Sixteen emergency management students completed the Basic Emergency Management Certification at a two-day class at the War Skills Building on the Nebraska Air National Guard Base in Lincoln, Oct. 7-8.

The course is taught as a capstone to 14 independent study courses offered through the Emergency Management Institute.

Representatives of cities, villages, counties and inter jurisdictional emergency management agencies, as well as representatives of state government agencies and partner organizations who work directly with NEMA to provide emergency management response and support across the state, took the course.

The course emphasizes various phases of emergency management, including requirements and expectations prior to, during and after an event or incident occurs.
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.

An expected spike in COVID-19 infections has arrived throughout the country this autumn, and to continue to preserve hospital capacity across the state Gov. Pete Ricketts announced an update to the directed health care measures (DHM) beginning Oct. 21. In addition to moving to stage 3.1 of the DHMs, the governor is asking us all to avoid the “Three Cs” to help slow the spread of the virus by avoiding: crowded places, close contact and confined spaces.

It’s also not too late to get a flu shot to prevent another illness that can affect hospital capacity. The addition of another respiratory illness on top of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic could overburden the health care system, strain testing capacity and increase the risk of catching both diseases at once. Even with a mild flu season, a COVID-19 surge could rapidly overwhelm the hospital system.

The governor announced new grant programs to continue growing Nebraska in the midst of disruption of the pandemic. As part of the Coronavirus Relief Fund, the State of Nebraska received $1.084 billion in federal assistance to address coronavirus related needs across the state. These funds are being used to assist in the state’s direct response to the coronavirus pandemic, as well as providing assistance to Nebraska businesses, nonprofits, and public healthcare providers who have been adversely impacted due to the pandemic. The state will award a second round of grants within the following programs:

- **Community CARES Grant Program** — $48.5 million of additional funds will be awarded to assist non-profits and care providers as they respond to needs arising from the coronavirus pandemic. Grants are available to charities, DHHS-licensed care organizations, places of worship, child care centers, food banks, shelters, and other non-profits.
- **Business and Livestock Producer Stabilization Grant Program** — On a first come, first served basis, $25 million will go to fund a new round of grants to eligible businesses and ag producers who have not yet received assistance.

Targeted grant programs to support businesses in industries particularly hard-hit due to the pandemic are also available as follows:

- Restaurants and Bars - $20 million
- Cosmetic, Massage, and Body Art Services - $22 million
- Event Centers and Sports Arenas - $20 million
- Hotels and Convention Centers - $34 million
- Ethanol Producers - $15 million
- Zoos - $6.05 million
- Movie Theaters - $3.2 million

Grant applications opened Oct. 21 and close Nov. 13. To apply, visit coronavirus.nebraska.gov/Programs&Grants. The grants will be issued by Dec. 30.

The state is allocating up to $40 million to support hospital capacity across Nebraska, $100 million to reimburse state agencies for eligible coronavirus expenses and expanded financial support for local governments to cover payroll costs from March 1 through May 3 for workers on the frontline of coronavirus response such as dispatchers, corrections teammates and public health staff.

Stay safe and be well. Make sure you are taking care of yourself during a difficult time for all of us.

Sincerely,

Bryan Tuma
Gov. Pete Ricketts announced Oct. 16 changes to the state’s directed health measures (DHMs). The governor also launched a campaign to encourage Nebraskans to avoid the “Three Cs” to help slow the spread of the virus:

1. Crowded places
2. Close contact, and

As of Oct. 21, all Nebraska counties are in Phase 3.1 Directed Health Measures (DHM) until Nov. 3.

The State’s Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Gary Anthone, announced the state is allocating up to $40 million of CARES Act funding to support hospital capacity.

Nebraskans are urged to continue social distancing and wearing masks to help mitigate the risk of infection.

**Elective Procedures/Surgeries**

- In order to continue elective procedures, hospitals must maintain at least 10% of general and ICU beds as reserved capacity to treat COVID-19 patients.
- Hospitals must continue to accept and treat COVID-19 patients and must not transfer COVID-19 patients to create capacity for elective procedures.

**Bars and Restaurants**

- Patrons will be required to be seated while on premise unless they are placing an order, using the restroom or playing games.
- 100% of rated occupancy continues.
- Maximum of eight individuals in a party. Groups larger than eight will need to split into multiple tables.

**Gatherings**

- Indoor gatherings will be limited to 50% of rated occupancy (not to exceed 10,000).
- Outdoor gatherings will remain at 100% of rated occupancy (not to exceed 10,000).
- Gatherings include, but are not limited to, indoor or outdoor arenas, indoor or outdoor auctions, stadiums, tracks, fairgrounds, festivals, zoos, auditoriums, large event conference rooms, meeting halls, indoor theaters, libraries, swimming pools or any other confined indoor or outdoor space.
- Groups shall be no larger than eight individuals.
- Plans for reopening or expanding to new capacity limits must be submitted to the local health departments and approved for all indoor and outdoor locations/venues that hold 500 or more individuals (1,000 or more in counties over 500,000 population) before reopening is permitted. The reopening plan must contain planned number of guests, how the location will meet social distancing guidelines, and sanitation guidelines.

**Wedding and Funeral Reception Venues**

- Maximum of eight individuals in a party. Groups larger than eight will need to split into multiple tables.
- 100% of rated occupancy continues.
- Limited dances or other social events requiring guests to gather outside of their respective tables in guidance.

**Extracurricular Event, Club Sport Participation, Self Monitoring**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q:** If my school-aged individual is on their way to an extracurricular or club sport event and is not wearing a mask while riding in a bus or vehicle, can they self-monitor instead of quarantine?

**A:** No, extracurricular events as defined in the Quarantine and Isolation directions excludes transportation to or from the event(s), pre or post event(s) activities or preparations, or other activities ancillary or in addition to the actual event(s) or practice.

**Q:** If my school-aged individual is seated in the bleachers to watch an extracurricular event, is this participating in the event?

**A:** No, a spectator is not a participant in the extracurricular event or club sport. It is recommended that a spectator follow social distancing and in the event that 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained, then to also wear a mask.

**Q:** If my school-aged individual is a cheerleader or dance team member and performing at an extracurricular event, is this participating in the event?

**A:** Yes, cheerleading and dance team are extracurricular events and would meet the definition of participating in an extracurricular event as defined in the Quarantine and Isolation directions.

**Q:** If my school-aged individual is in a locker room prior to or after an extracurricular event or club sport and is in close contact with a person who is COVID-19 positive, can they self-monitor in lieu of quarantine?

**A:** No, extracurricular events as defined in the Quarantine and Isolation directions excludes transportation to or from the event(s), pre or post event(s) activities or preparations, or other activities ancillary or in addition to the actual event(s) or practice.
Nebraska state agency staff, local agency representatives and other agencies involved in emergency management met virtually, Oct. 28 to complete the Threat, Hazard, Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA), Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR) and Training and Exercise Planning Workshops.

The workshops are required for the state to be eligible for homeland security grant funding through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Emergency Support Function representatives, specialty teams and local emergency managers were among the participants.

“We had good participation in the process,” said Preparedness, Exercise and Training Unit Supervisor Dave Reisen. “THIRA and SPR help us determine the state’s emergency management capabilities and level of preparedness. The information we gather through this process will be compiled, with information from other states, to determine the nation’s level of preparedness as a whole. TEPW provided an opportunity to review priorities, collaborate and streamline our approach to training and exercise.”
The Beacon – October 2020 in Review

by Kathy Smith,
FEMA Planning and Safety Branch Chief

Communities have long engaged in planning for public safety and future growth. But Congress recognized the need to support a new kind of planning that would help state, tribal, territorial and local communities understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards. This shift to focusing on pre-disaster planning was made formal in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. This law was signed on Oct. 30, 2000, and amended the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act). FEMA is celebrating the anniversary and legacy of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 throughout October and November.

Before the act was signed, emergency managers’ planning usually focused on preparing for and responding to disasters, which help people during hazard events. After the act passed, emergency managers began using a more proactive planning process. Leading their communities through that process resulted in FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plans. This planning was aimed at reducing the impacts of disasters before they occurred. Emergency managers began to use a more holistic, collaborative process for hazard mitigation plans. They involved a wider range of partners, from sectors such as housing and infrastructure. Mitigation plans brought together people from emergency management and community development. They encouraged community-specific blueprints for pro-actively reducing risks and vulnerabilities. This kind of plan is required to receive certain types of FEMA assistance. But participants found that the plans could be useful for much more than that.

As with most new initiatives, the first iteration of mitigation plans simply tried to meet the requirements in regulation and FEMA’s “Blue Book” (2004). The plans’ contents rarely reflected each community’s unique needs. However, with a requirement for updates every five years, future versions grew and evolved with the communities and were refocused on priorities to match the times. Today, these are foundational documents to help ensure disaster responses are locally executed, managed by the state, territory or tribal governments, and federally supported. Through the years, FEMA provided more guidance and training. This helped states, locals, tribes and territories develop more effective hazard mitigation plans.

Lessons learned across the nation were paired with hands-on assistance and how-to resources to help communities prepare for a disaster before it strikes.

Under the Disaster Mitigation Act, states, tribes, and local communities prepare for a disaster before it strikes.

The Disaster Mitigation Act celebrates 20 years of protecting communities from natural disasters. Find out more today at fema.gov/blog.

Twenty years later, many communities are updating their hazard mitigation plan for the fourth or fifth time. Increasingly, they are integrating elements of mitigation planning with other plans, such as comprehensive or economic development plans. Local communities are using them to decide where and how to build. The plans include using current disaster-resistant building codes. Communities are adding land use, wildfire protection, climate adaptation and fields such as public health to their mitigation planning. Take Massachusetts, which combined its hazard mitigation and climate adaptation plans into one strategy. Or Manitou Springs, Colo., which uses hazard mitigation as a factor in its growth and development choices. This is a testament of the power of planning to reduce risk.

FEMA’s National Mitigation Planning Program celebrates this landmark legislation. As we do so, we work to elevate and support effective planning. We engage with partners early and often, support plan integration and implementation of actions using a wide range of public and private resources. Effective planning leads to completed mitigation projects, including non-structural actions. FEMA continues to help communities as they work to become safer and more resilient.

To see a clear picture of the long-term impact nationwide, take a look at the hazard mitigation timeline on page 6 of this issue of The Beacon.
The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 became law on Oct. 30, 2000. This landmark law recognizes that mitigation planning is the foundation for reducing risk. Mitigation plans help states, tribes, and locals understand their risk from natural hazards and reduce losses based on those risks.

This year, for its 20th anniversary, FEMA celebrates the milestones and successes in work with partners to build more resilient communities.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 was signed into law. It amended the Robert T. Stafford Emergency Assistance Act to create the authority on mitigation planning and the Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) grant program.

- 2000
  - The first local mitigation plan was approved for Clackamas County, Oregon.

- 2004
  - The first tribal mitigation plan was approved for the Lummi Nation.

- 2006
  - More than 10,000 jurisdictions have engaged in mitigation planning.

- 2007
  - FEMA releases an Interim Final Rule creating tribal mitigation planning regulations.

- 2008
  - As of November 2008, more than 75% of the population live in communities with approved mitigation plans.

- 2012
  - More than 20,000 jurisdictions now have mitigation plans.

- 2014
  - The state mitigation plan approval period increases from 3 to 5 years.

- 2016
  - The Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act passes, adding a new dam safety grant program. The program requires applicants have a mitigation plan that includes all dam risks.

- 2018
  - The Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 passes and acknowledges the need for collaborative disaster response and recovery across the whole community.

- 2019
  - New York City launches the first web-based mitigation plan for greater accessibility across audiences.

- 2020
  - As of September 30, 2020, more than 23,000 local jurisdictions and 239 federally-recognized tribes have a mitigation plan, covering over 84% of the population.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 allows for states and tribes with an increased commitment to mitigation to achieve an “Enhanced” status, which provides additional funding.

Washington is the first approved state plan and the first to receive “Enhanced” status.

American Samoa becomes the first approved territorial hazard mitigation plan.

The Disaster Recovery Reform Act also created the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program to replace and simplify the PDM program.
Final State Highway Project Following 2019 Floods Complete

The Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT), Gov. Pete Ricketts, transportation partners and Spencer-area community members gathered Oct. 22 to celebrate the opening of the permanent bridge on Highway 281 over the Niobrara River south of Spencer. The event marked completion of the final State Highway System project after catastrophic flooding in March 2019.

“Since last March’s tragedy, we’ve come far with recovery in Nebraska,” Ricketts said. “We’ve reached many milestones worth celebrating as we worked to rebuild bigger and better than before.”

On March 14, 2019, the dam at Spencer was compromised when snow melt and rainfall and resulted in significant damage to Highway 281 at Spencer. On July 26, 2019, a temporary bridge was completed, allowing direct access in the region once again. Prior to the temporary bridge installation, locals were required to use a 127-mile detour to cross the river.

“We at NDOT are part of the community,” said Mark Kovar, NDOT District 8 Engineer. “We live here and raise our families here. The flood of 2019 was felt by all of us. Getting to today took a lot of work, coordination and effort from NDOT and our industry partners. It also took partnership and patience from the community, which was devastated by the flooding.”

As a result of the March 2019 flood, 3,300 miles of the State Highway System was closed. Once the damage was assessed, more than 27 bridges required major work or total rebuilds in addition to more than 200 miles of pavement requiring total rebuilds or significant repair.

“Recovery hasn’t been easy, but the people in this community worked together to come back better and support each other when times were hard,” said Derek Bentz, Chairman of the Spencer Board. Thank you to NDOT, Hawkins and their subcontractors for the work they have done.”

“The flood of 2019 presented challenges for all of us,” said Chris Hawkins, COO of Hawkins Construction. “We look forward to seeing this new bridge serve the community and the region as they continue to grow.”

NDOT worked closely with Olsson & Associates to expedite the design of the reconstruction. Hawkins Construction is the lead contractor on this project. The $25,470,887 contract covers the single lane temporary roadway and bridge as well as a permanent 1,050-foot bridge over the Niobrara River Channel.
Megan Tesmer was named a public assistance unit planning specialist at NEMA in October. She has served as administrative assistant in the Recovery Section since Dec. 23. Tesmer earned a bachelor of science in business management with honors from Doane University. She also has some other exciting news to share. She is getting married on Nov. 8, and after that will then be known as Megan Eckles.

Elizabeth Huggins joined NEMA, Oct. 19 as a planning specialist in the public assistance unit. She earned her bachelor’s degree from the University of North Texas, in emergency administration and planning.

Huggins interned with Denton County Volunteer Organization Active in Disaster and worked with the North Central Texas Council of Governments. For the past several years, Huggins worked in the banking industry, needing the stability to help take care of her grandmother who had Alzheimer’s. She also worked with special needs children.

She is from Carrollton, Texas and has lived in the North Texas area her entire life. She and her dog, Finn enjoy going to dog parks. Huggins also enjoys hunting, fishing, yoga, painting, learning new things, and seeing family.

Andrew Allen joined NEMA, Oct. 19, as a planning specialist in the public assistance unit. He is from Joplin, Mo. and earned his bachelor’s degree in public administration from the University of Oklahoma.

Prior to joining NEMA, Allen worked for the Nebraska State Patrol as a capitol security guard and worked part-time for Seward county emergency management.

He has a twin brother who also lives in Lincoln.

“If you see me outside of work and I look confused as to who you are, that might not be me,” Allen said.

He said he loves to travel and has been to almost all 50 states.

Sarah Jackson joined NEMA on Oct. 19 as a planning specialist hazard in the mitigation unit.

Jackson spent the spring 2019 semester as the first Emergency Management intern at Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium.

Through this internship, she was able to shadow each animal department to obtain knowledge of their emergency preparedness procedures.

“My first bachelor’s degree is in Criminal Justice with an emphasis on counter-terrorism,” Jackson said. “I wanted to see how one of the biggest and most well-known attractions would be able to handle an emergency event. Doing this internship showed me a preparedness perspective that was different and inspiring. Being the first Emergency Management intern through UNO and the zoo is a very humbling honor.”

She graduated in December 2019 with her Bachelor of Science in Emergency Management and Disaster Science from the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Her hometown is Omaha.

She is an avid hockey fan and enjoys watching and attending college and NHL hockey games. Jackson also attends comic conventions as a cosplayer (an individual who dresses in costume at conventions). She loves being a homebody and bingeing Ghost Adventures.

She is a triplet. Her brother, Brent, is an electrician and her sister, Clare, is a registered nurse in Omaha. Lastly, she is a proud mom to her furson, Bubba, a six-year-old domestic short hair cat.
Winter Weather Awareness Day — Nov. 5

Each year the first Thursday in November is Nebraska Winter Weather Awareness Day, a time to get ready for that first snow of the year.

This year, most Nebraskans have already experienced that first snow. However, Nov. 5 is still a good time to make sure you’re ready for the rest of the winter storms we can expect throughout the season.

The National Weather Service, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) and the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP) encourage Nebraskans to be ready for everything winter can bring.

Please visit the NEMA winter weather preparedness web page for tips on how you can be ready for winter.

Before the watches and warnings are issued: prepare a winter storm plan that will enable you and your family to survive for up to 72 hours without any outside assistance:

■ Have extra blankets on hand.
■ Ensure that each member of your household has a warm coat, gloves and mittens, hat and water-resistant boots.

Make sure all family members know what to do when a winter storm watch or warning is issued.

Assemble disaster supply kits for your home and auto. Lists of items to include are available on the winter weather preparedness web page. Drivers should get ready for the adverse conditions snow and ice can bring. Remember that anyone in need of help on Nebraska roadways can call *55 or 800-525-5555 to reach the NSP Highway Helpline, available 24 hours a day.

When winter weather conditions are hazardous, NDOT and NSP may advise motorists to restrict their travel or even advise them not to travel at all. Such advisories are not issued without considerable thought and weighing the effects.

Ultimately, the reduction of travelers on the roadway during a winter event improves safety for all those who share the roadway while also assisting NDOT with timely snow and ice removal.

As winter storms approach, travelers are urged to be alert, be aware and check the most up-to-date travel conditions available through 511, Nebraska’s Advanced Traveler Information System. The system is available at all times via Nebraska 511’s smart phone app, online at www.511.nebraska.gov or by dialing 511 on your mobile device within the state, or if dialing from a landline or outside Nebraska at 1- 800-906-9069.

Travelers are also encouraged to use NDOT’s Plow Tracker at https://plows.nebraska.gov/index.html where the public will be able to observe road conditions in real time from the cabs of NDOT snowplows.

For safe-driving tips and winter weather information, visit NDOT’s website: https://dot.nebraska.gov/safety/driving/winter/.
The Northeast Planning, Exercise and Training Region conducted a Hazmat Incident Accountability Drill at Scenic Park in South Sioux City on Oct. 8.

According to Nic Kemnitz, Wayne County Emergency Management director, the drill focused on the deployment and operation of the Salamander Accountability equipment to track responders, evacuees and volunteers. Participants verified that all their Salamander accountability equipment for an emergency event was in working order. Fourteen organizations participated in the drill.

Photos by Leo Larkin

The Northeast PET Region conducted a socially distanced accountability exercise.

NEMA’s Larry Fichtner talks with reporter to describe Salamander accountability during an event.

An after action review was held at the completion of the exercise.

Keith County Emergency Management was named a Weather Ready Nation Ambassador of Excellence by the National Weather Service. David Kling is director of Keith County Emergency Management. According the NWS, the Keith County Emergency Management Agency has proven to be an outstanding Weather Ready Nation Ambassador that constantly serves as a force multiplier in preparedness and awareness of hazardous weather. Keith County Emergency Management is an integral part in the development of a Spanish speaking decision support message that is distributed to key sites during peak recreation periods. Additionally, Keith County Emergency Management was a participant in the first Winter Weather Spotter Course in the area, which detailed the hazards of winter weather to the public and local business community.

Under the direction of Tim Lewis, Clay County Emergency Management director, has embodied the spirit of being a NWS Weather Ready Nation Ambassador according to the National Weather Service, by being a champion for weather safety and preparedness. Lewis worked with Midland Aging services to reach out to the more vulnerable, independently living, elderly population of Clay County. He stressed the importance of severe weather safety planning, including the value of all-Hazards NOAA weather radios for notifications. He also focused on heat related impacts and the importance of having appropriate cooling methods. Lewis sponsored and staffed a booth at a back-to-school safety event and centered his message around severe weather planning and preparedness for families with grade school age children. Lewis is the chair of Clay County’s Employee Safety Committee and leads the effort to educate Clay County employees regarding weather and workplace safety, including reinvigorating the practice of tornado drills for all county employees.
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)

The USDA FNS announced that Nebraska has been approved to disburse a second round of Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) benefits. P-EBT is a program authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), which provides assistance to families of children who are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals and impacted by school closures. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is overseeing the disbursement of benefits in the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (PEB-T) program. Families who qualified for the second round of P-EBT had their benefits automatically loaded onto an EBT card. School districts will report how many days each student can receive benefits, students are eligible for $5.86 per day missed. Families with questions about their eligibility should contact their school, questions about the P-EBT program should be directed to 402-471-9043.

With this final disbursement the P-EBT program ended on Sept. 30 with the end of the federal fiscal year. DHHS will not be able to launch a new program until given clearance from FNS. For this second round of P-EBT $762,947 was disbursed. Receiving P-EBT benefits will not affect a family’s ability to receive other benefits and benefits will be good for one year after receiving them. P-EBT benefits can be used to buy food at grocery stores and farmer’s markets that accept SNAP EBT and to purchase groceries online at Amazon and Walmart.

Nebraska Department of Labor

The Nebraska Department of Labor (NDOL) has published unemployment claim statistics for the week of Oct. 11-17. Additional statistics, including previous totals, are available here. NDOL news releases are available here. See information at right.

Nebraska Office of the Chief Information Officer and Southeast Community College hosted the 15th annual Nebraska Cyber Security Conference, Oct. 20, as part of National Cyber Security Awareness Month. Gov. Pete Ricketts signed a proclamation supporting the STOP. THINK. CONNECT cyber security awareness campaign organized by the National Cyber Security Alliance. The campaign aims to help people understand risks that come with using the Internet, as well as the importance of practicing safe online behavior. NEMA joined the OCIO for its month-long social media campaign to increase awareness of safe online habits amongst Nebraskans. For more information on cyber security visit: https://www.stopthinkconnect.org/, https://staysafeonline.org/ and https://twitter.com/Nebraska_OCIO.

Partner Updates continued on page 12
United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency
Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue designated six Nebraska counties as primary natural disaster areas. Producers in Colfax, Cuming, Dawes, Dodge, Stanton and Thurston counties who suffered losses caused by recent drought may be eligible for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) emergency loans.

This natural disaster designation allows FSA to extend much-needed emergency credit to producers recovering from natural disasters. Emergency loans can be used to meet various recovery needs including the replacement of essential items such as equipment or livestock, reorganization of a farming operation or the refinancing of certain debts. Producers in the contiguous counties listed below are also eligible to apply for emergency loans:

- Nebraska: Box Butte, Burt, Butler, Dakota, Dixon, Douglas, Madison, Pierce, Platte, Saunders, Sheridan, Sioux, Washington and Wayne
- Iowa: Monona and Woodbury
- South Dakota: Fall River and Oglala Lakota

The deadline to apply for these emergency loans is May 11, 2021. FSA will review the loans based on the extent of losses, security available and repayment ability. FSA has a variety of additional programs to help farmers recover from the impacts of this disaster. FSA programs that do not require a disaster declaration include: Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees and Farm-Raised Fish Program; Emergency Conservation Program; Livestock Forage Disaster Program; Livestock Indemnity Program; Operating and Farm Ownership Loans; and the Tree Assistance Program. Farmers may contact their local USDA service center for further information on eligibility requirements and application procedures for these and other programs. Additional information is also available online at farmers.gov/recover.

University of Nebraska Medical Center
The Great Plains Institutional Development Award (IDEA) Clinical & Translational Research (CTR) Network headquartered at the University of Nebraska Medical Center received a $180,000 grant to participate in a national effort to collect and share data on COVID-19-related patient outcomes for use in research.

The funding from the National Institutes of General Medical Sciences will support data transfer to the National COVID Cohort Collaborative (N3C) Data Enclave – a registry of COVID-19-related information from patients across the country. The enclave will enable researchers with data use agreements from UNMC and seven other IDEA-CTR networks – with support totaling more than $1.4 million – to track the disease in patients across the country.

N3C will help scientists develop insight into potential risk factors, protective factors and long-term health consequences. Currently, 57 sites across the country will share data from electronic health records of individuals (identity of individuals will not be included) tested for COVID-19, including demographics, symptoms, laboratory test results, procedures, medications, medical conditions, physical measurements and more. More about the N3C Data Enclave can be found at https://covid.cd2h.org/.

Partner Updates continued on page 13
FEMA Launches New National Community Emergency Response Team Website

CERT leaders across the country can now use a new and improved CERT Website. The site includes a new registration page. New user-friendly features and a re-designed format mean an easier and more effective experience for all users. Whether you are a State/Regional coordinator or a new CERT user, the new site streamlines all your needs in one central location.

CERT Coordinators can now: manage, approve and search within each log-in profile using the new CERT coordinator dashboard; access the CERT program metrics dashboard for real-time program data and use the new search this list feature for a contact directory and CERT registry. CERT Users now have access to: take the annual CERT survey; log new preparedness activities and update CERT program profiles. Existing users can log in and try out the new site now. Have a question about the site? Email: FEMA-Prepare@fema.dhs.gov. Stay tuned for information on webinars to help navigate the new site.

Federal Emergency Management Agency

If you missed the Great ShakeOut earthquake drill, Oct 15, take a few minutes to discuss what you and your family would do if an earthquake struck near you. Earthquakes can occur anytime and anywhere without warning. Practice earthquake safety. While learning to stay safe and prepare for earthquakes amid COVID-19, please follow the latest guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

- Practice the drop, cover, and hold on steps with your family and coworkers.
- Ensure items such as televisions and objects that hang on the walls are secured and store heavy and breakable objects on low shelves.
- Create an emergency plan with the whole family and practice it regularly. This should include what is needed to protect you and your family from an earthquake and other disasters, including COVID-19.
- Build an emergency kit. Include water, non-perishable food, flashlight, fire extinguisher, whistle and prescription medicines for at least three days for the whole family, including pets.
- Consider obtaining an earthquake insurance policy. A standard homeowner’s insurance policy does not cover earthquake damage.
- Consider fixing structural issues that could cause your building to collapse during an earthquake.
- Visit www.ready.gov/earthquakes to learn more about what to do before, during, and after an earthquake.

FEMA Asks Are You Prepared for a Wildfire?

Emergency plans are vital to ensuring your health and safety in wildfire areas. Only 29% of people living in wildfire areas have emergency plans that include how to evacuate. The most important protective action for a wildfire is evacuation. When planning, review multiple evacuation routes from locations you and your family frequent as this is an important factor in surviving a wildfire.

Due to COVID-19, public evacuation shelters may not be the safest choice for you and your family. Have you made plans to shelter with friends or family? Emergency plans should include locations for you and your family to shelter and stay safe. The pandemic has caused serious supply shortages across the country, including N-95 masks. This means that people living in wildfire risk areas should make plans to protect themselves and limit smoke exposure by evacuating early. If you do need to evacuate, having supplies already packed and ready to go can help you evacuate more quickly. Only 52% of those living in wildfire areas have supplies already packed and ready to go. Are you prepared to evacuate? Learn more about wildfire preparedness at and how the public is preparing for disasters by checking out the following resources:

- Ready.gov/wildfires
- Wildfire Information Sheet
- When the Fire Starts (YouTube video)
- 2020 NHS Data Digest: Wildfire Safety
Emerald Ash Borer found in Hall County; Quarantine Information Updated

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS), have confirmed the first discovery of emerald ash borer (EAB) in Hall County. EAB, an invasive beetle that attacks and kills ash trees and was first found in Nebraska 2016.

“Due to the confirmations of EAB in several new counties in Nebraska in 2020, covering a wide geographic area, NDA has determined that regulatory enforcement of a state quarantine is no longer warranted, and will rescind the Nebraska EAB quarantine effective immediately,” said NDA Director Steve Wellman. “NDA will continue to work with USDA on biocontrol releases targeting EAB as a long-term mitigation strategy, and continue to promote responsible disposal of ash materials and the “Don’t Move Firewood” campaign.”

The Nebraska EAB Working Group, which includes NDA, USDA, Nebraska Game and Parks and NFS, offers the following suggestions to help prevent the human-assisted spread of the insect:

- Since EAB can easily be moved in firewood, always use locally-sourced firewood and burn it in the same county where you purchased it.
- Consider treating healthy, high-value ash trees located within a 15-mile radius of a known infestation. Treatment will need to be continually reapplied and will only prolong the tree’s life, not save it. Trees that are experiencing declining health should be considered for removal.
- If you are in a non-infested county and think you have found an EAB infestation, please report it to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at 402-471-2351, the Nebraska Forest Service at 402-472-2944 or your local Extension office.

Additional information on EAB can be found on NDA’s website at: https://nda.nebraska.gov/plant/entomology/eab/. Additional information on EAB and Nebraska-specific recommendations for homeowners and municipalities can be found on the Nebraska Forest Services’ website at https://nfs.unl.edu/nebraska-emerald-ash-bor-
The latest statewide COVID-19 case total is 65,376, as of Oct. 27. There were 55 new COVID-19-related deaths in the state over the last seven days, for a total of 620. A total of 42,633 Nebraskans diagnosed with COVID-19 have since recovered. The daily average of positive cases for the last seven days is 852, compared to a daily average of 838 last week, and 684 and 530 cases in prior weeks. Daily hospitalizations increased by 37 over the last seven days for a total of 436 and 91 of Nebraska's 93 counties have had one or more positive COVID-19 cases in the last 14 days.

Halloween safety — Door-to-door trick-or-treating, truck-or-treat events and community celebrations come with a higher risk for infection. Nebraskans are encouraged to adapt these and other fall activities to help limit the potential for COVID-19 exposure. Anyone dressing up is encouraged to make a cloth face mask part of their costume, as layering a costume mask over a cloth mask can make it hard to breathe. Nebraskans are reminded to wear a mask, keep at least six feet of distance, wash hands and use hand sanitizer anytime you're with people from outside your household, and avoid crowded places, close contact and confined spaces. Anyone with COVID-19, or who may have been exposed to COVID-19, should avoid in-person celebrations.

The CDC has tips to help adjust plans for Halloween, Dia de los Muertos, Thanksgiving and other celebrations at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#halloween.

Tips for voters on Election Day — If you plan to vote in person, the CDC offers basic precautions to help limit time spent at polling places and reduce the likelihood of spreading COVID-19.

- Wear a mask
- Bring your own supplies - including hand sanitizer, a black pen and any materials such as voter registration card or sample ballot.
- If using public or private transportation to get to your polling place, open a window and avoid touching things if possible.
- While in line, keep your distance from others - even if everyone is wearing masks.

COVID-19 vaccine update — Gov. Pete Ricketts and state leaders announced this week that Nebraska will use an existing vaccine provider network to distribute a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as one receives federal approval and supplies are made available to the state. Doses are expected to be limited early on and will go to health care personnel and at-risk groups. Nebraska's existing Vaccines for Children network will distribute doses via health care providers, local health departments, federally qualified health centers, community-based clinics, tribal health care centers, and hospitals across the state. A second phase of vaccine distribution for the wider population will begin when large numbers of vaccine doses are available. The CDC has not yet announced an arrival date for a vaccine. Nebraska's COVID-19 Vaccination Plan is available at http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/covid-19vaccine.

COVID-19 testing update — The state is launching the first of several testing pods designed to help expand rapid mobile COVID-19 testing during winter. Five drive-through and five walk-up models will be deployed to support testing as needed across the state. The first drive-through pod will be in use this weekend at the Metropolitan Community College Fort Omaha campus. People who may have been exposed to COVID-19 or who are experiencing symptoms can receive a free test through Test Nebraska. Symptoms can include a fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, tiredness, muscle aches, headaches, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. Visit Testnebraska.com, or use TestNebraska/es for Spanish, to schedule an appointment at one of more than 60 Test Nebraska locations across the state. Nebraskans with general questions about testing or who need help completing the online assessment can call the Test Nebraska hotline at (402) 207-9377.

Questions — Nebraskans seeking information or help with general questions can call the DHHS COVID-19 information hotline at (402) 552-6645, or toll-free (833) 998-2275. The COVID-19 hotline is open 8 a.m.-8 p.m. CT, 7 days a week. DHHS will continue to share new information via the DHHS website, http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx, as well as on Facebook and Twitter.
Use Kindness, Support to Counter Frustration, Stress During Pandemic

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it's natural to feel frustration, stress and anxiety. The Department of Health and Human Services recommends countering it with a remedy of positivity, kindness and support.

“These times call for each of us to take a moment to ensure we communicate and treat each other with respect,” said Sheri Dawson, director of the Division of Behavioral Health at DHHS. “One way that stress presents is through communication. When we are stressed, we may become easily frustrated or angry.

Emotion may impact communication skills and people in a heightened sense of stress can have trouble expressing things in an appropriate way. Working to stay calm or taking a deep breath before responding is important. The following tips are adapted from the American Psychological Association to support individuals with a stress management plan:

- **Understand your stress:** How do you stress? By understanding what stress looks like for you, you can be better prepared, and reach for your stress management toolbox.
- **Identify your stress sources:** What causes you to be stressed? Be it work, family, change or any of the other potential thousand triggers.
- **Learn to recognize stress signals:** We all process stress differently so it's important to be aware of your individual stress symptoms.
- **Recognize your stress strategies:** What is your go-to tactic for calming down? These can be behaviors learned over years and sometimes aren’t the healthy option. For example, some people cope with stress by self-medicating with alcohol or overeating.

- **Implement healthy stress management strategies:** Be mindful of unhealthy coping behaviors so you can switch them out for a healthy option. If you’re overeating, for instance, you could practice meditation instead, or make a decision to phone a friend to chat through your situation. Make self-care a priority: When we make time for ourselves, we put our well-being before others. This can feel selfish to start, but it is like the airplane analogy—we must put our own oxygen mask on before we can assist others. The simplest things that promote well-being, such as enough sleep, food, downtime, and exercise are often the ones overlooked. Self-care is group-care.

- **Ask for support when needed:** If you’re feeling overwhelmed, reach out to a friend or family member you can talk to. Speaking with a healthcare professional can also reduce stress, and help us learn healthier coping strategies.

**Need to talk or get immediate help in a crisis?**

- Call 911
- Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 (press 2 for Spanish), or text TalkWithUs for English or Hablamos para Español to 66746.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522
- National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-4AChild (1-800-422-4453) or text 1-800-422-4453
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)
- The Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116
- Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

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.