



Knox County Emergency Management Agency

EMA Director's Report



July 2023

To: Commissioners Glaser, Pohlman, and Parent:

Below are the operational activities of the Knox County Emergency Management Agency for July 1 - 31, 2023.

EOC Activations:

KX2307: Union Fair	Level 1 (remote monitoring) EOC activation. Prior to the fair starting, we dropped off our traffic trailer (full of cones, barricades, flashing lights, etc.), the UTV (for fair staff and medical personnel to use), and our NOAA weather alert radio at the fairgrounds. We also towed the Sheriff's Office trailer to the fairgrounds since all of their trucks struggle with the size of the trailer and ours handles it just fine. I was able to request extra support from the National Weather Service – Gray staff for the fair, which included hour-by-hour forecasting and additional alerts to help with decision-making. During the fair itself, I remained on-call and stayed in touch with the Fair President and the town EMA director (Jay Feyler).
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Current Operations Updates

1. Disaster Declarations: FEMA-4696-DR (Christmas Eve 2022 storm): no recent updates
2. Disaster Declarations: FEMA-4719-DR (May 1, 2023 storm): no recent updates
3. Training:

Future:

- **MGT-383: Emergency Operations Plans for Rural Jurisdictions** – we are still working on getting this one rescheduled. I am waiting to hear back on a date I picked in October.
- **ICS-402 – Incident Command System (ICS) Overview for Senior Leadership & Policy Makers Course:** The next one is on August 24th at 5 p.m. at the EMA Office. Commissioner Pohlman will be attending this time.
- **CPR:** I recently spoke with school officials about providing CPR certification for staff and hands-only CPR/Stop the Bleed for the kids. We are working on getting that organized. I was hoping to offer some CPR classes at our offices this summer but with everything going on, it's been difficult to line up instructor schedules since they're all busy too. Hopefully we can pick things back up again in September.

4. Exercises:

- **Maine Lobster Festival TTX:** Chief Whytock and I had scheduled a table-top exercise for the lobster festival folks (planners, volunteers, etc.) for July 27th but just like last year, the Festival President decided everyone was too busy to hold it. We had the exercise completely planned out and a date set, hoping it would go forward this year. To say I'm disappointed is an understatement, and I know this has been frustrating for both Chief Whytock and Chief Carroll as well. The three of us, however, did meet with Celia Knight and Peter Beal at the Rockland Fire Station on July 26th to discuss safety concerns for the event. Chief Whytock is hoping to have the City require that events not only have an emergency plan but require that the event personnel participate in a table-top exercise or they will be unable to hold their event that year. I don't know where things are with that idea but I sincerely hope it's something the City decides to pursue. I will be meeting with Chiefs Carroll and Whytock this fall to look at putting together a project for my next Homeland Security application to hopefully purchase additional barriers, etc. to help keep fair attendees safe.

- **Rockport Emergency Operations Plan TTX:** The Town of Rockport updated their EOP earlier this year and is ready to do an exercise to test the new plan so they reached out and asked us to conduct a TTX for municipal employees, their elected officials, etc. This has been scheduled for September 18th. We did these a lot more often pre-pandemic so we're glad to get back into doing them because they're always a great learning experience for the participants and lead to important improvements for their emergency plans.

5. **Inventory Tracking:**

With all of the equipment we have in EMA that is frequently being borrowed by public safety agencies, etc., it has been frustrating not having a great way to track the reservation, deployment and return of that equipment. Prior to my being appointed as director, the department was using a system called D4H to keep track of a lot of activities in emergency management but it really didn't work for inventory tracking. We are working on developing our own system that meets our specific needs and will likely render our subscription to D4H unnecessary, which is always great for our budget!

6. **Schools:**

- Earlier this year, an officer from the Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (a federal agency under the Department of Homeland Security) visited RSU40 schools in order to provide some perspective on safety and security levels at each facility. This included four schools in Knox County: Friendship Village School, Warren Community School, Prescott Memorial School (Washington), and Union Elementary School. The written documentation received from CISA afterwards is rather like ordering a plain hamburger and being presented with a 9-course meal, so I'm working with the Superintendent to break the recommendations down into actionable items for each facility, some of which will have budgetary impacts. Once priorities are established, I plan to start including some of their projects in my annual application for the Homeland Security Grant Program in the hopes that some of the projects can be aided, at least in part, but federal grant programs. I have encouraged other districts to sign up for CISA visits, but for those not interested I have offered to do my own review of their facilities if they would like tips on ways to improve the physical security and cybersecurity of their schools.

7. **Grants:**

- **2023 HSGP (Homeland Security Grant Program)** – The State believes that sometime in August we will learn which projects the state submitted in their application (which includes 5 of the 8 projects I had submitted to the state) are approved by FEMA/DHS. I am already working on projects to submit next year (around February 2024 timeframe).
- **2023 EMPG (Emergency Management Program Grant)** – The state has released the information for the 2023 EMPG grant, including the allocation amount Knox County will be able to apply for. Thankfully the amount did not go down further considering the 2022 grant was nearly half of the 2021 grant. My application is due August 18th and is for the federal fiscal year of October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024.

8. **2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update:**

My staff and I had a virtual meeting on the 13th of July with FEMA Region I Senior Community Planner Nan Johnson, and MEMA's Natural Hazards Planner Sam Roy to discuss our upcoming plan update process. As someone who reviews completed plans, Nan's insight will be highly beneficial to getting off on the right foot when we start working on the plan update this fall. I met with Sam on 8/1 to get in to detail on the process and schedule. I have tentatively scheduled the "kick-off" meeting for the plan update for 5 p.m. September 7th. I will send out more information as the time gets a little closer.

In July went out to Vinalhaven to finally see some of the areas the town is concerned with for flooding damages and to meet the school superintendent and view the school. Unfortunately, our "tour guide", Marc Candage (he's both the fire chief and town EMA director) ended up first having a fire call and then an EMS call for a situation that turned out to be fatal, so we didn't get everything accomplished in one visit. I did at least get a chance to visit the school, meet the principal and some of the staff, and discuss their safety concerns. I plan to go back out another time to view areas with Marc that he is concerned out in terms of hazard mitigation.

9. **2022 Tier 2 Reporting:**

The last report has finally come for 2022. For those who don't know, facilities with quantities over a certain threshold (it's different for each chemical) on site must submit Tier 2 reports to both the State Emergency Response Commission,

the County's Local Emergency Planning Committee, and the fire chief for the town the facility is located in, all by March 1st each year. There is no penalty for filing late, which is why every year it's a struggle to get some of the last few reports in. The registration fees from filing the reports is what funds both the SERC and the county LEPC's. These funds have for funded 5 hours per week for an EMA staff person (currently the Administrative Programs Coordinator) to handle LEPC job functions. The state SERC holds on to most of the funding and the counties have struggled to affect change in the state's process. If anyone is interested, the LEPC meets monthly on the first Tuesday each month at 10:30 a.m. Most of the time we meet at the EMA office but occasionally we might meet at different facilities so if you want to come, let us know ahead of time so we can send you to the correct location. If you would like to know more about the LEPC and what we do, feel free to reach out to me anytime.

10. Staffing Update:

I was hoping to be able to introduce you to a new employee but it ended up not working out. I had hired someone, but on the very day he filled out his new-hire paperwork, he admitted that he had accepted a full-time job elsewhere but somehow hoped he could also work in EMA, which just wouldn't work. It's really disappointing because he was a great fit for the position but the full-time job he accepted was also his "dream job" so I can't really blame him. He still wants to be involved as a volunteer, so that's positive. We have put the position back out as open, and have started receiving applications.

11. GIS Program:

Support provided: Summer mass gathering events (Union Fair) & published Weather Monitoring Toolkit. *Board/Group participation:* chaired GeoLibrary Board special meeting & participated in Beginning With Habitat GIS sub-committee meeting.

We focused on building the county visual budget GIS application and scoping a county-wide planning/GIS application. GIS preparations for Hazard Mitigation Plan update are ongoing. Support for/development of county GIS solutions continues.

Ongoing County GIS efforts: 1) GIS Infrastructure maintenance, monitoring, management, development/expansion and 2) Program planning, needs assessment, data sourcing, project development, outreach, training development, documentation. We continue to work with CGIS Solutions to develop, integrate, and maintain our enterprise GIS system.

Municipal Work:

- **Appleton** – began revisions to Comprehensive Plan maps & continued public parcel viewer application transition
- **Camden** – continued cemetery mapping support/public app development & creation of assessing GIS revaluation application
- **North Haven** – began GIS transition planning & continued GSI support for Island Fellow
- **Rockport** – Conservation Commission project scoping support
- **St. George** – updated harbormaster dashboard & began development of citizen science tide tracking survey
- **Union** – provided snow plow route map & continued summer intern GIS support
- **Vinalhaven** – continued parcel project scoping, cemetery mapping & tide trackers (citizens science) support
- **Washington** – continued cemetery mapping support & dashboard development

KXGIS continues to maintain and update the Knox Hub. Since initial launch, the site has been visited 27,397 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
Work cell: 207-691-8826

FEMA and FCC Plan Nationwide Emergency Alert Test for Oct. 4

FEMA, in coordination with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), will conduct a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) this fall. The national test will consist of two portions, testing WEA and EAS capabilities. Both tests are scheduled to begin at approximately 2:20 p.m. ET on Wednesday, Oct. 4.

Details

The WEA portion of the test will be directed to all consumer cell phones. This will be the third nationwide test, but the second test to all cellular devices. The test message will display in either English or in Spanish, depending on the language settings of the wireless handset.

The EAS portion of the test will be sent to radios and televisions. This will be the seventh nationwide EAS test.

FEMA and the FCC are coordinating with EAS participants, wireless providers, emergency managers and other stakeholders in preparation for this national test to minimize confusion and to maximize the public safety value of the test.

The purpose of the Oct. 4 test is to ensure that the systems continue to be effective means of warning the public about emergencies, particularly those on the national level. In case the Oct. 4 test is postponed due to widespread severe weather or other significant events, the back-up testing date is Oct. 11.

The WEA portion of the test will be initiated using FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS), a centralized internet-based system administered by FEMA that enables authorities to send authenticated emergency messages to the public through multiple communications networks. The WEA test will be administered via a code sent to cell phones.

This year the EAS message will be disseminated as a Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) message via the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System-Open Platform for Emergency Networks (IPAWS-OPEN).

All wireless phones should receive the message only once. The following can be expected from the nationwide WEA test:



FEMA

2023 IPAWS National Test

- Beginning at approximately 2:20 p.m. ET, cell towers will broadcast the test for approximately 30 minutes. During this time, WEA-compatible wireless phones that are switched on, within range of an active cell tower, and whose wireless provider participates in WEA, should be capable of receiving the test message.
- For consumers, the message that appears on their phones will read: "THIS IS A TEST of the National Wireless Emergency Alert System. No action is needed."
- Phones with the main menu set to Spanish will display: "ESTA ES UNA PRUEBA del Sistema Nacional de Alerta de Emergencia. No se necesita acción."

WEA alerts are created and sent by authorized federal, state, local, tribal and territorial government agencies through IPAWS to participating wireless providers, which deliver the alerts to compatible handsets in geo-targeted areas. To help ensure that these alerts are accessible to the entire public, including people with disabilities, the alerts are accompanied by a unique tone and vibration.

Important information about the EAS test:

- The EAS portion of the test is scheduled to last approximately one minute and will be conducted with the participation of radio and television broadcasters, cable systems, satellite radio and television providers and wireline video providers.
- The test message will be similar to the regular monthly EAS test messages with which the public is familiar. It will state: "This is a nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System, issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, covering the United States from 14:20 to 14:50 hours ET. This is only a test. No action is required by the public."

Contact Us

If you have any questions, please contact FEMA Office of External Affairs:

- Congressional Affairs at (202) 646-4500 or at FEMA-Congressional-Affairs@fema.dhs.gov
- Intergovernmental Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-IGA@fema.dhs.gov
- Tribal Affairs at (202) 646-3444 or at FEMA-Tribal@fema.dhs.gov
- Private Sector Engagement at (202) 646-3444 or at nbeoc@max.gov

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Also, follow Administrator Deanne Criswell on Twitter @FEMA_Deanne.

