The National Emergency Management Association polled its primary membership in 2006 to get a picture of what emergency management is like across the U.S. The survey found, among other things, changes in the way emergency management directors are appointed, variations in the organizational structure of departments and the increasing role these directors are playing in the states.

By Beverly Bell
The number of emergency management personnel has increased; state budgets inched up; and more governors than ever are appointing the emergency management director, recognizing the critical role these individuals play.

Those are a few of the findings from the annual survey conducted by the National Emergency Management Association. At the end of 2006, NEMA, a CSG affiliate, polled its primary membership—the state emergency management directors who are responsible for coordinating all disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery in their respective states. There were 54 responders, representing 49 states, the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories.

Other results from the survey show the wide range of organizational structures for both emergency management and homeland security; how state director turnover remains an issue; and why state emergency management programs must be strong since most disasters are handled at the state level without federal help.

New Leaders, Turnover Affect the Field

State governments across the country are dealing with the implications of a large, aging U.S. population. The National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE) estimates 28 percent of state employees—not including those in higher education—will be eligible for retirement within the next five years.

According to the NEMA survey, this same trend cannot be verified in state emergency management. It is true that the majority of state directors (30) fall in the 51- to 60-year-old age range and six directors are 61 to 70. However, in the past, the state emergency management director position was often filled by a retired member of the military. The average age of the person serving in this capacity was higher, but not because of overall aging factors.

The most pressing issue for emergency management is recruiting, developing and retaining the next generation of emergency management leaders to address 21st century challenges. Current directors bring a wealth of experience to the table. The survey found that 37 state emergency management directors have been in the profession for 12 or more years. Thirteen of these have 28 or more years of experience.

But 36 directors—two-thirds of those surveyed—have been in their jobs three years or less. Turnover is inherent in state government where newly elected governors make appointments and bring in their own teams. In 2006, 36 states held gubernatorial contests, which accounted for some of the new emergency management director appointments. However, most appointments were due to a maturation of the field, growing federal mandates, budgets not keeping pace, and the lure of the private sector, which pays experienced emergency management professionals premium salaries.

To help ensure that knowledgeable personnel are chosen for this important post, NEMA is developing qualifications for state emergency management positions, training curriculum and continuing education. When finalized, these guidelines will help governors and other state officials make certain they have the right people in charge to handle any kind of disaster.

A particular challenge for new directors is that they took over after Sept. 11, 2001, when the focus—and most federal dollars—have been directed toward terrorism instead of all-hazards. They have to deal with a complex and conflicting paradigm, where the emergency management and homeland security parameters aren’t clear-cut. How emergency management can develop new talent as well as retain its knowledge base, so that lessons learned can be applied to better prepare for and manage all future disasters, remains a question.

When Disaster Strikes: Effective Emergency Management Structures

The state directors polled have handled 447 gubernatorial disaster declarations, almost 80 percent more than the estimated 250 presidential disaster declarations they’ve coordinated. The statistics indicate most disasters in the United States are handled at the state and local level.

It also indicates why more governors are choosing to appoint emergency management directors. Governors are realizing that in many cases, the success of their administrations can hinge on how effectively they handle a disaster. In the most recent survey, 34 governors appoint the emergency management director, up from 32 in 2005 and 29 in 2004.
WHAT IS EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT?

The structures under which the emergency management directors operate differ. In 14 states, the emergency management agency is located within the department of public safety; in 16 states, it is located within the military department under the auspices of the adjutant general; and in 11 states, it is located within the governor’s office.

However, there are certain organizational similarities for states with the most disaster experience. For example, seven of the top 10 states with the most disaster declarations as listed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) have day-to-day emergency management operations housed in the governor’s office. In seven of these states, the emergency management director is appointed by the governor. In eight states, the director reports directly to the governor.

After suffering the devastation from Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana changed its emergency management organizational structure in 2006, making it an agency within the governor’s office. Locating emergency management in the governor’s office can offer certain advantages, such as a direct line to the top state office when critical decisions need to be made. It can also result in better coordination of all state agencies, local jurisdictions and various disciplines.

Emergency Management Dollars, People

The 2007 operating budgets for state emergency management agencies range from a low of $270,000 to a high of more than $35 million for a total of $225,134,020. The average state emergency management agency budget is $4,169,149, and the median is $2,494,598. This compares to the 2006 operating budgets that ranged from $454,000 to almost $38 million. In that year, the average state budget was $4,090,365, while the median was $2,065,250.

Currently, there are approximately 4,675 personnel in state emergency management agencies. In 2005, staff totals stood at 4,491. Even with the slight increase, this means there are a little more than three people coordinating state emergency management activities for every 200,000 U.S. citizens. This is significant responsibility for relatively few people who are expected to develop disaster operations plans, conduct training and assist the governor during an event. There are also growing homeland security assignments, such as updating state plans to reflect the National Response Plan (NRP), training emergency responders and state and local officials on the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and implementing the National Preparedness Goal—all of which are tasked most often to emergency management.

State Homeland Security Still Being Defined

Four and a half years after a National Strategy for Homeland Security was developed, many states still face the challenge of assimilating homeland security into their emergency management and response systems. This is apparent from the wide range of structures and responsibilities under which state homeland security offices operate. In some cases, state homeland security directors manage grants and budgets; in other cases, they have very limited roles. The inconsistent approach is a clear indication that the relationship between homeland security and emergency management is still being defined.

All states have a designated homeland security point of contact. In fact, preparation on the state level for a terrorist attack occurred several years before Sept. 11, 2001, with groundwork being laid after the 1995 bombing at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Okla.

Over the past few years, the homeland security designee has become a critical member of a governor’s staff. While each state recognizes its importance, the person responsible for these duties varies widely from state to state. According to the survey, 22 states have established the unique position of homeland security adviser or homeland security director. In 11 states, either the emergency management director or a combined emergency management/homeland security director is the primary point of contact. Five states have the adjutant general serving in this capacity, a decrease from seven in 2005. Seven public safety secretaries/commissioners are in this role. Nine states have created totally different positions.

Many states also are modifying the structure of their homeland security office. Thirteen states house the day-to-day operations in the governor’s office, while six run it out of the adjutant general/military affairs department. Another six have it in a specific homeland security department. Nine states keep the homeland security function in their emergency management office, while
nine operate out of their public safety department. The remaining states have other structures in place.

The trend of the homeland security director becoming less of a political appointment in the governor’s office and more institutionalized in the organizational structure of state government continues. Forty-two states have authorized their homeland security offices, departments or agencies through either executive order or state statute. This is up from 39 in 2005.

**Paying for State Homeland Security**

The federal government is still footing most of the bill for most state homeland security offices in the form of grants. The NEMA survey shows 46 states receive at least 60 percent of their homeland security funding from federal money. This compares to 39 states in 2005. Of these 46 states, 22 operate with 100 percent federal funding. Only three states—Georgia, New Hampshire and New Mexico—rely totally on state appropriations for their homeland security funding.

The number of staff dedicated to homeland security is now 2,399. The striking aspect of this finding is how quickly state homeland security personnel has grown. The amount of homeland security professionals now equals more than half of those working in emergency management. This is particularly surprising considering that the emergency management field dates back to the 1950s, and adequate funding has been a constant challenge.

There are many more findings in the NEMA FY2007 State Director Annual Survey, including state disaster funding mechanisms; state director and deputy director salaries; educational backgrounds; and more details on how state emergency management agencies and homeland security offices are structured. For a complete report, visit the NEMA Web site at [http://www.nemaweb.org/](http://www.nemaweb.org/).

—Beverly Bell is a policy analyst with the National Emergency Management Association.

### Emergency Management Organizations In States With Most Disaster Declarations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>EM Director Appointed By:</th>
<th>EM Operations Location</th>
<th>EM Director Reports To:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Public Safety Secretary/ Commissioner</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>Adjutant General</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>Public Safety Secretary/ Commissioner</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Public Safety Secretary/ Commissioner</td>
<td>Public Safety</td>
<td>Governor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>