

North Dakota Emergency Managers

Roles & Responsibilities

**Compiled by the
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NOTE: Any reference in this document to “jurisdiction” means city/county/tribal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For decades emergency response across North Dakota has functioned as a simple, straightforward, and efficient process. The state's small, dispersed population, along with its self-reliant, creative, and industrious culture developed an environment in which people independently organized and took the actions required to help mitigate emergencies and disasters. However, this means of addressing issues is struggling under the weight of unrelenting natural disasters, development of new technology, energy industry development and subsequent growth of population, and the increased expectations of the state's citizens, transient population, and media.

Large, wide-spread disasters are increasingly impacting communities across the state, and these disasters require multi-discipline and multi-jurisdictional response. In turn, the need for strong, professional emergency managers with broad a knowledge of state and federal regulations, knowledge of their responder capabilities, the ability to work with a variety of volunteers and professionals (local, state and federal) to include the whole community, and to build coordinated and collaborative responses to disasters.

This paper is an attempt to define the role of county, city and tribal emergency managers in North Dakota and to bring together in a concise manner the duties, tasks, and expectations of those individuals.

BACKGROUND

The North Dakota Disaster Act of 1985 (Chapter 37-17.1 of the North Dakota Century Code) was passed with the purpose to "reduce vulnerability of people and communities of this state to damage, injury, and loss of life, and property and the resulting from natural and manmade disasters or emergencies, threats to homeland security, or hostile military or paramilitary action."

Within the Act, "Each county shall maintain an emergency management organization that serves the entire county or must be a member of a regional emergency management organization that serves more than one county." Cities within the counties must have their own emergency management organization or participate in the countywide emergency management organization.

ND Century Code also requires that each county appoint a Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) to "coordinate the development and maintenance of a state hazardous chemicals preparedness and response program." Often emergency managers are appointed to lead or play a key role within that committee.

EMERGENCY MANAGERS

EMERGENCY MANAGER DEFINITION

The emergency manager is overall responsible for the emergency management program within their county, city or tribe. While the program may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, minimally it will contain:

- Local Emergency Operations Plan
- Hazardous Materials Plan

Many emergency managers employ the LEPC, which usually includes fire, police, emergency medical services, public works, volunteers and other whole community stakeholders, in the development of these plans and the management of and response to emergencies within a jurisdiction. The emergency manager may also employ the LEPC to apply resources in a coordinated way by working with the fire chief, police chief, etc. The emergency managers do not usurp the authority of the responding entity managers; however, they have an integral role in coordinating, facilitating and providing assistance and logistical support.

Simply put, the emergency manager serves as an advisor to the jurisdictional executive leadership and works closely with agencies and whole community stakeholders to collectively prepare their jurisdiction to protect, prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from natural, adversarial and technological emergencies. In addition the emergency manager is part of the state response system, and in large disasters could contribute to the federal response system.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of an emergency manager are:

- Disaster Response and Recovery
- Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP)
- Operations
- EOC and Resource Management
- Homeland Security Grant Program
- Emergency Management Performance Grant
- Local Emergency Planning Committee and Hazardous Materials Plan
- Emergency Public Information
- Local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA)

In the following details of the above key responsibilities, those which are **top priority** are in **red** type, **secondary priority** are in **blue** type, and tertiary priority are in black type.

Disaster Response and Recovery

Following a disaster, the emergency manager is key in coordinating and assisting their jurisdictional government, local responders, businesses and citizens in connecting with state and federal assistance programs.

- Track and report through WebEOC jurisdictional disaster damages to NDDDES through WebEOC to determine if required threshold is met to request a formal, Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA)
- Coordinate and assist with PDAs
- Submit and maintain an approvable local Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Develop and maintain a Disaster Recovery Plan
- Assist and participate in applicant briefings after a presidential disaster declaration
- Ensure the jurisdiction designates an applicant agent who will:
 - Submit reimbursement requests with invoice and proof of payment
 - Submit quarterly financial progress reports
 - Maintains disaster documentation files as prescribed by record retention rules

Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP)

The emergency manager is responsible for working with their jurisdiction's local officials, whole community stakeholders, and local responders in development and maintenance of the LEOP to include:

- Incorporation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) including Incident Command System (ICS) and other state/federal mandates.
- Compliance with Comprehensive Planning Guidance (CPG) 101
- Develop, review and update the LEOP on an annual basis:
 - Ensure all threats and hazards are addressed in the plan
 - Identify available resources to include local, private, voluntary and mutual aid
 - Conduct a resource gap analysis
 - Conduct planning meetings with agencies identified in the plan to review and identify roles and responsibilities
 - Ensure the plan incorporates sheltering, evacuation, mass care, vulnerable populations, public information, resource management, ICS structure and position-specific checklists, Emergency Operations

Center (EOC) management, hazard-specific operational checklists and other documents based on identified jurisdictional hazards

- Develop and maintain mutual aid agreements

Operations

During a disaster the emergency manager is responsible for assisting responders in establishing the Incident Command System and coordinating response as needed.

- Designate and train a backup who can act in the emergency manager's absence
- Conduct a thorough initial assessment, to include potential resource needs, and immediately notify the NDDDES Duty officer when an emergency/disaster event is imminent, occurring, or has happened. Ensure appropriate local agencies and jurisdictions have been notified and briefed.
- Submit timely initial, periodic, and close-out situation reports to NDDDES via WebEOC
- Coordinate with local officials to issue emergency/disaster declarations
- In coordination with the Incident/Unified Command and local EOC
 - Assist with the identification and procurement of local, private, voluntary, and mutual aid resources as necessary
 - Coordinate state and federal assistance through NDDDES when local, private, mutual aid, and voluntary resources are exhausted

EOC / Resource Management

- Activate and ensure management of the EOC as necessary (see EOC Design and Development on page 9)
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive list of local, private and mutual aid resources
- Facilitate development of an EOC incident objectives and subsequent level of EOC action planning as necessary

Homeland Security Grant Program

The emergency manager, as determined by the commission/council, may be responsible for working with whole community partners to identify and prioritize needs (planning, training, exercise, and equipment) to build or enhance capabilities that relate to the prevention of, protection from, mitigation of, response to, and recovery from acts of terrorism or other catastrophic events.

- Distribute grant opportunities to local agencies and jurisdictions

The individual assigned this responsibility must:

- Submit application outlining proposed scope of work
- Submit quarterly progress reports on approved grant projects
- Submit reimbursement requests including proper supporting documentation
- Maintain and retain grant records
- Track and maintain equipment inventory lists of equipment purchased with grant funds
- Participate in grant monitoring visits
- Provide information for homeland security data calls

Emergency Management Performance Grant

Federal funds through the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) are available to assist county/city/tribal governments in enhancing and sustaining their emergency management programs. To obtain this funding the emergency manager must:

- Submit application to include a budget and work plan that outlines how their jurisdiction will sustain and enhance the program
- Complete the work described in the work plan
- Submit quarterly progress reports on the status of completed work described in the work plan
- Submit reimbursement requests, including proper supporting documentation
- Maintain and retain grant records
- Track and maintain equipment inventory lists of equipment purchased with grant funds
- Participate in grant monitoring visits
- Submit a 3-year training and exercise plan for the jurisdiction
 - Complete the EMPG minimum training and exercise requirements for emergency managers
 - Participate in annual Emergency Management Association/NDDDES conference
 - Track and maintain local training and exercise records, provide data to NDDDES as part of progress reports
 - Conduct or participate in a minimum of three exercises yearly
 - Coordinate after action reviews and improvement plan development following an exercise or real world event and submit to NDDDES

Local Emergency Planning Committee

The emergency manager may play a pivotal role in the organization and coordination of actions of the Local Emergency Planning Committee/Tribal Emergency Response Commission (LEPC/TERC):

- Under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs) must develop an emergency response plan and review the plan annually. It is suggested meetings be scheduled at least two times a year; however, quarterly is recommended.
- Serve on the LEPC as determined by the commission/council as a member: Possible duties may include:
 - Recruit, train, and maintain LEPC membership representation from a cross-section of the community as directed by the commission
 - Provide public information regarding topics such as – meeting announcements, LEPC membership, plan/emergency notification procedures, EPA fact sheets, EPCRA and farmers, EPCRA updates
 - Publish annually the location where the public can review documentation
 - Review and maintain Tier II facility information and response plans
 - Keep minutes and records of all actions
 - Ensure a non-lapsing, restricted financial account -- County Hazardous Chemicals Preparedness and Response account is established
 - Be knowledgeable about EPCRA and hazardous material programs
 - Conduct Tier II site assistance visits, as requested, and review facility emergency response plans

Emergency Public Information

Media (both print and electronic) including local, state and national media, can be demanding and can also play a vital role in getting information out to the citizenry. An understanding of the media, its attitudes and abilities, can be essential in getting your message across.

- Ensure the LEOP addresses public information to include identification of Public Information Officer(s) and their duties and, establishment of a Joint Information Center (JIC)/Joint Information System (JIS).
- Conduct public awareness campaigns to include: severe winter weather, severe summer weather, specific hazards (as deemed appropriate) and participate in National Preparedness Month

Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

With concurrence of commission/council develop and maintain a multi-hazard mitigation plan.

Funding for mitigation projects is only available to counties which have a federally approved local multi-hazard mitigation plan.

Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA)

Sound planning for the LEOP, Hazardous Materials Plan, Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan and other emergency plans require a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) as a first step. To complete the THIRA process the emergency manager must:

- Facilitate meetings with whole community partners to:
 - Identify threats and hazards of concern
 - Give threats and hazards context (describe)
 - Establish capability targets
 - Determine resources needed to reach capability target (gap analysis)

EOC DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Configuring an Emergency Operations Center is largely a local decision. There are a number of issues which should be considered as you mold an EOC to meet your community's needs as reflected in available space, staffing/volunteers and funding.

There is no single template which addresses the needs and capabilities of all communities but there are some basics which should be addressed during the development stage. Below are EOC categories with checklists to give you a platform to refine into a personalized and functional community EOC.

Facility

- Find and designate a "primary" EOC location
- Ensure the facility has enough space for both the professional and volunteers who will work during a disaster
- Ensure the facility can handle the small emergency but can expand to meet the needs of a larger disaster
- Ensure the facility is not in a high-risk area (i.e. floodplain)
- Make sure the EOC is structurally sound
- Identify and designate an "alternate" EOC location

- Develop plans for relocating to the “alternate” EOC location when the “primary” EOC is compromised. Seek a quick and seamless transition. Identify conditions which would cause a move.
- Develop and implement an exercise schedule for transitioning from “primary” to “alternate” EOC

Security

- Ensure the EOC/Alternate EOC is physically secure with adequate doors and locks
- Develop an access control plan
- Identify personnel and volunteers needing security clearance

Communications/Technology Security

- Check on Local Area Network (LAN) protection against cyber attack
- Check on State Wide Area Networks (WAN) protection against cyber attack
- Establish secure voice capability that is adequate to support EOC needs
- Establish radio communications protection
- Ensure an adequate number of telephone (secure or non-secure) and fax lines
- Is the EOC/Alternate EOC cell phone capable

Interoperability

- Develop plans and equipment banks for EOC monitoring communications of key emergency services such as law enforcement and fire.
- Develop a plan and training for utilization of WebEOC
- Develop a plan for routine training/exercising of joint communications

Operational Coordination/Planning

- Develop EOC activation procedures and criteria including authority to activate (ensure procedures can be scaled to the size of the emergency/activity)
- Develop a 24/7 staffing plan
- Identify an ICS structure for the EOC and assigned personnel
- Develop position specific responsibilities/checklists
- Identify a process for development/maintenance of a common operating picture
- Develop a training plan for EOC personnel/volunteers
- Identify mapping/GIS access for the EOC

Other

- Develop a plan for 24/7 operations (food, water, fuel for backup generators, paper products, office supplies, etc)
- Ensure backup power is available for the EOC/Alternate EOC
- Ensure there is an uninterruptible power supply (UPS)
- Develop a plan for management of the heating ventilating and air conditioning systems
- Ensure that an adequate number of tables, chairs, desks, etc. are available for emergency operations
- Ensure that computers are available and that connections are available for those who bring their own computers
- Confirm video teleconferencing capabilities

SUMMARY

Emergency management is not about command and control -- it is about coordination and collaboration. The emergency manager is the go-to-person in their jurisdiction when disaster or emergency situations occur. They should have a working knowledge of local government, responder and mutual aid partner capabilities, and state and federal programs while continuing to build necessary relationships with responding stakeholder entities.

The emergency manager is the front-runner in the overall national response system. It is important that all emergency managers understand they are a partner in the system and they do not have to face a disaster/incident on their own. The local emergency managers coordinate local response, and, when those local resources become strained, they have state and federal resources to call upon to meet the challenge.