



Knox County Emergency Management Agency

EMA Director’s Report



August 2022

To: Commissioners Meriwether, Pohlman, and Parent:

Below are the operational activities of the Knox County Emergency Management Agency for the period of August 1 – 31, 2022.

EOC Activations:

Ongoing

KX2201(prior KX 2101 and KX2002): 2019 Novel Corona Virus outbreak (2019-nCoV/COVID-19) 1/20/20-ONGOING	Currently (as of 8/4/22) there have been 7,283 cases in Knox County total, with the state having a total of 284,056 cases to date. Knox County has had 41 deaths, the state has had 2,524. Knox County has had 103 hospitalizations since the pandemic began, the state is showing 5,636 statewide.
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New

KX2214: Mass Gathering Event – Maine Lobster Festival (8/3-7/22):	EOC open at Level 1 (remote monitoring). The Festival was still in operation and therefore had not ended by the time I submitted last month’s report. There ended up not being any significant incidents at the Festival.
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Current Operations Updates

1. Staffing Updates:

Our new Administrative Programs Coordinator is Tim McFarland. Tim has been with Knox County for a long time – almost 20 years! He spent the entirety of that time working in the jail but has held several titles there, in part because his position evolved over the years. Tim started in EMA on August 29th and hit the ground running. He is a good fit for us and I’m excited to get us feeling more like a cohesive team as time progresses.

2. Grant Reimbursement Backlog:

The latest Finance Director at MEMA announced yesterday they have resigned effective the end of this month. MEMA has only been able to keep their finance directors a few months before they give up and leave. The lack of leadership and the turnover rate of both the director and other MEMA finance staff has really messed up the reimbursement process over the last couple years. It has been very frustrating, to say the least.

3. Exercises:

- I applied for and received a grant for two pallets of bottled water from Poland Springs (96 cases of water) through their parent company that will be distributed to municipal-level emergency management directors during a POD (Point of Distribution) exercise on Thursday, September 9th. Technically doing an exercise to distribute the water isn’t required but we have traditionally done so when distributing resources in large amounts because it’s good practice for both our staff and all of the municipal EMA directors and/or any other groups we are working with. We do it drive-thru style, usually in the EMA parking lot but during the pandemic I had also organized exercises that utilized the SRE building at the airport (which provided a roof over everyone’s heads) and at the Oceanside High School in Rockland (for the large USDA food box distributions).

4. Training:

- As I mentioned in my last report, I am working with RSU13 to host the “I Love U Guys” response protocols program this fall. The date has been set as November 21st. RSU13 decided to go with the virtual program delivery rather than having the ILUG staff come physically here, which allows school staff to meet at their own schools instead of piling everyone in to one room. Going with the virtual option also costs less since we

aren't paying for anyone's travel. Once the schedule for the day is finalized, invites will be sent to the other school districts. We can have up to 500 participants in the class that day, so that covers just about everybody.

- **AWR 148: Crisis Management for School-Based Incidents: Partnering Rural Law Enforcement, First Responders, and Local School Systems** is still scheduled for October 5th at the EMA office. We currently have people signed up from Knox County school districts, public safety, and even some state employees.
- **ICS-402: Incident Command System (ICS) Overview for Senior Leadership & Policy Makers** is scheduled for September 28th at 5 p.m. at the EMA office. This class is for new elected officials (generally new select board members) so they can understand their role in the Incident Command System. This training is a NIMS (National Incident Management System) requirement. Being NIMS compliant now only makes municipalities more prepared to handle all levels of emergencies but also makes municipalities eligible for certain federal grants. We encourage the town's EMA directors to attend with their new elected officials. We currently have 14 individuals signed up for the class.

5. **Food Insecurity:**

My next meeting with the food pantries will be in September so I will have an update for you then. In the meantime, I have not heard of any issues that you need to be made aware of.

6. **Vaccinations:**

- **Monkeypox:** So far the vaccination efforts have been directed mostly in higher population areas where there are more of the at-risk populations living. Where most of the transmissions have happened through sexual contact, the vaccine is only being offered to people more likely to be infected, and is not available everywhere. That may change as the number of cases in Maine increase. One bonus of this vaccine is it has been around a long time so it's well established and does not require extreme cold temperatures the way the initial COVID vaccines did.
- **COVID:** As we move into autumn months and colder temperatures, attention to boosters is likely to increase. The ME CDC anticipates Moderna releasing an updated booster this fall that should protect against the newer variants of the virus that are spreading at a much more rapid rate. I do not have a time frame on this yet.
- **Flu:** Where medical experts are anticipating a bad flu year, it is recommended that folks get their flu shot early this year. The flu vaccine that is currently available as of August is the updated vaccine for the 2022-2023 winter season, which targets the strains of the flu that the CDC anticipates to be the most prevalent this winter. The Finance Office is arranging for a flu vaccine clinic through the County's Wellness program in cooperation with the state folks in the courthouse.

7. **Drought:**

With Knox County still firmly in the "Severe" category, local reporters have started asking questions about whether the municipalities are making any water conservation efforts. Currently, there are currently 6 reported dry (or just about dry) wells in Knox County. There could be more dry wells that just haven't been reported to the state. The ones that I'm aware of are: Appleton (1), Hope (1), Owls Head (1), Union (1), Vinalhaven (1), and Warren (1). Four of those are listed as completely dry with two of them listed as "low water (tap water is sputtering and/or discolored)". All of the properties are listed as residential, with approximately 14 people affected by the dry wells.

8. **CERT Teams:**

- I will be meeting soon with the Coastal Mountain Search and Rescue team – we currently have an MOU with them since Knox County does not have its own Search and Rescue team. We support them with equipment and other resources and they in turn are automatically notified through the I Am Responding system (used by EMA, law enforcement, EMS, and fire agencies) to assist local agencies as needed.
- The ARES/RACES-CERT/PBARC amateur radio (hams) groups had their monthly meetings on August 13th. It was the first time they've met in person at Knox County EMA since the pandemic shut things down. The meetings were followed by an open house, which it turned out that was mostly only advertised to current and former members because it was such short notice. Now that we're ironing out some of the communications kinks we'll have another larger open house at a later date.

A few pictures from the Ham Radio open house:



9. COVID-19/Monkeypox/Influenza, etc:

- COVID: As of 9/6/22, the moving seven-day sum for Knox County is 34. Community **LEVELS** = **LOW** and Community **TRANSMISSION** = **HIGH** for Knox County (per USCDC).
- Influenza: The most common virus strain currently circulating is influenza A and B. There were 25 new cases reported to the Maine CDC in the last few weeks.
- Monkeypox: The US currently has a total of 20,733 cases. Wyoming is now the last state standing with no cases. Maine currently has 10 cases total:
 - Androscoggin (1)
 - Aroostook (2)
 - Cumberland (2)
 - Hancock (1)
 - Sagadahoc (1)
 - York (3)

World-wide there are 54,911 confirmed cases in 100 countries. As of right now, the US has the most cases of all of the countries reporting them – roughly 1/3rd of the cases world-wide. The US has now had the first fatality of someone with Monkeypox but they are still determining whether Monkeypox actually contributed to their death since the person had other medical conditions. World-wide there have only been 15 reported deaths.

10. Public Assistance Projects – COVID-19:

I've now had two Recovery Scoping Meetings with my FEMA project manager. It turned out that because Ray had started the two projects in the system so long ago (early 2020) and the system has undergone so many changes and updates since then, the FEMA project manager highly recommended deleting the two projects and starting over. Nothing had been uploaded so we lost nothing by doing so. I have been spending some time getting additional details on expenses that the different departments had submitted in 2020 and 2021 and consulting with FEMA on whether the expenses are eligible for reimbursement. I met with Administrator Hart via zoom on 8/23 to get him up to speed on where we are in the process and get his input on whether we should proceed with invoices that are likely going to be ineligible.

11. GIS Program:

Our summer GIS intern through The Climate Initiative completed their work. We continue to collaborate with the MEMA Natural Hazards Planner (Sam Roy) on developing the 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan GIS application(s) and enhancing GIS use in emergency management. We will continue jointly keep an eye out for future internship opportunities. Event support for the Maine Lobster Festival as requested by Chief Whytock is complete. Work on Rockport & Camden trail maps for response purposes continues. Planning began for Rockland & Vinalhaven Fire Department GIS web-solutions. Support for and development of county GIS products continues (KCRA/KRCC/KXEMA/Maintenance). County GIS Infrastructure maintenance, monitoring, management, and development/expansion is ongoing. GIS Program planning, needs assessment, data sourcing, project development outreach, training development, documentation is also ongoing. We continue to work with CGIS Solutions to develop, integrate, and maintain our enterprise GIS system.

Municipal Work:

- **Appleton** – public parcel viewer was updated & SLZ map reconstruction work continues.
- **Camden** – cemetery mapping support continues.
- **North Haven** – sent draft land use zone update map for feedback.
- **Rockland** – support continues for FRC implementation, as well as technical support for wastewater field collection and municipal planner.
- **St. George** – provided draft Conservation Commission “advanced” SLR web-application for feedback.
- **South Thomaston** – updates continue for Island Road project GIS web-application
- **Vinalhaven** – support continues for citizen science project and Island Fellow GIS transition; completed direct island Fellow GIS support.
- **Washington** – sent collection survey, provided field collection support, and began development of cemetery dashboard.

KXGIS continues to maintain and update the Knox Hub. Since initial launch, the site has been visited **22,177** times. As always, please let us know of any content that might be appropriate to include on Knox Hub and please, feel free to share - <https://knox-hub-knoxme.hub.arcgis.com/>.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about anything in this report or if you just want to come down to EMA and see what we're up to!

Respectfully,

Director Richards

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