

Elections, Greater Federal Grant Scrutiny and Ongoing Disasters Continue to Test Management System

By Beverly Bell

Almost 60 years of federal record-keeping passed before this country reached its highest number of major disaster declarations, 81 in 2010. It took only one more year to shatter that record, with 99 in 2011. State emergency management handled the growing number of events even as the average operating budget slid for the second year in a row. While Congressional scrutiny over federal spending persisted in Washington, D.C., state emergency management showed the initiative and proposed a substantial restructuring of related federal grants, one that promotes flexibility and accountability. The backdrop to all of this is national elections, which can turn every issue—including better preparation for the next disaster in order to save lives and protect property—into a political football.

One Record After Another

As experts continue to debate the causes and frequency of disasters, the economic impact of disasters is on the rise. Citing research from the World Bank and The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *The Economist* gives several reasons for the increase: development in previously uninhabited regions, elimination of natural barriers, which means more exposed property, and repeated rebuilding even though areas have been devastated over and over again. The result? Five of the world's costliest disasters from a financial perspective have occurred in the past four years. Without significant policy change and dedicating more resources to prevention, there's nothing to indicate that the trend will reverse.

For its part, the United States experienced more than its share of disasters in 2011. Devastating tornadoes ripped through Alabama and Joplin, Mo., killing an estimated 400 people. Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee caused serious flooding all along the East Coast. A 5.8 magnitude earthquake struck Virginia, Washington, D.C., and several eastern seaboard states; record winter snowstorms hit Alaska and massive wildfires ravaged Texas. In fact, 2011 marked the largest number of fire management assistance declarations at 114. Texas accounted for most of these with 55. The total is almost 33 percent higher than the previous record of 86 in 2006, when fire ravaged the western United States, the Southwest and the Great Plains.

The decade from 2001–2010 had the most presidential declarations since the Federal Emergency Management Agency started tracking the numbers in 1953, averaging almost 60 a year. A presidential declaration is the highest designation a disaster can receive from the federal government. It indicates the severity and destruction of an event and makes available the greatest amount of federal assistance.

The record-setting pace continued at the state level as well. In the National Emergency Management Association 2012 Biennial Report,¹ states² reported 250 gubernatorial emergencies in the 2011 fiscal year³, a 39 percent increase over the 180 gubernatorial emergencies in the 2009 fiscal year, when the last update was published. The number of events that required a significant commitment of state resources, but did not result in a declared state of emergency, also jumped. In the 2011 fiscal year, there were 258 events, compared to 122 events in 2009, which represents a 111 percent increase. Given the rising number of events, it's not surprising that states requested federal disaster or emergency declarations 242 times in the 2011 fiscal year, which is almost 2.5 times the 97 requested in 2009.

The Role of Emergency Management

Emergency management manages all these disasters at the state level. It is one of the most crucial functions of state government when a disaster strikes, acting as the central coordination point for all

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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 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.

State Emergency Management Organizational Structures/Budgets

2011 ushered in one of the largest class of new governors in this country, with 27 never having held the top state executive spot. This resulted in 17 newly appointed emergency management directors. Some state emergency management agencies also experienced reorganization. Currently, the emergency management agency is located within the department of public safety in 12 states; within the military department under the auspices of the adjutant general in 18 states; and within the governor’s office in nine states. Eight states have it in a combined emergency management/homeland security agency.

Regardless of agencies’ organizational structure for daily operations, emergency management ranks high among governors’ priorities. While the state emergency management director is an appointed

position in all 50 states, the director is appointed by the governor in 33—or nearly two-thirds—of states.

Even though state emergency management is handling more disasters and emergencies, their budgets remain relatively flat. Agency operating budgets for the 2012 fiscal year range up to about \$47 million. Twenty states saw their emergency management budgets shrink from the 2011 fiscal year. The average 2012 budget is \$5,987,294 and the median is \$2,826,624, which are both down from the previous year.

State Homeland Security Offices Also Evolving

Like emergency management, the state homeland security function has seen organizational changes. There is no one common structure, however, and responsibilities also vary. In some cases, state homeland security directors manage grants and budgets; in other cases, they have very limited roles.

In 18 states, a combined emergency management/homeland security office oversees daily operations of the homeland security function. Four states have the day-to-day operations in a homeland security agency or office. Five states run it out of the governor’s office. Ten states have it in the adjutant general/military affairs department and 12 states keep the homeland security function in their public safety department.

All states have a designated homeland security point of contact to the federal government and this position has become a critical component of a governor’s staff. Currently, 14 states assign the homeland security responsibility to their homeland security director. In another 21 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. Only two public safety secretaries/commissioners are in this role. The remaining states have other arrangements.

To fund their homeland security function, states rely on federal grants, state appropriations, a combination of the two and other sources. Fifteen states receive 100 percent of funding for their state homeland security office from federal grants. Only New Hampshire uses 100 percent state money for this function. Forty states receive at least 60 percent of funding from the federal government. This is only a slight increase from last year, when it was 39 states. On average, states rely on almost 76 percent federal funding to pay for their homeland security function, 18 percent state appropriations and 6 percent from other sources.

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 2012	Full-time employee positions
Alabama.....	★	G	Stand Alone Agency	\$1,229,167	97
Alaska.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$2,400,900	62 (b)
Arizona.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$2,693,820	61
Arkansas.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$2,136,729	100 (b)
California (c).....	★	G	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$36,888,000	548 (b)
Colorado.....	★	ED	Department of Local Affairs	\$640,000	29
Connecticut.....	...	PSS	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$5,500,000	35 (b)
Delaware.....			(a)		
Florida.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$46,843,050	150
Georgia.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$2,722,853	114 (b)
Hawaii.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$2,640,170	62 (b)
Idaho.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$1,466,700	66 (b)
Illinois.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$34,141,500	220
Indiana.....	★	G	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$12,851,000	243 (b)
Iowa.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$2,873,799	144 (b)
Kansas.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$1,068,389	46
Kentucky.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$2,091,700	107
Louisiana.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$15,400,276	122 (b)
Maine.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$1,013,831	30 (b)
Maryland.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$1,500,000	70
Massachusetts.....	★	G	Public Safety	\$4,506,189	84
Michigan.....	★	G	State Police	\$4,848,400	126 (b)
Minnesota.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	\$6,792,000	74 (b)
Mississippi.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$4,850,362	188
Missouri.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	\$2,851,248	65
Montana.....	...	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$1,505,000	23 (b)
Nebraska.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$931,578	37
Nevada.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	\$486,970	33 (b)
New Hampshire.....	★	G	Public Safety	\$5,215,510	43 (b)
New Jersey.....	★	G	State Police	\$1,986,691	341
New Mexico.....	★	G	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$2,802,000	62 (b)
New York.....	★	G	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$8,809,000	403 (b)
North Carolina.....	★	G	Public Safety	\$8,388,740	175 (b)
North Dakota.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$8,618,759	63 (b)
Ohio.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	\$6,046,752	97
Oklahoma.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$651,179	22
Oregon.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$3,277,804	40
Pennsylvania.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$10,930,000	188
Rhode Island.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$2,115,407	28 (b)
South Carolina.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$2,322,350	57
South Dakota.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	\$627,324	19
Tennessee.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$5,200,000	112
Texas.....	★	PSS	State Police	\$4,140,693	223
Utah.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	\$945,000	65 (b)
Vermont.....	★	PSS	Public Safety	\$2,753,143	23
Virginia.....	★	G	Public Safety	\$7,106,773	148 (b)
Washington.....	★	ADJ	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$3,645,847	90 (b)
West Virginia.....	★	G	Public Safety	\$5,340,945	53 (b)
Wisconsin.....	★	G	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	\$9,876,325	53
Wyoming.....			(d)		
Dist. of Columbia.....	★	M	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$2,000,000	56 (b)
Guam.....	★	G	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$0	10
No. Mariana Islands.....	★	G	Governor's Office	\$416,720	26
U.S. Virgin Islands.....	★	G	Combined Homeland Security/Emerg. Mgt.	\$5,248,675	94 (b)

Source: The National Emergency Management Association, March 2012.

Key:

★ — Yes

... — No

G — Governor

ADJ — Adjutant General

ED — Executive Director, Dept. of Local Affairs

M — Mayor

PSS — Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner/Director

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

(b) Includes homeland security and emergency management positions.

(c) After the survey was completed, California underwent a re-organization and is now organized under the Governor's Office.

(d) Wyoming is currently a NEMA member, but was not at the time of the survey.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Next Iteration of Grant Funding

Given the federal government's current economic environment with continued concern over the debt and deficit spending, Congress is still closely scrutinizing all outlays. State homeland security and emergency management grants are part of this analysis. To tackle the uncertain future of grant funding, a group of emergency management and homeland security professionals from across the country put forward a proposal in 2012—even before that of the president or Congress—suggesting a comprehensive restructuring of these grants while providing grantees with increased flexibility and Congress with more accountability on how the funds are spent. Previous grants were reorganized into three allocations from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security: a new homeland security cadre grant, a project-based investment and innovation grant and Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG).

EMPG'S Impact Quantified

EMPG is a core state emergency management funding mechanism and the lifeblood of emergency management throughout the United States. It's the only source of federal money directed to state and local governments for planning, training, exercises and personnel for all-hazards emergency preparedness.

In 2011, the emergency management community issued a report on EMPG, outlining the impact of the grant at the state and local levels. This report was updated and provided to Congress in early 2012. *Emergency Management Performance Grants: Providing Returns on a Nation's Investment* quantifies the thousands of local and state warnings systems, operational, special needs and evacuation plans, training and educational classes, full-scale exercises, mutual aid agreements and outreach campaigns that are possible in this country because of EMPG dollars. What is also significant about EMPG is that while the initial 2011 fiscal year federal investment was \$340 million, state and local government contributed at least another \$340 million because of the 50-50 match required by the program. Even as budgets have faced serious challenges in recent years and some have supported the federal government providing a higher portion, state government has stood behind the match, believing that every level of government has a responsibility in building emergency management capacity nationwide.

The fear is that if EMPG is cut, states will not be able to provide the match and would lose

irreplaceable dollars. Investments made thus far in terrorism-preparedness programs, response equipment, planning efforts and training will be jeopardized without adequate money to sustain them. States already have seen ramifications at the local emergency management level. Because local emergency management programs can't provide their EMPG cost share, they're turning down grant funding, which puts local agencies across the country at risk and seriously compromises that vital first rung of response capability.

More Deliverables for PPD-8

Last year, President Barack Obama signed Presidential Policy Directive-8, known as PPD-8, National Preparedness, which provided a broad outline for the nation to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond and recover from the most significant threats to the country. Replacing Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8, known as HSPD-8, under President George W. Bush, it also represented the first time the federal government worked to develop a National Preparedness Goal as called for in HSPD-8 and the 2006 Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act.

Since then, several milestones related to PPD-8 have been reached, including the release of the goal, which spells out the necessary capabilities, a description of a National Preparedness System with required resources and tools, a status report on national preparedness and an outline with specifics on roles and responsibilities in reaching a state of preparedness.

Many PPD-8 components are having a real effect on states because these elements partially determine how states can invest certain federal grants and report their actions/results related to those grant expenditures. This approach is part of the administration's overall pursuit of performance metrics, requiring specific outcomes based on investment and programmatic goals.

Nation's Mutual Aid System

The Emergency Management Assistance Compact, known as EMAC, a mutual aid agreement that allows support across state lines when a disaster occurs, continues to demonstrate its importance to the nation's disaster management system. Many states experienced severe flooding after Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee roared up the east coast in August 2011. As a result, 1,126 personnel from 25 states were deployed under EMAC to New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts,

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	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	16
Alaska	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	62 (b)
Arizona	Homeland Security Director	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	16
Arkansas	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	100 (b)
California (c)	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	548 (b)
Colorado	Executive Director of the Dept. of Public Safety	Public Safety	33.5
Connecticut	Emergency Management Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	35 (b)
Delaware		(a)	
Florida	Florida Dept. of Law Enforcement	Florida Dept. of Law Enforcement	35
Georgia	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	114 (b)
Hawaii	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	62 (b)
Idaho	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	66 (b)
Illinois	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	5
Indiana	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	243 (b)
Iowa	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	144 (b)
Kansas	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	0
Kentucky	Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	14
Louisiana	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	122 (b)
Maine	Adjutant General	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	30 (b)
Maryland	Homeland Security Advisor	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	3
Massachusetts	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	8
Michigan	State Police Superintendent/Director/Commissioner	State Police	126 (b)
Minnesota	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	74 (b)
Mississippi	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	19
Missouri	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Public Safety	16
Montana	Emergency Management Director	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	23 (b)
Nebraska	Lieutenant Governor	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	1
Nevada	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	33 (b)
New Hampshire	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	43 (b)
New Jersey	Homeland Security Director	Homeland Security (stand-alone office)	105
New Mexico	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	62 (b)
New York	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	403 (b)
North Carolina	Public Safety Secretary/Commissioner	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	175 (b)
North Dakota	Homeland Security Director	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	63 (b)
Ohio	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	19
Oklahoma	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	14
Oregon	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	2
Pennsylvania	State Police Superintendent/Director/Commissioner	Governor's Office	5
Rhode Island	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	28 (b)
South Carolina	State Police Superintendent/Director/Commissioner	State Police	20
South Dakota	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	3
Tennessee	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	26
Texas	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	40
Utah	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	65 (b)
Vermont	Homeland Security Director	Public Safety	7
Virginia	Homeland Security Secretary	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	148 (b)
Washington	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	90 (b)
West Virginia	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	53 (b)
Wisconsin	Adjutant General	Adjutant General/Military Affairs	0
Wyoming		(d)	
Dist. of Columbia	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	56 (b)
Guam	Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	12
No. Mariana Islands	Homeland Security Director	Governor's Office	8
U.S. Virgin Islands	Dual Title—Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Director	Combined Emerg. Mgt./Homeland Security Office	94 (b)

Source: The National Emergency Management Association, March 2012.

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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Delaware, Connecticut, Vermont and Pennsylvania. This included 86 missions in a seven-week period and more than \$13 million in estimated costs for requested resources. Earlier in the year, almost 950 personnel were deployed under the compact in response to the floods and tornados in Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, South Dakota, Mississippi, Alabama and Tennessee.

As part of its normal procedure for a larger event, EMAC conducted an after-action review and issued a report on the August disasters. It focused on four main operational components of the process: activation; the request and offer; response-mobilization, deployment and de-mobilization; and reimbursement. The document identified what worked well and those areas that need improvement. These recommendations will become part of EMAC's long-term work plan.

Impact of Elections

In national election years, all issues can become political. This is certainly a consideration for 2012, when elections for president, all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 33 U.S. Senate seats and governor in 11 states as well as two territories will be held. New faces in Washington and in the governor's mansions could result in more changes for emergency management and homeland security as national and state leaders revise current strategies or develop new ones.

To encourage a productive discussion about emergency management and homeland security before the November elections, the National Emergency Management Association—which represents state emergency management directors in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories—is meeting with presidential campaign representatives. The purpose is to learn candidates' positions regarding all hazards, emergency preparedness and homeland security.

Possible Changes to Declaration Process

Under current federal law, only a governor has the authority after a disaster to request either an emergency or major declaration from the president, which, if granted, allows federal assistance. In 2011, however, FEMA announced its support to allow a tribal government, if it chooses, to make a separate declaration request directly to the president without going through the state. The modification requires an amendment to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Relief Act (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.), which is the legislation that guides the declaration

process. The proposal also raises a number of issues related to the cost-share requirements; population guidelines and overall criteria.

Besides the tribal proposition, another possible change is underway. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued a suggested rule that would allow a county to initiate a declaration of an agriculture-related disaster directly to the USDA, removing the governor from the process. There are concerns that both of these changes could erode a governor's authority.

Notes

¹*NEMA 2012 Biennial Report*, National Emergency Management Association, March 2012.

²In this section, "states" refer to two territories, the District of Columbia, and 48 states that responded a National Emergency Management Association 2012 survey about emergency management organizations, funding and other issues.

³FY11 refers to the federal fiscal year, which is October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011.

About the Author

Beverly Bell is the senior policy analyst for the National Emergency Management Association, an affiliate of The Council of State Governments. In her position, she coordinates and conducts research, interacts with the states on changing federal policy and acts as an information clearinghouse for emergency management and homeland security issues.