Excellence in Leadership
NEMA’s Nathan Martinez Honored

The Martinez family, from left, Nathan, Zelda and Angel

See page 2 for details.
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 Message from NEMA Assistant Director

Erv Portis

This past week, as we celebrated Thanksgiving, we were able to take some time to recognize and thank the people who make a difference in our lives. My goal has always been to extend that spirit of thankfulness throughout the entire year and to make sure the people I work with feel appreciated for the great work they do every day. As public servants, NEMA employees are among the many federal, state and local employees, as well as nonprofit staff, who deserve appreciation for the ways in which they support and care for members of the public. These valued civil servants dedicate themselves to our state and the people in it.

During these past few years in particular, public servants have proved essential, protecting our communities, taking care of our neighbors and inspiring us as we made our way in this changed world. A few examples of the outstanding work completed by NEMA staff are:

■ Assisting the 400 plus applicants who had more than 2,000 projects to be completed after the 2019 floods. More than 98% of the funds for those projects have been obligated.
■ Processing millions of dollars for state and local entities through the COVID-19 response.
■ Responding to multiple wildfires this year in a season that started early and went long.
That doesn't happen without great staff. They pulled a rabbit out of the hat more than once to get work completed in a timely fashion. I am honored to work with each and every one of them.

Several NEMA employees were recognized Nov. 30 during the State Teammates Recognition Ceremony at the Joint Force Headquarters. Nathan Martinez was honored as an Excellence in Leadership award winner and was sited as “providing an enthusiastic vision for incorporating new technologies into the agency.” Betty McCracken was recognized for her “can do attitude and willingness to help.” In addition, NEMA staff who have served in the military were recognized for their service.

Sincerely,

Ervin L. Portis
Assistant Director

NEMA staff recognized for military service were: Nathan Martinez, Troy Harris, Jill Burmester, Dave Reisen, Danelle Nelson, Roger Conrad, Leo Larkin and Maj. Gen Daryl Bohac. Not pictured is James Rashilla.
Disability Awareness Training Offered

Niagara University Disability Awareness Training has received a grant from the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities to educate anyone involved in emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery as it pertains to individuals with disabilities and access and functional needs.

Niagara University has tailored a presentation that identifies the responsibilities of both emergency management personnel and disability advocates during an emergency. This program will introduce the four modules necessary for proper response that include Disability Awareness Training, the Americans with Disabilities Act specific to Emergency management, emergency plan content, and inclusive planning and active participation.

David Whalen presented an overview of his program at the Nebraska Association of Emergency Managers (NAEM) Conference in April.

During the NAEM presentation, Whalen reiterated the importance of “inclusive planning” with the whole community but focused more on the inclusiveness of the disability community.

“From the emergency management perspective, to have this training opportunity in our own state couldn’t have come at a better time”, said Sean Runge, NEMA’s Preparedness and Operations Section Administrator.

Runge was referring to White House presidential directives and priorities to FEMA’s Preparedness and Recovery Grant programs to ensure inclusiveness, equity and whole community.

To date, Whalen has conducted the in-person Emergency Management – Disability Awareness Training in Scottsbluff, North Platte, Norfolk, Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island.

Approximately 67 jurisdictions represented by over 100 individuals from municipal, county and state government, non-governmental organizations, boards, commissions and advocacy groups representing the disability community.

Whalen plans to bring this training back to Nebraska in the spring of 2022 for two additional offerings, with one being offered in the Lincoln area and the other yet to be determined.

If you are interested in hosting one of the two trainings, please contact sean.runge@nebraska.gov.

The program provides the introduction and concepts to Nebraska for those individuals with disabilities, disability organizations, parents, service providers, emergency management personnel and anyone invested in the disability community. This training has introduced many of these groups and individuals to one another, so the collaborative efforts to get involved and do our part to ensure that equity, inclusion and the whole community approach is being done in all of our communities across Nebraska.

If you have not already attended the training, you are strongly encouraged to check the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) training list in early 2022 for the next opportunity to collaborate and learn from others during one of the final courses being offered by David Whalen.

Collectively everyone should be determined to be inclusive and engage our whole community in emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery.

Please click this link and learn more about Niagara University’s Disability Awareness Training.
Sabrina Roland joined NEMA on Nov. 8 as administrative programs officer.

Roland came to NEMA from the Department of Labor where she worked as an adjudicator. Previously, she worked at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, in financial aid, and at Nelnet.

Roland has a bachelor of science in economics from UNL. Her grandfather, Bill Meyer, served as a planner in the NEMA planning unit until he retired 10 years ago. Roland has a dog, Levy, and a cat, Nemo. She enjoys video games and cosplay (costume play).

Mack Johnson, left, NEMA’s planning and training site specialist for Cooper Nuclear Station delivers a Radiation Basics class during November to Nemaha County Hospital personnel in preparation for a FEMA Evaluated Medical Exercise. At right, Deb Robinson, senior planning and training specialist, provides training to Nemaha County Emergency Management, Otoe County Emergency Management, Brownville Fire, Nemaha County/Auburn Fire and Rescue, Peru Fire and Rescue, Midwest Medical Transport, and Cooper Nuclear Station personnel. All participants received training in Emergency Worker Medical Response training.

The NEMA Planning, Exercise and Training Unit held its Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop in November to establish priorities for training and exercises in the coming year. This year the workshop was held via Webex and followed a series of stakeholder surveys that started in July.

The workshop was designed to identify preparedness priority factors, establish preparedness priorities, develop a multi-year schedule and establish program reporting.

“We definitely got the participation we were looking for with as many as 65 people participating,” PET Unit Supervisor Dave Reisen said.

Maj. Gen. Daryl Bohac presents NEMA Public Information Officer Jodie Fawl with a challenge coin in recognition of her work to complete the Master PIO program.
Central City Public Schools Construct Safe Room/Gym

Through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, Central City is getting funds to construct a community safe room at Central City High School.

According to Program Specialist Lexy Hindt, the NEMA mitigation unit has been working with the Central City School District since 2018 to secure grant funds for the project.

“We were so excited when their project was approved by FEMA under DR-4420’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program,” Hindt said. “This project will serve as a dual purpose facility for Central City as a safe room and a gymnasium.”

Cost for the project is roughly $5.2 million and Hindt reports FEMA is paying just over $3.9 million.

Superintendent Jeff Jensen said the dome shaped facility is preparing for inflation in early December.

“We continue to hope for a September 2022 completion.”

Central City Superintendent Jeff Jensen and NEMA Hazard Mitigation Unit Supervisor John Gassmann tour the Central City Public Schools safe room/gymnasium in October.

An architect’s drawing of the FEMA-funded safe room/gymnasium is displayed outside Central City High School.

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.