

Franklin County Regional Emergency Management Committee

June 30, 2022

Virtual Meeting Notes

The FC-REMC meeting was held virtually. The meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

Attendance: Vince Hickey (Berkshire SB/EMD), Brian Savage (Swanton Town TA/EMC), Steve Bessette (Fairfax EMD), Carrie Johnson (St Albans Town Mgr.), Bob Cross (St. Albans Town Public Safety Officer), Shaun Coleman (NRPC), Max Kennedy (VEM), Jared Ulmer (VDH), Lucy Lieberman (VDH) and Jason Gosselin (AHS).

Shaun began the meeting at 10:00 am followed by roll call. There was no quorum.

Adjustments to the Agenda: None.

REMC Overview – Max Kennedy, VEM

Max Kennedy introduced himself as the VEM NW Planner for Addison, Chittenden, Franklin and Grand Isle Counties. He provided an overview of the REMC program including reviewing the state issued guidance, quorum, bylaws, officers and appointments to the REMC. He spoke of his role at VEM to provide direct assistance including emergency planning, training and exercises. He also offers direct assistance to a local EOC during emergency events if needed as a direct liaison to State EOC.

The state has begun planning for a statewide catastrophic exercise called *Binary Blizzard* scheduled for 2023. The exercise will test the state's ability to respond to a cyber-attack and associated critical infrastructure disruptions.

The state's annual Emergency Preparedness Conference will be held in September (National Emergency Preparedness Month) on Sept 20th and 21st at Killington. Each REMC may have one free overnight stay. Shaun said he will send out a notice to the REMC list and will randomly select one person who has expressed interest in staying overnight.

Max noted that the state does recognize issues the REMCs are having with achieving a quorum and expects a change will be coming during the next legislative session.

Hot Weather Planning – Jared Ulmer and Lucy Lieberman, VDH

Jared provided a presentation regarding Hot Weather Planning for communities in Vermont. VDH received a grant from the CDC to help with the effort. This included an overview of heat related emergencies. Between 2009 and 2019 (average of 104 heat-related emergency department (ED) visits per year and 12 total heat-related deaths across the state. Heat-related ED visits have trended up over that period by more than 2 additional ED visits each year. 2018 was the deadliest year in recent record, with 173 heat-related ED visits and 5 heat-related deaths. During the week of the heat wave, there were also more ED visits than normal for some conditions known to worsen from heat exposure, including diabetes, kidney issues, asthma, and cerebrovascular conditions.

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/health-environment/climate-health/hot-weather>

VDH is recommending that municipalities adopt hot weather plans to guide preparedness and response activities before and during a hot weather event. They have developed guidance to assist communities to use the plans as an annex to Local Emergency Management Plans. Similarly, Local Hazard Mitigation Plans are the most likely place to address long-term heat mitigation strategies.

VDH has been partnering with RPCs across the state to help with the planning effort. VDH has a website that show locations of cooling shelters and local contact information for the party responsible in activating the shelter. Jared asked everyone to submit their cooling shelter locations either directly to Jared or through the [healthvermont.gov](https://www.healthvermont.gov) or through Shaun at NRPC.

There was a question and answer period following Jared's presentation including determining capacity size of cooling shelters, second tiers of demand for opening shelters due to exceeding capacity and HVAC upgrades for existing facilities.

Recovery Support for Individuals and Families Impacted by Disaster - Jason Gosselin, AHS

Jason introduced himself as the Emergency Management Director for the Agency of Health and Human Services. He provided an overview of support activities AHS and partners provide following disasters.

If there is an event that causes significant damage to private residences but does not rise to the level of a Presidentially Declared Disaster, AHS is responsible for coordinating various state and voluntary agencies that have recovery capabilities. Jason is the lead for the Individual and Family Needs Task Force made up of various support agencies including Health, Children and Families, Mental Health, VT Food Bank, Community Action, RPCs, etc. These agencies work closely with local and state emergency management partners to provide shelter, food, clothing, and social services to individuals and families.

Jason discussed the role of VT Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD) made up of non-profit agencies, churches, schools, municipalities and state government that provide assistance to individuals and families. They coordinate clean-up, repairs, technical support, food access, counseling, housing and financial support.

A Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC) may be activated. They can be an efficient way to deliver services to individuals and families affected by a disaster by bringing together multiple service providers in a single location and providing on-site assistance. Swanton Village hosted the first MARC activation in the state during the Missisquoi River 2018 flood event.

Case Managers may be assigned. Case Managers serve as guides through the recovery process. They assist with applications to the Vermont Recovery Fund to cover expenses beyond insurance, guide individuals to connect with crisis counselling, establishing connections with COVID.

There was a brief discussion regarding disaster recovery following Jason's presentation. One of the most common requests is for assistance driveway repairs. Unfortunately there is no financial assistance for such repairs beyond insurance. Some municipalities have offered to deliver gravel in the proximity of a driveway in the town's right-of-way.

The group agreed to keep the meetings quarterly due to busy schedules.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

Meeting ended at approximately 11:30 a.m.