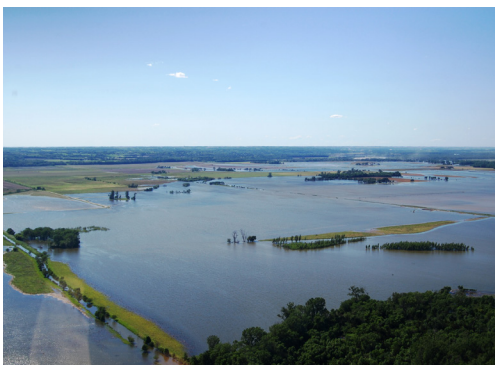




# Disasters and Emergencies Are Local Events

# ARE YOU READY?





# Leadership During Crisis: The Role of Elected Officials

**Emergency management, from mitigation through long-term recovery, must 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. Nebraska's 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.

Nebraska elected officials must 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 survivors and the public, and temper expectations of what government can do to aid in the recovery. Public officials must deliver a coordinated message with emergency management 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.

**NEMA offers EM101 for anyone interested in learning more about emergency management in the state of Nebraska.**

## Essential Actions for Prepared Leaders

- ▶ Learn about emergency management and disaster assistance services, as well as limitations. A good option is to take NEMA's EM 101 course.
- ▶ Visit your jurisdiction's emergency operations center.
- ▶ Encourage all government agencies and business leaders to coordinate and collaborate with the emergency management agency.
- ▶ 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 immediate communication with the emergency management agency and coordinate messages to the public.



## Building a National Emergency Management System

Preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters is a shared responsibility among 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 survivors 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 is Part of Nebraska's 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.

### Resource Links

- Governor's Emergency Fund Guidelines**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/gov-guide.pdf](http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/gov-guide.pdf)
- Local Emergency Operations Plans**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/leops/nebraskamap.html](http://www.nema.ne.gov/leops/nebraskamap.html)
- State Emergency Operations Plan**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/nebraska-seop.pdf](http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/nebraska-seop.pdf)
- Radiological Emergency Response Plan**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/rerp-plan.pdf](http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/rerp-plan.pdf)
- State Hazard Mitigation Plan**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/hazmitplan.pdf](http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/hazmitplan.pdf)
- Local Director's List**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/director-lists/directors.html](http://www.nema.ne.gov/director-lists/directors.html)
- Nebraska Emergency Management Act**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/nebraska-emergency-management-act.pdf](http://www.nema.ne.gov/pdf/nebraska-emergency-management-act.pdf)
- Training Calendar**  
[www.nema.ne.gov/preparedness/training-calendar.html](http://www.nema.ne.gov/preparedness/training-calendar.html)

## Individual Preparedness

**Nebraska elected officials should make sure the public, private sector and media understand the limitations of government in disasters and to 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.

Therefore, it's important that people make good decisions about where they build their homes and locate their businesses, 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 websites 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.

## Private Sector Preparedness

**Companies in the private sector have a responsibility to their employees, and the communities they serve, to be prepared for emergencies and disasters. 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.**

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.

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

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.


Joint planning between the State of Nebraska, local governments and the private sector, that recognizes the importance of that partnership between government and the private sector, is effective planning for emergency management. Public-private partnerships that allow each sector to use their skills and resources can help ensure a quicker recovery.

# Emergency Management: A Vital Government Function

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. In addition to natural disasters, emergency management must deal with complex issues like climate adaptation, cyber security, homegrown violent extremism, critical infrastructure interdependencies, infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics and school security. While not necessarily the lead agency in every event, emergency management is responsible for coordinating the overall state response. 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 and recovery for any event that threatens the residents and communities of a state. The Nebraska Emergency Management Agency, working in cooperations with and assisting local emergency management officials, 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.

# NEBRASKA ELECTED OFFICIALS' GUIDE TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



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