



MEMA REPORTS

MEMA REPORTS is a monthly newsletter produced by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to help keep the Public Safety Community of Massachusetts better informed about the day's Emergency Management issues. MEMA REPORTS also appears on the MEMA website: www.mass.gov/mema.

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'THE BLIZZARDS OF 2015'

In response to the January 26-28 Blizzard, MEMA initiated a Level 3 Activation (Full) of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) at 4:00 p.m. on January 26, with over 80 liaisons from 20+ federal, state, local, volunteer and private agencies and organizations. Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito spent the majority of the storm at the 'MEMA Bunker'; they participated in briefings and hosted numerous news conferences to help keep the public informed and safe. Governor Baker issued a 'State of Emergency' for the entire Commonwealth, which was in place from 11:30 a.m. on January 26 until 5:30 p.m. on January 28, 2015. With much of the Commonwealth receiving 2-3' of snow and experiencing severe winds with gusts over 70 mph, at 12:01 a.m. on January 27, Governor Baker issued a 24-hour statewide driving ban and suspended MBTA public transportation service. The MA National Guard (MANG), MA State Police (MSP), and MA Environmental Police (MEP) were pre-positioned in over 30 locations to quickly be available to assist communities with emergency evacuations, aid stranded motorists, provide shelter security, conduct wellness checks, and help utilities gain access to impacted areas to restore power. Fortunately, the light, fluffy snow caused fewer power outages than the hundreds of thousands that were anticipated. The maximum number of power outages topped out at 36,000, mostly in coastal communities where the winds were the strongest. Over 40 shelters stood up, servicing a total of 450 individuals. The greatest amount of damage to homes occurred along the coast, particularly on the South Shore, Cape Cod and Nantucket, which suffered major coastal flooding. In both Scituate and Marshfield large portions of seawalls were breached. MEMA coordinated over 60 missions to assist with non-emergency evacuations and public safety snow and ice operations to ensure accessibility of thoroughfares for emergency vehicles. Over the course of the week, Mass211, the Commonwealth's emergency information telephone line received over 2,500 inquiries. The SEOC returned to Level 1 Activation (Steady State Monitoring) at 8:00 a.m. on January 28, However, MEMA continued to



coordinate snow removal missions with communities throughout the week. If that was not enough, MA was impacted by three subsequent storms occurring on February 2-3, February 9-10 and February 14-15. These storms brought an additional several feet of snow to areas of the Commonwealth. On



Charles D. Baker, Governor
Karyn E. Polito, Lt. Governor

Andrea J. Cabral, Secretary of Public Safety & Security
Kurt N. Schwartz, MEMA Director

February 2, MEMA, through the SEOC, began to coordinate the response to local requests for assistance for snow removal, as well as snow removal and opening roads and critical transportation routes. To provide the needed support to local communities, on February 9, the Governor issued a State of Emergency. This allowed MEMA to seek mutual aid assistance under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) from states in the Northeast. As a result of this EMAC request, the following government agencies deployed a total of 151 pieces of heavy equipment and operators to Massachusetts: NJ DOT (February 11-23); VT National Guard (February 11-23); ME National Guard (February 12-23); NY DOT (February 11-23); NY Thruway (2/11 to 2/14); PA DOT (February 12-20); PA Turnpike (February 13-20) and NYC -Snow melters for Boston (February 11-17). In addition, MEMA contracted with private vendors in two states to supply an additional 100 pieces of heavy equipment for emergency snow removal operations. Hundreds of MANG soldiers dug out hydrants and catch basins, and deployed heavy snow removal equipment to assist communities. To coordinate the deployment of these assets, MEMA set up a State Staging Area at Hanscom Airfield; given the amount of heavy equipment, Middlesex Community College provided an overflow Staging Area nearby. During February, MEMA received over 500 resource requests from 150 communities. One hundred and twenty communities received support from heavy equipment teams and 80 communities received at least one MANG hydrant shoveling team. MANG soldiers assisted the MBTA with restoration of Red Line service. Additionally, MEMA worked with the Operational Services Division (OSD) to help resolve issues with salt delivery to municipalities.

ROOF COLLAPSE SAFETY ANOTHER MAJOR ISSUE

The accumulating weight of snow on many roofs in MA has caused a rash of roof collapses since February 9. Over 250 structures, to date, have experienced some level of partial or full collapses. The vast majority of these structures have been flat-roofed commercial warehouses, storage units, garages and barns. However, portions of residential structures, skating rinks, schools and big-box stores have also experienced failures. During the storms, the Governor continued to urge residents to safely remove snow from their roofs. MEMA issued a joint news release statement with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Department of Fire Services (DFS) on February 19 and MEMA has issued two *Massachusetts Alerts* outlining warning signs of roof issues and tips to safely remove snow. Despite this outreach effort, we have are experiencing a rash of roof failures similar to the winter of 2010-11 when the Commonwealth experienced over 300 roof failures.

FEDERAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE FOR THE JAN/FEB SNOWSTORMS

To evaluate the possibility of receiving federal disaster assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), MEMA has been working with state agencies and local communities on a multi-step damage assessment process to evaluate the impact and costs of the January 26-28 Blizzard response. Utilizing information collected from the Initial Damage Assessments (IDAs), FEMA/MEMA joint Preliminary Damage Assessment Teams (PDAs) visited and/or requested documentation from select communities and state agencies to validate reported costs. The 10 counties in which damage assessments were conducted (Worcester, Middlesex, Essex, Suffolk, Norfolk, Bristol, Plymouth, Barnstable, Dukes, and Nantucket) exceeded their PA cost thresholds and the state threshold was met for the January 26-28 Blizzard. This information will be used to bolster the request to FEMA for a disaster declaration. In light of the cumulative impacts of three the February storms, MEMA is working with communities to complete a more comprehensive IDA process to capture costs that include the consecutive major snowstorms. IDA forms have been distributed to communities in MEMA Regions I, II, IV and state agencies to gather the requested IDA information. These forms were due on March 6, 2015. MEMA is currently in the process of analyzing the data to build a strong request for federal assistance for the cumulative impacts of the unprecedented amount of snow the Commonwealth received between January 26 and February 15. If requested by the Governor and approved by the President, a Major Disaster Declaration that includes snow assistance may provide reimbursements to eligible applicants (state agencies, local communities and certain Private Non-Profits) for work such as snow removal, snow dumps, de-icing,

salting, and sanding of roads and other facilities essential to eliminate or lessen immediate threats to life, public health, and safety.

FIELD DEPLOYMENTS

Following the January 26-28 Blizzard, MEMA ferried a Shelter Trailer to Nantucket to assist the local shelter set up at Nantucket High School, as well as aid the various utility crews on the island to restore electricity following the widespread power outage. MEMA also deployed key operational personnel and equipment to coordinate activities at the Staging Area for scores of pieces of heavy equipment at Hanscom Airfield in Bedford from February 11 through February 23. MEMA assets included Mobile Emergency Operations Center-1 (MEOC), a Mobile Generator Trailer (MGT), a Mobile Cargo Trailer (MCT) and a large cache of radios and the coordination of Interop Channels/Talk.

PREPARING FOR THE 2015 BOSTON MARATHON

Last September, MEMA and the Boston Athletic Association (BAA) initiated public safety planning for the 2015 Boston Marathon with the formation and meetings of numerous working groups. These working groups are composed of numerous federal, state and municipal, public health and public safety leaders from the 8 cities and towns that host the race along with state and federal partners. The working groups are focused on functional areas, including: Tactical Operations, CBRNE (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive), Communications, Intelligence & Investigations, Emergency Medical Services/Mass Casualty, and Course Disruptions. On January 20 the initial full meeting of over 100 key officials took place at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) at MEMA HQ to formulate the comprehensive and unified safety and security plan for this year's Boston Marathon. The planning will continue over the next several months and on March 25, MEMA will host a functional exercise to critically evaluate operational plans prior to the 2015 Boston Marathon. MEMA will once again host the Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) on race day, mirroring the enhanced scale of the operation utilized for the 2014 race.

FEMA UPDATES 2015 HAZARD MITIGATION ASSISTANCE UNIFIED GUIDANCE

FEMA has just released the updated 2015 Hazard Mitigation Assistance Unified Guidance. Significant changes have been made to the Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Guidance, a comprehensive document that details the specific criteria of the three HMA programs: the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) programs. The Fiscal Year 2015 (FY15) HMA Guidance provides stakeholders with updates and refinements of program policies and practice. These enhancements will promote resilience, and streamline application review, eligibility requirements, project cost estimates and implementation. This guidance will apply to future HMGP grants for disasters declared on or after the date of publication, as well as the upcoming PDM and FMA application cycles. Please note there are no grant application periods open at this time. The NEW 2015 HMA guidance, which outlines the requirements and considerations for these programs, can be found here: <http://www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-assistance>.

ENHANCED CAPABILITIES IN MEMA REGIONAL OFFICES

All three of MEMA's Regional Offices have completed projects to enhance capabilities of their Emergency Operation Center (EOC) capabilities. The Regional Offices now have enhanced Audio Visual and display capabilities, allowing for a more effective and efficient EOC operations. These projects were supported by the Emergency Management Performance Grant. These upgrades were well-timed, as the February snowstorm response put the new equipment to use right away. A big thank you to the team that helped complete these projects and enhance the ability of the Regions to respond effectively to our communities

VERMONT YANKEE TABLETOP EXERCISE

The federally graded Vermont Yankee (VY) Nuclear Power Station Emergency Plan will take place in May 2015. A tabletop exercise (TTX) has already been held in Fairlee, VT to allow responders to discuss plans and response to an event at VY. The graded exercise in 2015 will be unique, as the scenario will be hostile action based (HAB) which includes a deliberate act by a person or group. The HAB scenario requires greater coordination with a number of law enforcement agencies than a mechanical malfunction scenario. The areas that are tested include: 1) dissemination of public information; 2) provision of information to ensure decision-makers implement proper protective action; 3) implementation of these actions at the local and state level; 4) process supporting information sharing and decision-making; and 5) communication process among various state and local organizations and entities.

TRAINING UPDATE

During January and February, 42 individuals attended different classes, receiving training through MEMA in the following subject areas: *NIMS 700/ICS-100* and *ICS-400*. For additional MEMA Training opportunities, go to www.mass.gov/mema.

2014 MEMA TRAINING SUMMARY

MEMA's Training and Exercise Unit delivered 76 classes, and trained approximately 2,500 various disciplines/students last year throughout the Commonwealth.

Classes that were offered included:

- Incident Command courses 100/700, 200, 300 and 400.
- Basic Public Information
- Resource Management. Courses/Basic and Administrative
- Emergency Operations Center
- Hazmat Awareness
- Preparing and Reviewing Local Hazard Mitigation Plans Workshop
- Pediatric Response and Emergency Planning Course
- Statewide Emergency Management Conference
- Community Emergency Response Training Train-The-Trainer (CERT T-T-T) and CERT Program Manager Courses
- Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Awareness Workshop/IED Search Procedures Workshop
- Screening of Persons by Observational Techniques (SPOT) T-T-T
- Prevention/Response to Suicide Bombing Incidents
- Vehicle Borne IED Detection Course
- IED Counterterrorism Workshop
- IED Awareness/Bomb Threat Management Workshop
- Hazard City TTX Exercise
- Sports and Special Events Incident Management Course

MEMA STAFF UPDATES

Congratulations to Dan Nietsche who has moved to the position of Operations Unit Coordinator from his previous position of Hazard Mitigation Grants Coordinator. MEMA would like to welcome its new staff including David Bryant who joined MEMA as a Training Coordinator, within the Training & Exercise Unit, Desiree Kocis as the GIS Coordinator in the Planning Unit, and Rachel Potts as a Local Coordinator in MEMA Region II.

“ARTHUR” COMES TO THE BUNKER

MEMA Deputy Director Christine Packard and Public Information Officer Peter Judge were recently involved in the production of an episode of the PBS children's animated show 'Arthur'. On the show Packard and Judge discussed emergency preparedness with four 3rd graders, spoke about what MEMA does and gave them a tour of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) and Communications Center. This 'live action' segment will be shown next season as part of an episode focusing on issues the characters faced before, during and after a hurricane impacted 'Elwood City'.

TOWN OF NORWELL DESIGNATED *STORMREADY*

The Town of Norwell is the MA community to most recently receive the designation of *StormReady* by the National Weather Service (NWS). *StormReady* is a NWS program that addresses the need for a higher level of community awareness in order to minimize loss of life or property from extreme weather. To be designated as *StormReady*, a community must meet or exceed six established criteria in 1) Communications; 2) NWS Information Reception; 3) Weather & Water Monitoring Systems; 4) Local Warning Dissemination (including NOAA Weather Radios in local city or government-owned buildings with public access); 5) Community Preparedness - Safety/Spotter Talks and public education via the Media; and 6) Development of Administrative Tools/Record Keeping. Norwell was honored at a ceremony at Town Hall. Norwell becomes the 18th *StormReady* Site in Massachusetts joining the communities of Agawam, Belmont, Boston, Braintree, Carver, Mansfield, Nantucket, Scituate, Shrewsbury, Southborough, Southwick, and Worcester, in addition to Boston College, Boston University, Harvard University, Natick Soldier System Center and Six Flags New England. For more details about the event and *StormReady*, go to www.nws.noaa.gov/stormready.

A “SWARM” OF EARTHQUAKES IN CONNECTICUT

When a “swarm” of a dozen minor earthquakes occurred in Connecticut in January, MEMA took the lead in the region to coordinate a conference call with the Weston Observatory at Boston College, state emergency management agencies in CT and VT, and the Northeast States Emergency Consortium (NESEC). MEMA was also in contact with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and was advised that none of the nuclear power plants in the region had reported operational issues or concerns as a result of the earthquake activity. One of the items discussed on the call was the number of earthquakes that occurred in such a short period of time. The Weston Observatory stated that these earthquakes were associated with an earthquake “swarm,” also known as a series or burst of earthquakes in succession. A “swarm” is not indicative of further or larger seismic activity. The last time an earthquake “swarm” took place in New England, was in 2006-2007 in Bar Harbor, Maine.

VIRTUAL TABLE TOP EXERCISES AVAILABLE AT EMI

The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) provides [Virtual Table Top Exercises \(VTTX\)](#) to the emergency management community at no cost. VTTX offers a flexible and adaptive set of exercise documents that can be included as part of the community's training plan and be re-purposed later for follow up discussion based training. EMI has developed 50 scenarios that communities can use to ensure policies and procedures are set before an event takes place. Additional scenarios can be produced upon request. EMI completed an earthquake response VTTX on January 6-8, 2015. More than 150 participants, including representatives from police, fire, emergency medical services, public works, National Guard, and critical incident stress management, as well as private industry community partners Pacific Gas & Electric Co. and Target Co., took part in the exercise, which was a simulation of a 6.4 earthquake. The scenario included a structure collapse, activated emergency operation centers, spontaneous volunteers, wide spread power/phone/internet outages, shelters and recovery actions. EMI drafted and produced the VTTX situation manual. For more information on upcoming VTTX sessions, contact Douglas Kahn at douglas.kahn@fema.dhs.gov. Program information, dates and scenarios for 2015 are [available online](#).

NEDRIX SPRING CONFERENCE

The NorthEast Disaster Recovery Information X-Change (NEDRIX) will be holding their Spring 2015 Conference at Iron Mountain, 1 Federal Street, Boston, MA on May 6, 2015. Some of the features of the conference will include a Crisis Communication workshop and a session about ISO Certification. Please check the NEDRIX website for details and updates: <http://www.nedrix.com/>.

MEMA'S MISSION STATEMENT

MEMA is the state agency charged with ensuring the state is prepared to withstand, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies and disasters, including natural hazards, accidents, deliberate attacks, and technological and infrastructure failures. MEMA is committed to an all hazards approach to emergency management. By building and sustaining effective partnerships with federal, state and local government agencies, and with the private sector - - individuals, families, non-profits, and businesses - - MEMA ensures the Commonwealth's ability to rapidly recover from large and small disasters by assessing and mitigating threats and hazards, enhancing preparedness, coordinating response operations, and strengthening our capacity to rebuild and recover.

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