March 2021 in Review

Severe Weather Awareness Poster Contest
See pages 7-10

First Place
Sarah Kuchta
Wayne

Second Place
Julia McNamara
Bellevue

Third Place
Ryker Hasenauer
North Platte

Fourth Place
Gabby Gronewald
Gothenburg
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.

After weeks of decline and then plateau, COVID-19 cases are now rising in the United States. The need to accelerate the vaccination process continues to be a priority. In Nebraska, all health districts will move to Phase 2B of the state’s vaccination plan on April 5. Phase 2B includes state residents age 16-49. More than 868,000 vaccinations have been administered.

With severe weather season upon us, we requested that local and state emergency management staff be added to the list of people who received vaccinations across the state during March. With a vaccinated workforce, emergency managers are ready to respond to any issues that arise from severe weather.

In Nebraska, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that newly reported cases were steady but rose 9% for the week of March 16-29. The seven-day rolling average of daily new cases in Nebraska has risen over the past two weeks from 230 new cases per day on March 13 to 291 new cases per day this past Saturday, March 28. To date, a total of 162,560 Nebraskans testing positive for COVID-19 have recovered. The total number of COVID-19-related deaths reported in Nebraska is 2,180.

Nebraskans are encouraged to Finish Strong and do their part to end the pandemic by registering for the vaccine. Those registered will be alerted when a vaccine is available in their health district. In addition, we need to continue to use the tools to slow the spread of the virus, such as staying home when sick and washing hands often.

Severe Weather Awareness Week was recognized in Nebraska during the week of March 21-27 as a time to make sure your family is ready for the hazards we face in the state. We want all Nebraskans to prepare for severe weather events that could effect their families. Everyone needs multiple ways to receive weather alerts. Setting up emergency alerts on a phone, purchasing a NOAA weather radio and making sure to follow weather.gov and local media are good methods for staying situationally aware. It’s also important to create a family emergency preparedness kit and a family emergency plan so that you and your family are prepared for whatever weather emergency comes your way.

Sincerely,

Bryan Tuma
NEMA Hosts All-Hazards Position Specific Logistics Section Chief

Logistics personnel from across the country came to Lincoln the week of March 15 for L967: All Hazards Position Specific Logistics Section Chief training. The 11 students included people from Nebraska, Missouri, Florida and Oregon. Alicia LaMay and Jon Rosenlund, both logistics section chiefs active in Nebraska, taught the course, which provides local- and state-level emergency responders with a understanding of the duties, responsibilities and capabilities of an effective logistics section chief (LSC) on an all-hazards incident management team (AHIMT).

These responsibilities fall into two categories: responding to the incident and effectively fulfilling the position responsibilities of a logistics section chief on an AHIMT.

This course is an instructor-led training that supports learning through discussion, lecture and active participation in multiple exercises that provides a realistic, scenario-driven approach to mastering the skills required of an LSC. Exercises/simulations, discussions and a final exam enable participants to process and apply their new knowledge.

National Incident Management System Incident Command System all-hazards training should be completed by personnel who are assigned to functional, support or unit leader positions on a Type 3 or 4 incident management team, or by personnel who are seeking credentials/certification in those positions.
Gov. Pete Ricketts Office  U.S. News and World Report ranks Nebraska the #6 Best State, according to a national study. That's up three spots from 2019, when Nebraska placed ninth. “This year, Nebraska also made the top 10 for education (#9), infrastructure (#6), opportunity (#10) and natural environment (#6). This is Nebraska’s highest ranking in recent years in the ‘Best States’ report,” said Gov. Pete Ricketts. “We are helping to set the bar in key areas such as infrastructure, affordability, and how we conserve our natural resources. As we emerge from the pandemic, Nebraska is positioned to grow back stronger and better than ever before.”

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services  As of March 28, more than 828,764 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been given to those in Phase 1 and Phase 2A priority groups. Additionally, as of Sunday, more than 310,267 Nebraskans have completed vaccination, which represents 20.9% of Nebraskans age 16 years and older.

Federal Emergency Management Agency  April 1 marks FEMA’s 42-year anniversary. Created in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter, FEMA consolidated the federal emergency response functions across government under a single agency. Since then, FEMA has supported more than 4,000 emergency, fire and major disaster declarations. This total includes COVID-19 major disaster declarations in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, 5 territories and three tribes. In the past 12 months, the agency has faced unprecedented challenges: the COVID-19 pandemic, a record setting Atlantic hurricane season and the current nationwide drive to provide a COVID-19 vaccine to anyone who wants one.

- As of March 29, FEMA has provided more than $4.47 billion to 42 states, Washington D.C., four tribes and five territories for expenses related to COVID-19 vaccination at 100% federal cost share. These funds cover critical supplies, staffing, training and transportation needs that support increased vaccination efforts.
- FEMA is committed to the equitable distribution of vaccines. Using data from CDC's social vulnerability index and population data from the Census, we work with our state partners to locate community vaccination centers where they will be able to do the most good for the most vulnerable populations and ensure everyone who wants a vaccine gets one.
- FEMA is working to speed up vaccinations by supporting states as they open community vaccination centers across the country and working with its interagency partners to continue to stand-up and provide support to additional sites daily. Each state determines its own vaccination priority groups and procedures. Community vaccination centers are led by states, but may be supported by the federal government, including FEMA.
- Working with state governments, FEMA will open additional federal community vaccination center pilot sites, which include both federal support and supplemental vaccine allocation:
  - Recently, federal community vaccination center pilot sites opened in Boston, Massachusetts; Newark, New Jersey; Norfolk, Virginia; and Yakima, Washington.
  - In the next week, federal community vaccination center pilot sites are scheduled to open in Gary, Indiana, and St. Louis, Missouri.
- Find out where, when and how to get a vaccine in your community and get more information from your local health department and a list of places where adults can get a vaccine. Visit FEMA.Gov for information on FEMA's vaccination support efforts.

Hagerty  The inaugural application development period for FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) came to an end and Amelia Muccio, Vanessa Castillo and Millie Starliper of Hagerty have outlined the takeaways for emergency managers. "Potential BRIC projects are currently being evaluated by the National Technical Review (NTR) team comprised of mitigation subject matter experts who review each eligible project for cost-effectiveness and engineering feasibility. The review process will take several months meaning eager applicants and sub-applicants will not know their project’s status until July 2021 – approximately one month before the new grant cycle starts again, with the release of the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for Fiscal Year 2021.” The Hagerty staff report that BRIC 2021 could be a significant amount of funding. Check out Hagerty’s full article here.
Nebraska Department of Insurance

Nebraskans Urged to Review Flood Insurance Needs

Where It Can Rain, It Can Flood

The threat of spring flooding is just around the corner. Since floods can happen anytime, anywhere, and without warning, Nebraskans are urged to review their flood insurance needs.

Prepare for Unplanned Emergencies

The Department of Insurance encourages Nebraskans to take time to review their insurance needs and be prepared for unplanned emergencies in 2021. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), approximately 20 percent of flood insurance claims come from outside high-risk flood zones—citing that anywhere it can rain, it can flood.

According to the National Weather Service, the melting of snow has occurred slowly which is very favorable for reducing the flood risk due to snowmelt runoff. However, rises can still be expected on some rivers as meltwater makes its way into river systems. The spring weather pattern will most likely become more active in the weeks ahead, and additional precipitation could have an impact on the flood risk. Nebraska residents are encouraged to review their needs for flood insurance before a flood occurs. Keep in mind that just an inch of water in a home could cause more than $25,000 in damages. If flooding occurs and you do not have flood insurance, you could experience financial ruin.

Allow 30 Days for a Flood Policy to Take Effect

It is important to note that a flood insurance policy takes 30 days to take effect. The policy will not cover a loss in progress. Flood damage is not typically covered through most homeowners’ and renters’ standard insurance policies. Homeowners and renters are urged to review their insurance needs with their agents now and discuss whether it is necessary to have flood insurance coverage.

Flood Insurance is a Separate Coverage

Flood insurance is a separate coverage you can purchase. If you consider a private flood insurance policy, be sure to shop around and compare coverage and premiums before you buy. If your insurance agent can’t write a private flood insurance policy, he or she may be able to refer you to another licensed agent. Flood insurance can be purchased through an agent or insurer participating in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which FEMA manages.

If eligible for NFIP coverage, the NFIP provides coverage of up to $250,000 for the structure of a home and up to $100,000 for personal possessions. NFIP policies have a 30-day waiting period unless a policy is bought at the same time as a newly purchased home. If your community doesn't participate in the NFIP, the NFIP Referral Call Center at 1-800-427-4661 may be able to assist you.

Additional Information

Additional insurance information on all types of insurance coverage may be found on the Department’s website at doi.nebraska.gov. If you have insurance-related concerns, call the Department’s toll-free consumer hotline at 1-877-564-7323.
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Nebraska Department of Transportation

Buckle Up Phone Down
Safety Initiative Takes a Front Seat

When it comes to safety, the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) has a front seat view of what can happen when safe driving habits aren’t practiced. Over the past 10 years, about 70% of vehicle fatalities were unbuckled. In Nebraska, there are nearly 4,500 distracted driving crashes annually. In an effort to increase awareness surrounding seat belt usage and curbing distracted driving in the State of Nebraska, NDOT launched the Buckle Up Phone Down (BUPD) safety initiative in October 2020. The BUPD initiative reminds individuals, businesses, and schools that two of the most impactful decisions that drivers can make are to buckle up and put their phone down. At the heart of this initiative is the safety and wellbeing of all Nebraskans, with safer drivers and safer roads the desired outcome.

Nebraska Environment and Energy

The most recent version of the Nebraska Energy Quarterly is now online at http://dee.ne.gov/publica.nsf/pages/ENE012 and features NDEE’s 2020 Annual Energy Report, Weatherization Assistance Program information, changes in the auto industry, NDEE retirements, new teammates, and an update on NDEE transitions including new building, a reorganization and some staff changes.

ICS-300 Intermediate Incident Command System

offers an in-depth look at the National Incident Management System Incident Command System (ICS). Nic Kemnitz, Wayne County Emergency Management Director (top photo) and Kevin Garvin, Cedar County Emergency Management (bottom photo) taught ICS 300 at the Pierce Fire Station, March 18-21.

The course includes the tools, practices, and procedures that are available in ICS to effectively manage emergency incidents or planned local events at a local Type 3 level. Expanding upon ICS-100 and -200, the course ensures that responders understand the basic ICS concepts that allow an incident management organization to expand and contract as needed to fit the incident and maintain its operational effectiveness.
Gov. Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation declaring March 21-27 as Nebraska Severe Weather Awareness Week, a time to remind Nebraskans that community preparedness can minimize the dangers of the annual severe weather season to the lives and property of Nebraskans.

As part of the week, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency Assistant Director Bryan Tuma announced the winners of the annual Severe Weather Awareness Contest.

The winning students were honored in their counties by NEMA, the Nebraska Association of Emergency Management, the National Weather Service and the Nebraska Military Department, sponsors of the contest.

The winning and honorable mention posters will be featured in NEMA's 2022 Severe Weather Awareness Calendar.

First Place: “The BASEMENT is the place to go when the wind is swirling out of control!” by Sarah Kuchta, 9, Wayne Elementary School, Wayne, Wayne County.

Second Place: “When my winds blow you better go!!!” by Julia McNamara, 8, Bellevue Elementary School, Bellevue, Sarpy County.

Third Place: “If there is HAIL You better BAIL” by Ryker Hasenauer, 9, Jefferson Elementary School, North Platte, Lincoln County.

Fourth Place
“Tornado Preparedness: Go to basement away from windows. Get the Emergency Tornado Box” by Gabrealla Diane Gronewold, 9, home school, Gothenburg, Dawson County.

Honorable Mention
“Be Prepared for Severe Weather,” Julie Rianne F. Basa, 9, Bridgeport Public School, Bridgeport, Morrill County.

“Stick Around Go Underground” Olivia Clark, 9, Seward Elementary, Seward, Seward County.

“Tornadoes! Tornadoes! Watch out for...Tornados!”

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The contest is sponsored each year by the Nebraska Association of Emergency Managers, NEMA, the National Weather Service and the Nebraska Military Department.

“We want all Nebraskans to take some time during Severe Weather Awareness Week to prepare for spring and summer severe weather,” Tuma said. “The devastating impacts of extreme events can be reduced through improved readiness. Make a safety plan, create a preparedness kit and review proper safety precautions. It’s just a good practice for those of us who live in areas affected by tornadoes, floods and severe thunderstorms.”

For more information on severe weather awareness, or preparing for severe weather, visit: https://nema.nebraska.gov/
Honorable Mention-Desmond Mata

Honorable Mention-Olivia Clark

Honorable Mention-Karis Crosmer

Honorable Mention-Sloane Hagerman
Beware of False Weather Information

Know Your Source

The National Weather Service is a trusted source for weather information. ALL weather Watches and Warnings originate from the National Weather Service. These Watches and Warnings are issued based on all available data, including direct observations from local emergency responders and trained storm spotters.

Social Media Filters

Up-to-date weather information can be found on the social media accounts of various National Weather Service offices, public safety agencies and organizations, private weather vendors, as well as local news media. Be wary of other unofficial and/or “viral” social media accounts that post exaggerated forecasts and/or false information about current or expected weather. Examples of this can include exaggerated rainfall or snowfall forecasts or using doctored images or photographs from past storms. Beware of these social media posts that may have malicious or misinformed intentions.

Misleading Messaging

Recent events have created a spotlight on the potential harm of misinformation. Whether the intent of the parties responsible was to be beneficial or malicious remains unclear.

- A group identifying themselves as certified spotters recently visited or called several Kansas communities telling them to activate the outdoor warning devices because of a funnel cloud. In one case, citizens were interrupted and even ridiculed during a community meeting and told to activate the outdoor warning devices. In this case, no NWS warnings were issued and no weather events occurred, leaving community members confused and concerned about weather misinformation.

- Another group called a National Weather Service office, instructing them to issue a Tornado Warning, while monitoring weather conditions online from hundreds of miles away.

Both of these incidents are cause for concern. They reiterate the need for everyone to rely on trusted weather sources, such as the National Weather Service and local media, for important weather information. The National Weather Service trains—and trusts—thousands of storm spotters each year, and values the direct observations they report to NWS.

The National Weather Service is here to serve you, and is always looking for ways to improve on the mission of providing weather forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property.

Visit us at: weather.gov or www.nema.Nebraska.gov
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Samantha Gordon joined Nebraska Emergency Management Agency on March 22 as an accountant I in the administration unit.

Previously, Gordon worked in the Department of Administrative Services as an accounting clerk. She studied business administration at Southeast Community College.

Gordon serves as the village clerk for Sterling and lives in Tecumseh. She and her husband, Mike, have a six-year-old daughter Adelynn and a five-month-old son, Ezra.

She enjoys hunting, fishing and gardening, as well as spending time with her family, cats dogs and horses.

Jenna Clark joined Nebraska Emergency Management Agency on March 29 as a planning specialist in the public assistance unit.

Clark is originally from California but has lived in Nebraska for 14 years. She attended Grand Island Senior High School.

Clark graduated from the University of Nebraska at Omaha with a bachelor’s degree in emergency management and disaster science in 2019.

Previously she worked at the Heartland Disaster Recovery Group as an AmeriCorps VISTA and then at the Four Corners Health Department in York as Emergency Response Coordinator.

In her free time, Clark enjoys reading, watching Las Vegas Raiders football, going for runs with her three dogs, Jackson, Oakley and Hank, hiking, camping and anything outdoors.

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.