

Franklin County Regional Emergency Management Committee Meeting
September 19, 2024; Virtual Meeting

Attendance: Christine Forde (CCRPC), Shaun Coleman (NRPC), Ann Janda (CCRPC), Marlana Valenta (NRPC), Ben Rose (VEM), Harry Schoppmann (VEM), Jay Perkinson (Buel's Gore), Paula Carrier (Jericho TA), Aaron Collette (WFD Chief), August Toynton (VDH), Bob Henenberg (ARC/RACES), Dorian Evan (UVM), Darren Schibler (CCRPC), Maya Balassa (ACorps), Elaine Wang (Winooski TM), Sara Muskin (CCRPC), Taylor Newton (CCRPC), Keith Ellery (NMC), Shawna Lovelette (Enosburg Falls/Town).

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting began at 9:00 a.m. There was no quorum. The meeting was held concurrently with Chittenden County REMC for efficiency from having the same agendas.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Hazard Mitigation Program – Ben Rose, Recovery Section Chief, VEM

The mitigation pre disaster application intake is still open. For DR4720, the legislature is providing the cost-share. Homeowners seeking a buy-out will have no cost-share. Typically, there is a 25% match and that is in some combination of the sponsoring municipality and homeowner. The buyout serves as a co-benefit humanitarian mission of getting people out of harm's way.

Ben provided an overview of recent disaster declarations made, FEMA assistance processes and mitigation funding information. Vermont currently has 14 open disasters. Ben has worked on 27 federal disasters since his tenure began following Hurricane Irene. In the past 14 months, Vermont has 7 declared or soon to be declared disasters. In the past decade Vermont averaged 2 declarations per year.

Recent disaster history:

- DR4720 - July 7-21, 2023 – Severe storms and flooding
- DR4744 – August 3-5, 2023 (Addison County) – Severe storms and flooding
- Undeclared declaration – December 2023 – High winds
- DR4770 – January 9 – 13, 2024 – Severe Winter Storm
- DR4816 – June 22 - 24/24 (Stowe and Walden) - Flooding
- DR 4810 – July 9 – July 11, 2024 – (TS Beryl) Severe Storm, flooding, landslides, and mudslides
- TBD – July 29 – July 31, 2024 - Severe storms and flooding event. The Governor submitted a Federal Major Disaster Declaration Request to FEMA on 8/28/24 for damages in Caledonia, Essex and Orleans Counties for Individual and Public Assistance

A question was asked about driveway damages being considered for repairs. Ben Noted that private roads, driveways, and bridges are eligible for Individual Assistance. The maximum award is \$42,500 for DR4720 IA disaster. Doug Farnham, State Recovery Officer, has established a working group that involved multiple state agencies around private roads and bridges funding. VEM has advocated for some assistance for private roads and bridges, but with restrictions to limit development patterns along steep terrain, etc. The state does not want to subsidize new private road development nor incentivize development in vulnerable areas.

Christine noted that DR4810 PA (TS Beryl) application deadline is today. A question was asked about when towns will receive FEMA funding start developing projects? Ben noted there is not a straightforward answer.

50 Request for Public Assistance for DR4810 is today but there is a 30-day “safety net” extension for stragglers. If there is a
51 non-profit that had damages, it is not too late to submit. Reach out to Ben or Kim Canarecci. The state will likely ask for
52 a 60-day extension on Individual Assistance for DR4810. There are 91 applicants registered for PA thus far.
53

54 Once VEM has all the RPAs, they will be assigning a Public Assistance Coordinator and FEMA will be assigning a Program
55 Delivery Manager (PDMG) for each community. They work together for the community they are assigned to through the
56 PA process. They will be scheduling an exploratory call to inform the applicant communities to orient them as to what
57 happens next. The key of the exploratory call is to set the community up for a successful Recovery Scoping Meeting.
58 That Recovery Scoping Meeting should not occur until the community submits its Damage Inventory. The focus is to
59 ensure that communities submit detailed and accurate Damage Inventories. What happens is that sometimes an
60 inexperienced FEMA PDMG will come in and write a Project Worksheet for the community that may not be structured
61 for the community. The community needs to advocate how the work flow, timing, contract work of the Project
62 Worksheet should be implemented.
63

64 On Aug. 23, 2024, Small Business Administration made available [disaster loans](#) to *private non-profits* (PNPs) that do not
65 provide critical services of a governmental nature due to severe weather. PNP organizations may borrow up to \$2 million
66 to repair or replace damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business
67 assets. The interest rate is 3.25%, with terms up to 30 years.
68

69 There was a question about how federal disasters get numbered. Harry replied that as the president signs declaration
70 across the country, they assign a number. Typically, they begin with 4800. Ben added the 1000 series are emergency
71 declarations which are not major disasters such as Spring 2011 flooding. Vermont is the seventh most frequent receiver
72 of major declarations.
73

74 Harry noted that VEM will be hiring 3 additional regional coordinators to assist communities.
75

76 Ben provided some information on mitigation grants (<https://vem.vermont.gov/funding>). Basically, the legislature rolled
77 over excess ARPA funding into hazard mitigation both for Flood Resilient Community Fund (FRCS) and as match for the
78 Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP). FRCS covers things that FEMA won't cover. The application form is designed
79 to be an easy intake form for municipalities to articulate project ideas. VEM will then select municipal projects that will
80 then turn into full HMGP grant applications.
81

82 Tropical Storm Irene costs were approximately \$750M (\$277M FEMA PA, plus \$250M Federal Highway, \$40M CDBG, plus
83 private insurance). The Halloween Storm of 2019 was \$25M disaster. COVID in 2020 cost was \$500M. DR4720 is
84 projected to cost \$550M to \$600M in PA. Formula for hazard mitigation is \$0.15 for every dollar of public assistance
85 made available to the state as hazard mitigation funding for any municipality in the state. Most of the demand is for
86 areas that were impacted by the event.
87

88 The Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) is an appropriation against which FEMA funds disaster response and recovery efforts for
89 Presidentially declared disasters. When DRF funding requirements threaten to exceed available resources, FEMA takes
90 proactive steps to prioritize limited funding to essential functions. Essential functions are those which provide for
91 lifesaving, life-sustaining, and critical ongoing disaster operations. DRF levels must also be sufficient to respond
92 immediately to a new catastrophic event.
93

94 To ensure available funding for these critical requirements, FEMA's Chief Financial Officer can implement Immediate
95 Needs Funding (INF) guidance. FEMA is currently operating under INF. This occurs basically when Congress fails to
96 replenish the DRF. When operating under INF, FEMA prioritizes response and immediate recovery effort funds (Category
97 B) by deprioritizing obligations to other activities. Typically, with the approach of Hurricane Season, FEMA implements
98 INF (when DRF is reduced to approx. \$3B). Under INF, FEMA will pause all new obligations related to Public Assistance,
99 such as reimbursement for disaster activity that has already been completed and permanent work, as well as Hazard
100 Mitigation and DRF-funded BRIC grants, that are not essential for life-saving and life-sustaining activities.

101
102 For Vermont, all projects from last July's flooding are backed up and waiting for FEMA to lift the INF moratorium. FEMA
103 needs Congress to act on the budget in order to lift it. The good news is that Vermont has convinced FEMA that interest
104 incurred on municipal borrowing while waiting for FEMA obligations are eligible FEMA costs.

105
106 The state's ERAF cost-share for DR4720 (TS Beryl) is 78% across the board so 7.8% state, 90% FEMA and 2.2% local. The
107 state is waiting for INF to be lifted when Congress passes a continuing resolution when Federal Fiscal Year rolls over on
108 October 1. When that happens, the 90% federal share will be announced. It is unknown when the current INF
109 moratorium will be lifted.

110
111 Elaine noted that Winooski has been waiting on mitigation funding for a relatively small fix to the sewer plant. The costs
112 are high to the municipality but not compared to the overall DRF.

113
114 Ben replied that for the first time in recent memory, that Congress did not pass a disaster supplement which would have
115 given Vermont funding through a Community Development Block Grant to help with housing. VEM is optimistic that the
116 INF moratorium will be lifted by end of September.

117
118 If a disaster doesn't get declared, the Vtrans may be able to access the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal
119 Highway Administration (FHWA) emergency relief funding.

120
121 To qualify for a major disaster declaration, FEMA must verify that there has been or will be at least \$1.183 million in
122 response and public infrastructure recovery costs. Individual counties must also show damages of \$4.60 per capita to
123 qualify.

124
125 Ben added that federal BRIC (Building Resilient Infrastructure Communities) funding occurs every January. This funding
126 source gives Vermont a \$2.6 million dollar set aside which is used to fund mitigation planning.

127 128 **Community Vulnerability Index Tool**

129 Marlana Valenta, NRPC and Ann Janda, CCRPC provided a presentation.

130
131 The Climate Council and Agency of Natural Resources created this tool (<https://climatechange.vermont.gov/mvi>) in
132 order to meet some of the mandates of the greenhouse gas reduction goals of the state. The purpose was to have a
133 useful tool at the state level and local levels for planning for climate adaption and hazard mitigation. RPCs in the state
134 were asked to present workshops on the model to several municipalities within each region.

135
136 They provided a sample municipal profile and noted that the tool does not behave well in a Zoom environment. The tool
137 uses various community asset, hazard and social data to analyze vulnerabilities. The sample showed critical assets and
138 their relation to hazards such as wastewater treatment plants and FEMA flood plains. The tool also incorporates the
139 Transportation Resiliency Planning Tool (TRPT) which depicts bridges, roads and culvert conditions. Several
140 municipalities are using the (TRPT) for capital planning. <https://vtrans.vermont.gov/climate/trpt>

141
142 Some communities focus on new development on steep slopes to eliminate driveway and access issues that frequently
143 come up during recent disasters. Additionally, the tool can be used to look at nature-based solutions to build resilience.
144 For example, where a community might want to consider additional conservation or protection of areas like water
145 retention areas to reduce flooding or enhancing wildlife diversity.

146
147 Feedback the climate office is receiving is that users want to know what the solutions are to the vulnerabilities the tool
148 depicts. Planners are familiar with some of the actions that can be taken by a community to reduce their vulnerability.
149 The tool is good for meeting with a community of volunteers to present information visually versus looking at a plan.

151 There was some discussion regarding using the American Community Survey (ACS) data which is not very reliable
152 because populations are low for extrapolating useful data. ANR is working on the environmental justice law (Act 154)
153 and having the same issue with ACS data. The state is grappling with this in many different ways.
154

155 Marlena noted that this issue comes up in every meeting due to the low density of municipalities. Anyone who is
156 introducing this tool should be up front about the flaws on the social domain for climate vulnerability. For example, the
157 disability rates are unreasonably low which may be due to census under reporting. For some communities who see that,
158 they may think it is not an issue because the number is so low. A solution would be to add context to any narrative
159 regarding the data extrapolated from the tool explaining potential flaws in the data sources.
160

161 **VEM Update** – Harry Schoppmann, Regional Coordinator

- 162 • Harry reported that VEM is hiring three new regional coordinators.
- 163 • On October 1, VEM will be working directly with towns on updating LEMPs. There is no funding in EMPG for
164 RPCs to support LEMP development. Shaun noted that RPCs will continue to support municipalities that ask.
165 They will notify VEM coordinators when this occurs.
- 166 • The EM conference was held last week at Lake Morey.
- 167 • The Binary Blizzard state wide exercise will be held in October. There will be 7 or 8 locations across the state that
168 will work on how the hazard will affect their area. All will come back together again to discuss impacts and
169 response mechanisms.
- 170 • The local EMD course being held next week virtually over 2 days for 4 hours each day. They are trying to address
171 the time barrier for EMDs for attending sessions 2 days in a row.
172

173 Shaun noted that RPCs will continue to assist municipalities that call them for assistance with LEMPs and will notify the
174 VEM coordinators when that happens. RPCs won't bill their time to EMPG.
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176 **Officers**

177 Tabled. No quorum.
178

179 **Other Business**

180 None.
181

182 **Adjourn**

183 Meeting adjourned at 10:23 a.m.