

Protecting Past Investments and Developing Creative Solutions in a Troublesome Budget Environment

By Beverly Bell

In the world of state emergency management and homeland security, 2009 was a year of new faces, new threats and new opportunities. It began with the Obama administration tapping several state officials for the top jobs at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This was followed by the first flu pandemic in 40 years, with tens of millions of Americans contracting the H1N1 virus. Technology continued to extend its long tentacles with some 40 states using social media Web sites such as Facebook and Twitter to connect with citizens about disaster preparedness and safety. All of this occurred as the country experienced its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. The challenge in 2010 will be to protect investments to date and still move forward with creative problem solving while state and federal budgets make their way back from the brink.

Looking Back

In early 2009, even as the nation moved further into the depths of the recession, the state emergency management and homeland security communities were heartened by the selection of several state leaders to fill significant positions in the new Washington administration. Not only did the president pick Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano as secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, he also selected several well-respected state emergency managers to fill top jobs at FEMA, including Florida State Director Craig Fugate as FEMA administrator. These choices demonstrated to state emergency management and homeland security the president's commitment to experienced individuals handling the critical life-saving responsibilities of FEMA and DHS.

One of the first challenges under the new administration was the onset of the H1N1 influenza virus. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the virus infected about 47 million Americans between April and November 2009. Nearly 10,000 people died from it. Unlike seasonal flu, children and young adults were most vulnerable to H1N1. The prolonged outbreak demonstrated the critical role of federal grants, such as the Emergency Management Performance Grant. It is often this type of funding that states use to develop their pandemic and other emergency plans. While many states have made progress in their pandemic preparations, more work is needed in stabilizing federal and state funding, and creating better coordination between emergency

management and public health officials at all levels of government.

As with every year, states dealt with a variety of disasters in 2009. These included wildfires in Oklahoma, record snow storms in North Dakota, a tsunami in American Samoa and flooding in Alabama. One event, the emergency landing of a commercial aircraft on the Hudson River in New York, was notable because it didn't become a major disaster. The plane stayed intact and everyone on board was rescued.

The decade concluded with the most presidential declarations since FEMA started keeping records more than 50 years ago, averaging 56 a year. It's unclear if there are in fact more disasters that warrant a declaration or if because of growing political pressures and societal expectations, federal declarations are made more frequently. The period of 2000–2009 also represented the warmest decade on record and 2009 is expected to rank as one of the top 10 warmest years since 1850, when instruments were first used to track temperature.¹ As a result of these trends, several state emergency management agencies are now actively involved in developing adaptive measures that address climate change repercussions.

The backdrop to everything in 2009 was of course the contraction of the economy. State revenues have plummeted while demand for government assistance is higher than ever. Regardless of state coffers, however, if a disaster occurs, state emergency management and homeland security are responsible for protecting lives and property.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Emergency Management and Homeland Security Structures

When a disaster strikes, emergency management becomes one of the most important functions of state government. It is the central coordination point for all resources and assistance provided during disasters and emergencies, including acts of terrorism. It also has the overarching responsibility of saving lives, protecting property and helping citizens recover once a disaster has occurred. Typically, emergency management comes to the forefront once an event has taken place. In reality, much of the critical work comes *before*—in the form of disaster drills and exercises, hazard mitigation programs, public warning tests and preparedness education.

Emergency Management includes four main parts, referred to as the “Four Pillars:”

- Mitigation—Activities that reduce or eliminate the degree of risk to human life and property;
- Preparedness—Pre-disaster activities to develop and maintain a capability to respond rapidly and effectively to emergencies and disasters;
- Response—Activities to assess and contain the immediate effects of disasters; provide life support to victims and deliver emergency services; and
- Recovery—Activities to restore damaged facilities and equipment, and support the economic and social revitalization of affected areas to their pre-emergency status.

On the state level, these four elements encompass many different aspects, from planning and implementation to training and exercising. A state emergency manager will interact with all sectors of the population, including other state agencies, elected officials, local jurisdictions, all public safety personnel, the private sector and the general public.

Emergency Management Organizations/Budgets/Staff

Unlike the organizational structure for many state agencies, emergency management is not static—most states design their organizational structure based on their specific and changing needs. In 14 states,² the emergency management agency is currently located within the department of public safety; in 18 states it is located within the military department under the auspices of the adjutant general; and in 12 states it is within the governor’s office. It should be noted that in seven

of the 10 states with the most disaster declarations since 1953, the emergency management director reports directly to the governor.³

Regardless of agencies’ organizational structure for daily operations, emergency management ranks high among governors’ priorities. In 32 states, the emergency management director is appointed by the governor. This is especially relevant in 2010 because 36 states and two territories will hold gubernatorial elections, which could affect these appointments. In eight other states, the position is appointed by the adjutant general and by the secretary of public safety in an additional eight states.

Agency operating budgets for FY 2010 range up to about \$47 million. Twenty-four states saw their emergency management budgets shrink. Depending on the size and speed of the economic recovery, this trend could continue. State emergency management full-time equivalents (FTEs) also fell, from 5,217 in FY 2009 to 5,020. It should be noted that the current total represents a growing number of states that combine their emergency management/homeland security personnel.

More than half of the state emergency management agency directors have been in their current position for three years or less. Since this is a politically appointed position in most states, turnover is not unusual. Despite the uncertainty, 27 states have directors with a wealth of experience, bringing 12 or more years to the job. As their tenure grows, their likelihood of experiencing a presidential-declared disaster increases. Last year, nine directors had not had such a declaration. The number now stands at 10. On average, each director has experienced almost 19 gubernatorial declarations, and about seven presidential declarations.

Homeland Security Structures and Funding

Most states formally established their homeland security offices in the early part of this decade. Yet after several years, there is still no clear consensus of how these offices are organized. They include a wide range of structures and responsibilities. In some cases, state homeland security directors manage grants and budgets; in other cases, they have very limited roles.

All states have a designated homeland security point of contact and this position has become a critical component of a governor’s staff. It has the enormous job of preparing citizens, businesses and governments for the next emergency or large-scale disaster.

**Table A: State Emergency Management:
Agency Structure, Budget and Staffing**

State or other jurisdiction	Position appointed	Appointed/selected by	Organizational structure	Agency operating budget FY 2009	Full-time employee positions
Alabama.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$ 3,300,000	100
Alaska	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	3,041,400	60 (c)
Arizona	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	1,398,429	58
Arkansas	★	G	Governor's Office	2,705,374	100
California	★	G	Governor's Office	39,652,000	551 (c)
Colorado	ED	Department of Local Affairs	640,676	29
Connecticut	HSEMC	Governor's Office	4,716,587	34(c)
Delaware.....	(a).....
Florida	★	G	Governor's Office	47,957,247	136
Georgia	★	G	Governor's Office	3,850,788	106
Hawaii	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	1,500,000	80
Idaho	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	1,300,000	65 (c)
Illinois.....	★	G	Governor's Office	34,856,844	229 (c)
Indiana	★	G	Department of Homeland Security	12,150,000	250 (b)
Iowa	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	2,723,553	61
Kansas	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	988,477	35
Kentucky	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	1,741,000	93
Louisiana	★	G	Governor's Office	18,746,837	167 (c)
Maine	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	1,244,114	23 (c)
Maryland.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	2,500,000	65
Massachusetts.....	★	G	Public Safety	2,096,704	77
Michigan	★	G	State Police	4,965,000	79 (c)
Minnesota	★	PSS	Public Safety	5,696,000	70.5 (c)
Mississippi.....	★	G	Governor's Office	6,518,995	117
Missouri	★	PSS	Public Safety	3,472,000	62
Montana.....	...	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	775,000	23 (c)
Nebraska	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	1,474,191	36
Nevada	★	PSS	Public Safety	604,561	34 (c)
New Hampshire	★	G	Public Safety	3,492,855	53 (c)
New Jersey.....	★	G	State Police	1,265,000	353
New Mexico.....	★	G	Stand Alone Agency	3,332,000	82 (c)
New York	★	G	Governor's Office	5,800,000	106
North Carolina.....	★	G	Public Safety	10,300,000	180
North Dakota.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	6,400,000	58
Ohio.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	5,028,474	93
Oklahoma	★	G	Governor's Office	800,000	32
Oregon	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	2,248,271	40
Pennsylvania.....	★	G	Governor's Office	11,886,000	141
Rhode Island.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	955,000	28 (c)
South Carolina.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	2,473,956	74
South Dakota.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	653,464	19
Tennessee.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	3,000,000	99
Texas.....	...	PSS	Public Safety	16,100,000	236
Utah.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	1,028,300	53
Vermont.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	1,913,000	21
Virginia	★	G	Public Safety	6,974,792	150
Washington.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	4,668,798	92 (c)
West Virginia.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Public Safety	5,620,118	53
Wisconsin.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	8,530,100	52
Wyoming.....	(a).....
Dist. of Columbia.....	★	M	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt. Agency	3,700,000	54 (c)
Guam.....	★	G	Department of Homeland Security	0	17
Puerto Rico	★	G	Public Safety	6,401,000	198

Source: The National Emergency Management Association, January 2010.

Key:

★ — Yes

... — No

G — Governor

ADJ — Adjutant General

ED — Executive Director, Dept. of Local Affairs

M — Mayor

HSEMC — Homeland Security/Emergency Management Commissioner

PSS — Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner/Director

(a) Not a member of NEMA, and therefore is not represented in the survey data.

(b) Includes homeland security, emergency management and other positions.

(c) Includes both homeland security and emergency management positions.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Who takes on this responsibility varies from state to state. Currently, 14 states assign the homeland security advisor role to their homeland security director. In another 15 states, either the emergency management director or a combined emergency management/homeland security director is the primary point of contact. Seven states have the adjutant general serving in this capacity. Eight public safety secretaries/commissioners are in this role.

Many states are also modifying the structure of their homeland security office, moving the day-to-day operations away from their actual homeland security department. Only four states house the daily functions in a homeland security agency or office, the same number as last year. In 14 states, either emergency management or a combined emergency management/homeland security office oversees daily operations. Eight states run it out of the governor's office while another eight have it in the adjutant general/military affairs department. Fourteen states keep the homeland security function in their public safety department.

As in the past few years, states are providing more of the funding for their homeland security offices. In 2009, 34 states received 60 percent or more of their homeland security funding from federal dollars. This compares with 36 states in 2008; 39 in 2007 and 46 in 2006. Of the 34 states this year, 13 operate with 100 percent federal funding, which is down from 18 last year. The change reflects a steady decline in various federal homeland security grants and the decision by state legislatures to commit to these programs by investing more state dollars.

The New and the Tried and True

Mutual Aid

In the current tough economic environment, mutual aid remains a critical component in disaster response and recovery. These interstate agreements—also called compacts—allow support across lines of jurisdictions when a disaster is too large for an individual jurisdiction to manage. All states as well as the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are members of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). Through EMAC, states can share available equipment and personnel to bridge the gap between demand and supply when a disaster occurs. EMAC's effectiveness was demonstrated in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The state-to-state agreement deployed nearly 66,000 people from 48 states, at a cost of more than \$830

million. This represented the largest deployment of mutual aid assistance in United States history.

Last year, states were moving to the next level of mutual aid, developing *intrastate* agreements, which are geared toward a local jurisdiction, such as a city or county, rather than a state. Now, a growing number of states along both borders are forming international mutual aid agreements with Canada and Mexico. Because disasters don't respect political boundaries, these agreements are essential for prompt response and recovery efforts.

A Resilient Approach

The idea of resiliency continues to gain momentum in emergency management and homeland security circles. This is particularly true as economic pressures persist, the number of natural disasters increases and communities are faced with new dangers such as those posed by climate change. From an emergency management perspective, resiliency refers to the ability of a local jurisdiction, state or region to withstand or quickly rebound from a disaster. Mitigation—those activities that reduce or eliminate the degree of risk to human life and property—plays into this concept. It shifts the focus from re-building an area after a disaster in exactly the same way to restoring communities in a smarter, stronger and sustainable manner.

Using Social Networking to Save Lives

One of the biggest trends in state emergency management and homeland security agencies is the adoption of new technologies such as Twitter, Facebook, MySpace and YouTube to reach out to citizens when a disaster strikes. Recent examples include Arkansas, which used Twitter to talk directly to the public when several tornadoes hit the state in 2009; the District of Columbia communicating with residents and visitors via Twitter during the week-long celebration for President Obama's inauguration; and Florida posting daily and weekly situational reports on YouTube as a way for Floridians to get the latest on any kind of hazard or weather event. There are concerns about controlling erroneous information and having adequate staff to provide timely updates, but despite these, states are incorporating social media into their traditional communications plans.

The Road Ahead

Two initiatives with deadlines for the states have been extended, though for one of the projects it's uncertain that it will make a difference. The

Table B: Homeland Security Structures

State or other jurisdiction	State homeland security advisor	Homeland security organizations	
	Designated homeland security advisor	Day-to-day operations under	Full-time employee positions
Alabama.....	Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	14
Alaska.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	60 (c)
Arizona.....	Homeland Security Director	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	17
Arkansas.....	Emergency Management Director	Emergency Management	6
California.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Emergency Management	551 (c)
Colorado.....	Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	14
Connecticut.....	Commissioner of Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security	Governor's Office	34 (c)
Delaware..... (a)		
Florida.....	Florida Dept. of Law Enforcement	Governor's Office	66
Georgia.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	4
Hawaii.....	Adj. General/Director of Civil Defense	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	10
Idaho.....	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	65 (c)
Illinois.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Emergency Management	229 (c)
Indiana.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	250 (b)
Iowa.....	Lieutenant Governor	Emergency Management/Homeland Security	8.5
Kansas.....	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	5
Kentucky.....	Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	22
Louisiana.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	167 (c)
Maine.....	Adjutant General	Emergency Management	3
Maryland.....	Homeland Security Director	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	3
Massachusetts.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Public Safety	8
Michigan.....	State Police Lieutenant	State Police	79 (c)
Minnesota.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Public Safety	70.5 (c)
Mississippi.....	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	15
Missouri.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Public Safety	14
Montana.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Emergency Management	23 (c)
Nebraska.....	Lieutenant Governor	Emergency Management	10
Nevada.....	Homeland Security Director	Emergency Management	34 (c)
New Hampshire.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	53 (c)
New Jersey.....	Homeland Security Director	Attorney General	135
New Mexico.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Emergency Management/Homeland Security	82 (c)
New York.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	118
North Carolina.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Emergency Management	27 (d)
North Dakota.....	Homeland Security Director	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	17
Ohio.....	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	28
Oklahoma.....	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	19
Oregon.....	Adjutant General	Emergency Management	7
Pennsylvania.....	Emergency Management Director	Emergency Management	3
Rhode Island.....	Adjutant General	Emergency Management	28 (c)
South Carolina.....	State Police Superintendent/Director/Commander	State Police	14
South Dakota.....	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	3
Tennessee.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Public Safety	28
Texas.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Public Safety	5
Utah.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	65
Vermont.....	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	8
Virginia.....	Special Assistant to Governor	Governor's Office	8
Washington.....	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	92 (c)
West Virginia.....	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Public Safety	8
Wisconsin.....	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	0
Wyoming..... (a)		
Dist. of Columbia.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Emergency Management/Homeland Security	54 (c)
Guam.....	Homeland Security Advisor/Director	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	17
Puerto Rico.....	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	0

Source: The National Emergency Management Association, January 2010.

Key:

(a) Not a member of NEMA, and therefore is not represented in the survey data.

(b) Includes homeland security, emergency management and other positions.

(c) Includes homeland security and emergency management positions.

(d) Part of emergency management personnel.

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Real ID Act of 2005 requires national standards for driver's licenses and identification cards. After much pushback from governors, DHS moved the December 2009 deadline to May 2011. The program remains problematic for many states, essentially because it's viewed as an unfunded federal mandate. It's estimated that Real ID will cost almost \$10 billion, with \$4 billion of it coming from the states. A quarter of the states have passed legislation, disallowing participation in the program.

In addition, the Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) grant program was extended, allowing states to spend funds through fiscal year 2012. Initially scheduled to expire in December 2010, the PSIC grant can be used for advanced technologies and improved communications in areas with a high risk for disasters or terrorism. This grant is important because it helps the states address the expensive issue of interoperability—all emergency responders being able to talk to each other through both voice and data systems.

FEMA as well as the states will be weighing in on a review of the entire disaster recovery process in 2010, with a focus on long-term recovery. As evident with Hurricane Katrina and the 2008 Iowa floods, disasters that require months or even years of rebuilding pose special challenges and require creative solutions. To accomplish this, FEMA has initiated the development of a National Disaster Recovery Framework, which was required by Congress. Every aspect of disaster recovery assistance—roles, programs, responsibilities—will be scrutinized with states closely engaged throughout. It is expected that this will result in modifications, though the degree is unknown.

In addition, DHS completed its Quadrennial Homeland Security Review in 2009, a comprehensive evaluation of the department. A full report on the congressionally mandated assessment was due at the end of December 2009. It is expected to outline the future direction of DHS, at least for the next four years.

Budget issues will remain with most states throughout 2010. The financial collapse has meant the loss of sales, income and property taxes, which are used to fund important state functions such as emergency management and homeland security. Agencies will continue to face budget cuts, hiring freezes, travel restrictions and be forced to furlough employees.

Financial shortfalls also will impact those federal grants that require a state match. The Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)

program, for example, is a core state emergency management funding mechanism. As the only source of federal money directed to state and local governments for planning, training, exercises and personnel for all-hazards emergency preparedness, it requires a 50-50 match. If states aren't able to provide the match, they will lose out on critical dollars. Investments made thus far in terrorism-preparedness programs, response equipment, planning efforts and training could be jeopardized without adequate money to sustain them. States are already seeing the ramifications at the local emergency management level. Because local EM programs can't provide their EMPG cost share, they are turning down grant funding, which will jeopardize local agencies across the country and seriously compromise the response capability.

There is concern that because of the growing number of disasters along with the sizeable deficits, federal regulations will be interpreted more narrowly to reduce the government's financial exposure in assistance programs. In the past, states and their legislatures have tried to make up the difference by committing more dollars to both emergency management and homeland security, and by establishing state-funded assistance programs, but these are threatened as well by revenue shortfalls.

Integrating the private sector into the emergency management framework has become more urgent since the attacks of September 11, 2001. Much of the nation's infrastructure, including dams, bridges and utilities are controlled by private entities. In addition, they have vast experience in logistics and distribution that are essential in an emergency. The interface between the private sector and public officials will expand, from disaster pre-planning all the way through recovery.

States will continue to push the message of personal responsibility in a disaster. Years ago, citizens were told to prepare supplies for the first 72 hours following a disaster. That approach waned after major events such as Hurricane Andrew when the federal response was criticized and government began assuming a more active role. The unintended consequence was citizens relying too heavily on government and not enough on themselves. States believe that adequate public resources must be in place to manage a disaster, but individuals have to take more initiative in protecting themselves, their families and their property. This tenet is mirrored by the current administration, which also maintains that prepared citizens are a resource in a disaster, not a liability.

Notes

¹2000–2009, The Warmest Decade, World Meteorological Organization, http://www.wmo.int/pages/mediacentre/press_releases/pr_869_en.html; (December 2009).

²This data is based on an annual NEMA survey of state emergency management directors. There were a total of 51 responses which included 48 states, the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico. The term “state” throughout the text refers to all respondents.

³Declared Disasters by Year or State, Federal Emergency Management Agency.

About the Author

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