



DISASTER ZONE

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NEMA Conference Tidbits

Thoughts and comments gleaned from the 2020 NEMA Forum.

BY ERIC HOLDEMAN / OCTOBER 30, 2019



Every year the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) (<https://www.nemaweb.org/>), the membership of which is made up of the emergency management directors from all 50 states plus territories, has an annual forum in the state of the current NEMA president. This year's event was held in Idaho. There were around 500 attendees. Anyone can register to attend. Note, some sessions are closed to external participation.

I did not take copious notes throughout the forum, but did glean a few tidbits that I've recorded below — for your review.

What does it mean to focus on "resilience" versus what we used to call "preparedness"? This question continues to be asked with many people substituting the words "disaster resilience" for all phases of emergency management that they have done in the past.

In many areas, we are duplicating work. The power of resilience is in the integration. Disparate people and organizations coming together for a common purpose. The ability to anticipate, adapt and evolve. It is pretty easy to

look at the impacts of climate change and what it means for future disaster impacts. Anticipating those impacts should cause us to begin now to adapt to new realities.

Not enough to just have the data. Information-sharing is critical. The information-sharing challenge has been looped and looped. In reality, how do we do knowledge management?

States with resilience offices. Those that do advanced planning for their states and communities have been better positioned to respond to disasters. There is \$100B flowing to states and communities just from the 2017 disasters.

I spoke with some Nebraska representatives. They have had flooding since last spring that has continued until today and will remain in a flood state all the way into 2020. Flooding started last year with the ground frozen/frost two feet down. Warming temps, no ground absorption. There is no good inventory of levees beyond the ones maintained by the Army Corps of Engineers.

Drone usage by utilities, electrical and pipelines is considered normal at this point. At a recent pipeline conference, the two major topics were security of pipelines/protester issues and the use of drones to inspect pipelines.

California is a bellwether state for wildland fire. We will begin to see these types of impacts in other states.

Utility relationships: Know the people at the utilities.

FIT Teams: FEMA has been fielding FEMA Integration Teams (FIT) teams to states with potential catastrophic earthquake risks, e.g., Cascadia subduction, New Madrid fault, etc. They are delaying Phase III deployments to make sure the budget fits the mission. For the 2020 budget, they are looking for more funding. Need clear ground rules for what the team members work on.

Focus of FIT — Preparedness, mitigation, logistics response and recovery. Not meant to be a siloed program run out of the headquarters.

Most recently, lots of activities around assisting states with the current hurricane season.

States can and should participate in the hiring process for FIT teams. Oregon has one of the positions focused on augmenting their public affairs staff as a PAO.

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Disaster Zone by Eric Holdeman is dedicated to sharing information about the world of emergency management and homeland security.



(mailto:eric@disaster-zone.com/DisasterZone)

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