The report is a useful tool for Nebraska as we constantly look for ways to improve our statewide emergency management program.

**National Association of SARA Title III Program Official Conference** — NEMA was recognized by the National Association of SARA Title III Program officials for hosting its annual conference in Omaha, May 24-26.

The association is made up of members and staff of State Emergency Response Commissions (SERCs), Tribal Emergency Response Commissions (TERCs), Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), various federal agencies and private industry and NEMA's SERC Coordinator **Tonya Ngotel** is serving as the association's president. Members include state, tribal or local government employees with Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know (EPCRA) program responsibilities, such as health, occupational safety, first response, environmental and emergency management agencies.

The annual training workshop and grants assistance meeting included a variety of sessions providing valuable information, and NEMA was proud to be a sponsor.



Sincerely,



## Academy Teaches Emergency Management Basics

The essentials of emergency management and fundamental elements of planning for, responding to, recovering from and mitigating against disasters were covered in a week-long class at Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, June 6-10.

The NEMA Basic Certification Course or “Basic Academy” included sessions on the history of emergency management, local and state emergency operations plans and the National Incident Management System.

Coursework also included weather spotting, individual and public assistance, hazard mitigation, grant management, public information and social media.

One evening, participants also had the opportunity to tour the University of Nebraska Memorial Stadium’s emergency operations center.

**Pictured, clockwise from top, Roger Conrad, exercise training officer with NEMA, addresses Basic Academy participants; Public Information Officer Jodie Fawl talks about social media; Nikki Weber, preparedness section manager, discusses grants management; Patrick Rooney, planning specialist, discusses planning and Donny Christensen, Recovery Section manager, talks about public assistance.**





NEMA and Emergency Support Function staff work at the State Emergency Operations Center during the June 14 Cooper Nuclear Station evaluated exercise.

## State Participates in Evaluated Cooper Nuclear State Exercise

A biennial test shows that emergency officials in Nebraska and Missouri as well as staff at the Cooper Nuclear Station are prepared to work together in the event of a disaster at Cooper Nuclear Station near Brownville.

After the exercise, officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the agency tasked with evaluating the exercise participants, briefed state officials and plant personnel at the Nebraska Public Power District’s emergency operations facility in Auburn. NPPD owns and operates the plant.

The exercise, conducted June 14, was intended to test the ability of state agencies from multiple states, non-governmental organizations and the utility itself to come together to respond to an emergency involving the Cooper Nuclear Station, located three miles south of Brownville.

More than 20 FEMA evaluators shadowed participants in the exercise, included more than 50 county, state and federal agencies, including representatives from Richardson and Nemaha counties as well as Atchison



Jon Schwarz, who is technical hazards section manager for NEMA answers a question for emergency operations facility staff, Tonya Ngotel and Julie Bergfield.

County, Mo.

“It was a very good exercise,” said Jon Schwarz, NEMA’s Technical Hazards Section manager. “We were able to work through some new procedures, including a new message that would be sent out to the public via the National Weather Service’s weather radio network.”

Nuclear power stations are required, by federal regulations, in order to address the health and safety of those who live and work near the plant. State and local radiological emergency readiness and response plans, including the activation of emergency operations facilities, including Nebraska’s State Emergency Operations Center, were tested.

Exercise participants were evaluated on 140 criteria. The evaluations will be compiled into a comprehensive report, then distributed to the various government agencies. Those agencies will have 60 days to review and comment on the report before FEMA finalize its own report. The actual report will not be available for at least one month.

The report will be sent to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

The exercise covered such sectors as emergency operations management, protective action decision making, and emergency notifications and public information.

“It is important that accurate in-



Mike Wight, public information officer with the Department of Health and Human Services, (center) serves as spokesperson for the state at a mock news conference.

formation get out to the public in a timely manner,” said Jodie Fawl, public information officer for NEMA. “The information must be accurate and timely because it will be the basis for the way the public responds to protective action recommendations from the counties and states.”

These exercises are conducted throughout the year in order to test the existing plans and procedures that are in place.

“Our first priority is the safety of the people of the state of Nebraska,” Fawl said.

“We need to test our plans and capabilities routinely to ensure that we get it right in the event that a real incident does occur.”



Troy Harris, NEMA communications officer, checks out a radio to NEMA’s Melissa Wood, who staffed the Joint Information Center at Auburn.



Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Department of Health and Human Services, Nemaha County and Cooper Nuclear Station staff work in the Joint Information Center (JIC) during the June 14 evaluated exercise.



Nebraska Public Power District staff David Montgomery and Dave Kimball serve as technical briefer and Joint Information Center manager, respectively.



From left, State Hazard Mitigation Officer, Mary Baker, Pilger Village Clerk Kim Niemann and Kathy Fitzgerald, who served as the FEMA long-term recovery representative following the June 16, 2014, tornado at Pilger, met for a picture at the Joplin Tornado Summit on May 19. Not pictured is Brent Curtis of NEMA who also attended. Paul Johnson, director of Douglas County Emergency Management was also one of the 350 attendees. It was held at Missouri Southern State University in Joplin. While the focus was on the Joplin tornado of May 22 2011, representatives of other tornado and flooding diasaster including Moore, Okla., Tuscaloosa, Ala., Greensburo, Kans., Cedar Rapids, Iowa and Minot, N.D., were in attendance.



From left, Steve Eddy, the city manager of Moore, Okla. and Kim Niemann, Pilger village clerk, spoke on the summit panel: *Leading through a Disaster: The Sprint that becomes a Marathon.*



*All Disasters are not Created Equal: Understanding the Factors that Determine Recovery Resources* was another panel that featured Kim Niemann of Pilger.

## Joplin Tornado Summit Provides Opportunity to Discover How Communities Respond to Disaster

“It is important to learn how other communities are navigating their road to recovery,” NEMA’s State Hazard Mitigation Officer **Mary Baker** said. “Every community is different and therefore possess separate and unique challenges so each approach varies. Ironically some of the basic recovery pieces remain the same. Like the resolve of the human spirit and the power of hope, both are crucial in a community’s full recovery. And how everyone pulls together and helps each other out, sometimes even before the actual threat of the hazard has left the immediate area. People are so gracious and willing to help each other out, and in times of emergency that quotient is amplified by 10-20 fold.

“It was good to see how other communities are incorporating resiliency and mitigation measures into their recovery efforts. The opportunity to weave mitigation into recovery efforts enables us ways to significantly reduce a community’s risk profile, and that is the ultimate goal of mitigation.”

## Preparedness Section



## LEOP Workshop at NEMA

NEMA held a local emergency operations plan planning workshop June 16 to help emergency managers who are updating their plans. Left: NEMA Program Special Logan Lueking answers questions from Platte County Emergency Management Director Tim Hofbauer while Phelps County Emergency Management Administrative Deputy Jill Harvey works on her county plan. Right: NEMA Planner Specialist Patrick Rooney, center, works with Fillmore County Emergency management Director Jim Dunker, right, as Tyrel Hernes of Region 5/6 works on a LEOP. Dunker said he was working on his plan a year early to identify changes and update information and the workshop offered a good chance to work directly with NEMA planning staff.

## Emergency Support Function 15 -- Military



Photos by Larry Fichtner

The Nebraska Air National Guard's 155th Civil Engineer Squadron's debris removal team unloads equipment at the Nebraska Army National Guard's Camp Ashland for an exercise to familiarize personnel with new equipment.

# Nebraska Air National Guard Debris Removal Exercise Provides Demonstration of Capabilities for NEMA

The Nebraska Air National Guard 155th Civil Engineer Squadron recently acquired and trained on new equipment for debris removal.

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Exercise Training Officer **Larry Fichtner** attended a June 4 training at the Army National Guard's Camp

Ashland to observe some of the capabilities and equipment available to the state following a disaster.

[Continued on next page](#)



Chain saws and a skid loader are among the equipment available from the Air National Guard's debris removal team.

## Emergency Support Function 15 -- Military



“This is another tool in the toolbox,” Fichtner said. “The 155th debris removal team can help us out with up to 20 personnel, two dump trucks, two flat beds, two skid loaders and a container filled with equipment, including chain saws, wedges, shovels, fuel cans and safety equipment.”

The Nebraska National Guard is one of the state agencies that responds

alongside NEMA when disaster strikes.

“If we didn’t know about their capabilities, then we wouldn’t know to ask for assistance,” said NEMA Operations Section Manager **Earl Imler**. “Observing this exercise allowed NEMA to know more about the guard’s capabilities.

During the exercise, the 155th debris removal team removed trees blocking roads at Camp Ashland.

“One group achieved their goal in the allotted time, while the other group had some setbacks and didn’t meet their goal due to equipment issues,” Fichtner said. “It was a great exercise because that’s what happens in the real world. I saw people learning how to use unfamiliar equipment and learning lessons that will benefit them prior to an actual event.”



The Nebraska Air National Guard’s debris removal team clears trees from roads at Camp Ashland as part of an exercise of new equipment.

Training Opportunities Available

# Volunteer Organizations Help Communities Recover

By Brent Curtis

Voluntary Agency Liaison and  
Operations Program Specialist

Nebraska Emergency Management Agency

In Nebraska, we rely heavily on volunteers, both pre- and post-disaster.

Pre-disaster, they can be essential in such emergency work as filling sandbags when flooding is imminent, and (more commonly) in training, preparing, educating and practicing for disasters that may impact a community in the future.

Post-disaster, volunteers and non-governmental organizations (such as the Lions Club, Salvation Army, Red Cross etc.) can make all the difference between a community recovering and disappearing.

Representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can accomplish what local, state and federal governments simply don't have the resources, capability or liability to do.

This can include, but certainly isn't limited to, debris clean-up, mass feed-

ing, mass care assistance (food, clothing, shelter for those individuals and families directly impacted), sheltering, emergency repairs, disaster child care, donations management; and long-term recovery assistance, such as reconstruction, replacement of personal belongings or household items, direct financial assistance, and many other types of aid.

The threshold for a presidential disaster declaration for individual assistance (IA) is so high that it is doubtful that Nebraska would receive more than a handful during the next 20 years.

Since 1999, Nebraska has received four federal IA declarations—and three of those were from floods. With no local or state individual assistance programs in place, the onus of recovery is on the affected households, communities and those organizations that have resources and capability to assist. It is for all of these reasons that NGOs are essential to the resiliency and recovery

**Training Resources**

[Nebraska Citizen Corps](#)  
[American Red Cross](#)  
[Ready.gov](#)  
[FEMA Independent Study Courses](#)

of communities in Nebraska.

There are training and education opportunities available for citizens in Nebraska. There are also multitudes of web-based education and training resources available.

Locally, I would recommend starting with the Citizen Corps program, as well as the American Red Cross.

Online, there are sites dedicated to helping citizens train and prepare for both being impacted by disaster and for volunteering in times of crisis.

Credentialing is extremely important, for several reasons. It can be done in advance, in coordination with local emergency management. It can also be done during a disaster, using plans and procedures that have been developed for Nebraska.

All disasters start and end locally, and any state or federal government resources that are brought in to the incident are there to assist, not circumvent, local control of the incident. Thus, one of the best practices for NGOs is to establish a good relationship with local emergency management prior to a disaster.

Nebraska has a state-wide credentialing standard that more readily recognizes the various aspects of disaster response (e.g. law enforcement, fire, public works, voluntary agencies, etc.). These can be issued to individuals pre-disaster to help expedite the response.

It is, however, important to remember that in the immediate wake of a catastrophic event, such as a tornado, local government may close off all access (other than for emergency responders) to an area while life-saving and safety issues are addressed. This



Nemaha county volunteers fill sandbags during flooding in 2011.

## Operations Section

can include search and rescue, de-energizing downed power lines, and securing other potential hazards created by the event. When it comes to issues of life safety and security, they are certainly within their authority to do so.

Credentialing is more than just recognizing that an individual is registered to potentially have access to an affected area. It is also an accountability measure.

When a credentialed individual stages for entry to an affected area, their ID card is scanned and acts as a type of “time card” that serves two purposes.

1. It ensures accountability when operations cease for the day—they can track if anyone didn’t “punch out” and can coordinate to locate that individual—for their safety, as well as the safety of the community.

2. It tracks the number of hours that individual volunteers as part of the immediate response. Those hours can translate directly into financial assistance for the community on a declared disaster.

For example, in Pilger—in June 2014, we had approximately 77,000 volunteer and donated equipment hours. After all of the debris had been piled up on the southwest corner



Ogallala volunteers fill sandbags during flooding in 2013.

of the town, the project to properly dispose of that debris in a landfill was more than \$2 million.

FEMA pays 75 percent, the State of Nebraska pays 12.5 percent, and the remaining 12.5 percent of the cost was the responsibility of Pilger.

Because of those volunteer hours, Pilger received a financial credit (approximately \$23 per hour donated towards their cost share. The end result is that Pilger did not have to pay any money for the debris removal project. This is why tracking volunteer hours is so important for communities impacted.

In much the same way as fire departments across the nation have mutual aid agreements with their neigh-

boring communities, so do the various NGOs and voluntary organizations.

This can be done on the local level with Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs), above the local level with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (the Nebraska VOAD, or “NEVOAD”), and post-disaster with Long-Term Recovery Groups (LTRGs).

These organizations exist to enhance mutual coordination, communication, collaboration and cooperation while maintaining the individual identity and mission of member organizations. These organizations work hand-in-hand with local and state emergency management to enhance resiliency and recovery.

COADs are not active in every community in Nebraska, but they are out there. Lincoln, Grand Island, Scottsbluff and northeast Nebraska are examples, but several other communities are actively developing COADs, as well.

I would encourage all volunteer organizations to join the Nebraska VOAD as it serves to strengthen all involved.

The NEVOAD is an excellent venue to gain awareness of relevant training opportunities that arise throughout the state and the multi-state region.

For more information on NEVOAD vis the website at [Nebraska Voad](http://NebraskaVoad.org) or contact: [susan.epps@redcross.org](mailto:susan.epps@redcross.org).

Reach story author, Brent Curtis, at [brent.curtis@nebraska.gov](mailto:brent.curtis@nebraska.gov)



Volunteers organize donated items at Wisner Pilger High School following a tornado at Beaver Crossing in 2014.

# Are You Ready? Preparedness Tips

## FEMA App Can Help You Stay Safe

The latest version of the FEMA App is available for free in the App Store for Apple devices and Google Play for Android devices.

The app provides a customizable checklist of emergency supplies, maps of open shelters and disaster recovery centers, and tips on how to survive natural and man-made disasters.

The app also will enable users to receive weather alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations across the nation. A “Disaster Reporter” feature lets users upload and share photos of disaster damage.

## One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire

The Rocky Mountain Area Coordinating Group and the Rocky Mountain Coordination Center *One Less Spark, One Less Wildfire* campaign, is aimed at reducing human-caused wildfires in the Rocky Mountain Area Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas.

Most wildfires are caused from escaped debris burning, sparks thrown from chains dragging behind vehicles on roadways, farm and construction equipment, lawnmowers, chainsaws, ATVs, target shooting and unattended campfires.

Citizens have the responsibility to prevent human-caused wildfires. Please consider the following:

- Fireworks are never allowed on state managed or federal public lands. Smaller, more innocent devices like sparklers, as well as exploding targets and larger combustible devices can start fires. Be careful when using fireworks on private land due to the high potential of causing wildfires.
- Before going camping, learn of any fire restrictions in place and never leave a campfire unattended. Build campfires in cleared open areas, and keep water and a shovel nearby.
- Make sure campfires are cool to the touch before leaving the area.

- When smoking, always dispose of cigarette debris in an ashtray and always smoke in approved areas.
- Avoid driving in tall grass. Exhaust particles, hot exhaust pipes and hot catalytic converters can start grass fires. Maintain proper tire pressure. Driving on exposed wheel rims can throw sparks.
- Sparks from lawnmowers, dragging chains, exhaust from ATV’s and motorcycles can start grass fires. Spark arresters are required on all recreational and portable gasoline-powered equipment.
- Before burning debris, obtain the required permits and stay mindful of current weather conditions.

Fire restrictions may be in effect across Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming. Fire restriction information can be found online at: [http://fireweather.sc.egov.usda.gov/rmgacc/fire\\_restrictions.php](http://fireweather.sc.egov.usda.gov/rmgacc/fire_restrictions.php).

## Lightning Safety

According to the National Weather Service (NWS), lightning strikes the United States about 25 million times each year.

Talk with your family about staying safe during thunderstorms. Here are just a few lightning safety tips that the NWS offers if you are indoors:

- Stay off corded phones. You can use cellular or cordless phones;
- Don’t touch electrical equipment such as computers, TVs, or cords. You can use the remote control safely; and
- Stay away from windows and doors that might have small leaks around the sides to let in lightning, and stay off porches.

According to the NWS, if you are outside during a storm it is important to get inside a safe building or vehicle. You are NOT safe outdoors, but if you absolutely cannot get to safety, follow these tips to slightly lessen the threat of being struck by lightning:

- Avoid open fields, the top of a hill, or a ridge top;

- Stay away from tall, isolated trees or other tall objects. If you’re in a forest, stay near a lower stand of trees; and
- If you’re in a group, spread out to avoid the current traveling between group members.

## Preparing Your Business

There are many ways business owners can prepare their organizations for emergencies. The Ready Campaign can assist entrepreneurs in developing a preparedness program by providing tools to create a plan that addresses the impact of many hazards. The five steps in developing a preparedness program are program management, planning, implementation, testing and exercises, and program Improvement.

For example, your business’ program management plan should include short and long-term objectives that protect the safety of employees, visitors, contractors and others at risk from hazards at the facility. The objectives of a preparedness program include:

- Establish a program committee that includes wide participation from your company;
- Conduct a business impact analysis to identify the operational and financial impacts from an interruption or disruption of your business;
- Protect the safety of your employees by developing evacuation, sheltering and lockdown plans.
- Conduct employee training and drills;
- Upgrade the protection of the facility by installing a fire sprinkler system; and
- Build a culture of preparedness in the workplace and encourage employees to have a plan at home.

Visit [ready.gov/business](http://ready.gov/business) for more information on how you can prepare your business for an emergency. You can also check out the Prepare Your Organization playbooks from America’s PrepareAthon! Find a playbook for each of the campaign’s featured hazards on page 2 when you click on the link.



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

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NEMA Director

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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:

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NEMA Operations Manager Earl Imler addresses ROTC members from Omaha who toured the Joint Force Headquarters building. As a part of the Nebraska Military Department, NEMA coordinates with the Nebraska National Guard on disaster response.

## Indoor Sheltering During Disasters

Whether at home, work, school or elsewhere, there may be situations when remaining where you are inside a sturdy building and taking additional actions for the specific hazard is the safe thing to do to protect yourself and your loved ones from harm. The following are examples of indoor shelter for weather specific emergencies:

- Extreme Heat: Stay indoors with air conditioning and limit sun exposure. If you do not have air conditioning, go to a building that does.
- Flood: Stay on high ground or get to high ground. If you are advised to evacuate, follow directions. And never walk or drive through floodwaters.
- Thunderstorm, Lightning, and Hail: When thunder roars, go indoors! Get or stay inside a sturdy building if you hear thunder or see lightning. Stay away from windows, skylights, and plumbing.

- Wind (Tornado or Hurricane): Seek cover in a FEMA Safe Room, ICC 500 Storm Shelter, or Best Available Refuge Area (BARA) identified by a qualified architect or engineer. If that is not available, go to a small, interior, windowless room (e.g., bathroom, closet) in a sturdy building on the lowest level of the building not affected by floodwaters.

- Winter Storm: Prepare to stay warm at home or at work. Stay inside and off the roads.

Before any emergency, be sure to learn how to obtain alerts and warnings, develop shelter and communications plans, and gather emergency supplies.

If you have a generator to use in the event of a power outage, be sure it's located outside the home and far enough away to prevent exhaust fumes from entering the building.