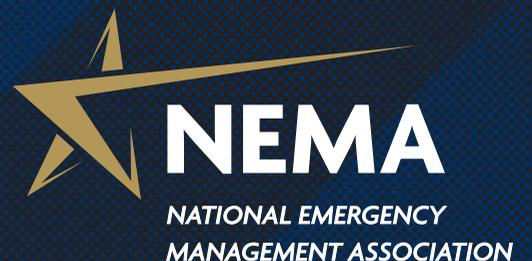


are you **READY?**

[An Elected Official's Guide to Emergency Management]





The emergency management system was created in the



1950s and evolved over decades through the periods of détente in the 70s to the end of the Cold war era of the 80s. Significant events have occurred since then and lessons have been learned from the response to disasters such as Hurricane Hugo, Hurricane Andrew, the Loma Prieta and Northridge earthquakes, the Oklahoma City bombing, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina.

In recent years, states have experienced such disasters as hurricanes, tropical storms, floods, landslides and mudslides, bridge collapse, drought, tornadoes, severe winter storms and wildfires. The 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak required emergency response plans to be activated in support of a public health emergency. Scientists predict climate change may increase the frequency or severity of disasters such as drought and flooding. In addition, our nation must be prepared to respond to a nuclear or biological attack.

Leadership During Crisis:

The Role of Elected Officials



Photo courtesy of NC Division of Emergency Management

Emergency management, from mitigation through long-term recovery, should be recognized and supported by all elected officials as a critical government service.

Preparedness efforts and resources need to be sustained so long-term planning and implementation can be achieved. Elected officials should hold emergency management agencies accountable and those agencies should be able to demonstrate capability that's been developed through the investment of public funds.

Elected officials need to understand their emergency authorities and responsibilities, and practice them in conjunction with emergency management officials before a disaster occurs. They should meet with their emergency management officials and establish solid relationships, request a briefing on state and local preparedness efforts, learn about emergency plans and procedures, and visit the emergency operations center and other critical facilities.

It is vital for government to be able to promptly and accurately inform the public about the seriousness of an event and provide assurance that leaders are fully informed and are directing the response with every available resource. For public officials to be effective leaders during times of crisis, they must have a clear understanding of how government responds to emergencies and disasters, what resources are available, what types of assistance can be provided to citizens, and how much time it may take to deliver that assistance. They must be able to instill a sense of calm in disaster victims and the public, and temper expectations of what government can do to aid in the recovery. A coordinated message between elected officials and emergency management is necessary so people don't receive conflicting information.

Policymakers have a responsibility to reach decisions that keep their constituents and communities safe even though some of those decisions may be unpopular with the public or private sector. State and local governments, as well as the insurance industry, should not be rewarded for poor public policy choices with lax statutory incentives and regulations. This is especially true when these bad choices result in inappropriate land use planning and preparedness, ineffective building code requirements, and insufficient enforcement.

Elected officials play a crucial role in public safety. Their understanding and support of emergency management is vital to the safety and well-being of the public and communities.

top: North Carolina Gov. Beverly Perdue talks with the media at a disaster related news conference.

bottom: Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon (right) talks with a relief worker at a commodities distribution point.



Photo courtesy of Missouri Emergency Management Agency

Essential Acts for Prepared Leaders

- Meet with your emergency management team to learn about the hazards that threaten your jurisdiction and what is being done to address those hazards
- Learn about emergency management and disaster assistance services, as well as limitations
- Encourage all government agencies and business leaders to coordinate and collaborate with the emergency management agency
- Visit your jurisdiction's emergency operations center
- Encourage individuals, families and businesses to develop an emergency plan and be self-sufficient in the immediate aftermath of a disaster
- When a disaster occurs, establish communication with the emergency management agency and coordinate messages to the public



Photo courtesy of Robert Eplett, Ca. Emergency Management Agency

left: California emergency management officials confer in the emergency operations center.
bottom left: Flooding causes portions of a road to wash away in Alabama.

Building a National Emergency Management System

Preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters is a shared responsibility between all levels of government. Adequate emergency management and response personnel, equipment, facilities, training and other resources are necessary at the local, state and federal level. Strengthening the capabilities of local and state emergency management and the various response disciplines will help prevent the loss of life and property during disasters, deliver assistance to victims most expediently, and reduce costs.

The nation requires an emergency management system that recognizes the necessary integration of local, tribal, state, regional and federal organizations capable of creating a single management structure in response to disasters. Unity of effort is a prerequisite for effective disaster response. Intergovernmental relationships must be established and communications networks in place prior to events.

Who's Part of the Emergency Management System?

- Elected officials
- Local, state and federal emergency management and response agencies
- Private sector representatives
- Volunteer agencies and other non-governmental organizations
- Members of the public

Components of an effective emergency management system:

- Emergency management is recognized as a critical government service.
- Hazards and threats are identified and emergency operations plans are in place to address them; mitigation and prevention activities are encouraged and supported by public officials.
- Emergency management agencies are appropriately staffed, trained and resourced.
- Emergency operations centers are functional and used to coordinate disaster response; interoperable communications systems are in place; and information-sharing takes place between all response entities.
- Emergency warning and notification systems exist. Government has the ability to provide clear and timely information to the public during times of disaster.
- Mutual aid systems help facilitate the request or provision of supplemental disaster assistance when needed.
- The private sector, volunteer agencies and other key stakeholders are engaged with government in planning and preparedness activities and are effectively utilized during disaster response and recovery.
- Citizens understand their responsibility and take action to prepare for disasters and lessen their reliance on government.
- Communication and coordination takes place regularly between emergency management agencies at all levels of government.

Photo courtesy of Alabama Emergency Management Agency



Emergency Preparedness

for Individuals

The message of individual preparedness and self-reliance is one that should be conveyed by elected officials before, during and after disasters.

Elected officials should make sure the public, private sector and media understand the limitations of government in disasters and plan for emergencies in advance. The increasing reliance on government to meet the most basic needs of people in the immediate aftermath of a disaster leads to unrealistic expectations and causes other vital response and recovery actions to be delayed.

Disaster assistance programs are available to help individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations and governments recover following a disaster, but the programs are limited and many include loans that must be repaid or require a shared financial contribution. Sufficient government funding isn't available to fully restore what can be lost in a disaster. That's why it's so important for people to make good decisions about where they build their homes and locate their businesses, that they purchase adequate insurance, put emergency plans in place, and take actions to lessen the impact of disasters before they strike.

State and local emergency management agencies regularly promote individual and family preparedness through public information campaigns and other special events to raise awareness of the importance of emergency planning. Specific instructions on what to do during a disaster can be found on their web sites along with emergency plans, evacuation routes, and emergency shelter locations. Elected officials are encouraged to contact their emergency management agencies and lend support to public information campaigns taking place within their jurisdictions.

for the Private Sector

Companies in the private sector have a responsibility to their employees and the communities they serve to be prepared for emergencies and disasters. Elected officials can encourage various industries and individual companies to assess their own hazards and threats, develop plans and procedures to address them, and train and drill their employees on emergency protocols. In addition, businesses that can reopen quickly following a disaster can provide basic services to communities. Such services might include water, ice, food, fuel and other commodities. This allows government to focus on other vital services, such as search and rescue operations, utilities restoration and infrastructure repair.

The response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 demonstrated the need for government to better integrate the private sector into disaster response operations. The private sector has vast resources beyond those of government and has the systems in place to access and deliver equipment and other resources much more quickly than government. Many state and local governments have engaged in joint planning with the private sector and recognize them as important partners in an effective emergency management system. Public-private partnerships that allow each sector to utilize their skills and resources can help ensure a quicker recovery.

The private sector must be resilient and elected officials should encourage business leaders to be prepared. Business continuity is vital to a community's ability to recover after a disaster.

left: A helicopter rescues a stranded flood victim.

top right, next panel: Neighbors helping neighbors during the North Dakota Red River flood.



Photo courtesy of North Dakota Department of Emergency Services

Photo courtesy of Robert Eplett, C.A. Emergency Management Agency



Challenges and Opportunities

One of the primary challenges for emergency management is to gain the attention and support of the public and elected officials before disasters happen. This challenge specifically relates to funding for basic emergency management programs and investments in mitigation, or disaster loss reduction initiatives. Support for emergency management tends to be reactive rather than proactive, and preparedness resources flow most readily after a tragic event has occurred. Proactive investments in emergency management can lead to the successful mitigation of potential losses as well as a more effective disaster response and recovery.

Most state and local governments rely on federal funding to support their emergency management and homeland security programs. Too much reliance on federal support can leave states vulnerable when that funding is decreased or eliminated. In addition, federal funding is usually tied to federal priorities and mandates which don't always coincide with state and local priorities. The most successful emergency management programs are in states and communities where it is identified as a priority and supported by officials at the highest levels.

The federal government focuses its resources on the most recent tragic disasters. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, federal grant funding came with requirements to focus on national homeland security priorities. After Hurricane Katrina, preparing for natural disasters once again became as important as preventing terrorist attacks. History has shown that an all-hazards approach to emergency management is the best way for state and local governments to focus their preparedness efforts on the threats that have the greatest likelihood of impacting them, while also addressing homeland security concerns.

Emergency management continues to grow as a recognized profession. Voluntary emergency management standards have been developed and a national assessment and accreditation program exists to help state and local governments benchmark and measure their progress in building effective emergency management capabilities. Elected officials should encourage and support their emergency management agencies in working to meet national standards. Another sign of the professionalism of emergency management is the number of colleges and universities around the country that now offer degree programs. More individuals than ever are pursuing emergency management as their chosen career. This is a positive sign when an aging American work force and record retirement levels are expected to impact the field of emergency management. It is important that a strategy be developed to continuously recruit, train and develop our future emergency management leaders.

Photo courtesy of North Dakota Department of Emergency Services



The National Emergency Management Association

(NEMA) was established in 1974 and represents emergency management directors in the 50 states, territories and the District of Columbia who are responsible to their governors for all-hazards emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery from all emergencies, disasters and threats to the homeland.

The goals of NEMA are to:

1. Strengthen the nation's emergency management system.
2. Provide national leadership and expertise in comprehensive, all-hazards emergency management.
3. Serve as a vital emergency management information and assistance resource.
4. Advance continuous improvement in emergency management through strategic partnerships, innovative programs and collaborative policy positions.

Through NEMA, elected officials can access information on state emergency management and homeland security programs including agency organizational structures, budgets and staffing, disaster funding mechanisms, mutual aid, emergency management standards, innovative programs and much more. NEMA is regularly invited to testify before Congress and provide subject matter expertise to the federal government on emergency management and homeland security related legislation, national strategies, plans and policy development. Governors, state legislators and other state and local officials regularly utilize NEMA as an expert resource on emergency management.

NEMA administers the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), the nation's interstate mutual aid system that allows states to share personnel, equipment and resources during disaster response and recovery. Mutual aid is a key component of an effective emergency management system. Information on EMAC and mutual aid can be found on the EMAC Web site at www.emacweb.org.



Photo courtesy of FEMA



Photo courtesy of Wash., Division of Emergency Management

Emergency Management in the 21st Century

Emergency management is an activity, a profession, a discipline and a critical government agency. Its purpose is to apply resources and efforts to mitigate, prevent when possible, protect where feasible, and to respond and recover from all threats and hazards that impact the safety and security of the nation.

Emergencies and disasters can pose both short-term and long-term public policy challenges, including the continuity of government; public health, safety and security; economic development; the environment; agriculture; and technology. Having an effective emergency management system in place can help minimize the potentially devastating impact of emergencies and disasters.

Government has the responsibility to ensure an effective response to any disaster or emergency that threatens the residents and communities of a state. **The emergency management agency is responsible for:**

- Identifying and assessing potential hazards;
- Developing emergency operations plans and procedures;
- Training personnel;
- Conducting drills and exercises to test plans;
- Working among levels of government, volunteer agencies and the private sector to ensure that all understand their roles and responsibilities during disaster response;
- Providing critical information to the public before, during and after a disaster occurs;
- Facilitating mutual aid;
- Administering disaster assistance programs; and
- Providing overall coordination for disaster response.

Phases of Emergency Management

Preparedness: Activities undertaken to prepare for disasters and emergencies and facilitate future response and recovery efforts. Includes writing emergency operations plans and procedures, training, exercises, evacuation planning, public education and warning.

Mitigation: Activities undertaken to avoid, eliminate or reduce the probability of occurrence, or to lessen the effects of an emergency/disaster. It involves actions to protect lives and property and to defend against attacks.

Response: Activities undertaken in the immediate aftermath of a disaster that help to reduce casualties and damage, and that expedite recovery. Response activities include warning, evacuation, rescue and other similar operations.

Recovery: Reconstruction, repair and rebuilding activities intended to restore a community. In addition to permanent repairs to bridges, roads and buildings, these activities include helping victims return to permanent housing, community redevelopment activities, and long-term redevelopment planning.

left: Tennessee Gov. Philip Bredsen (left) and FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate (right) prepare to tour the flooded city of Nashville.

right: Senator Patty Murray (center) and Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire (right) thank local officials for their emergency response efforts.



NEMA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization and an affiliate of The Council of State Governments. NEMA is headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky.

Headquarters Office

National Emergency Management Association

PO Box 11910

Lexington, KY 40578

p: (859) 244-8162

f: (859) 244-8239

Washington, DC Office

444 North Capitol St., NW

Suite 401, Hall of the States Bldg.

Washington, DC 20001

p: (202) 624-5459

f: (202) 624-5875

[www.nemaweb.org]



Cover photos courtesy of FEMA

Copyright 2010 National Emergency Management Association ALL RIGHTS RESERVED