

SYMPOSIUM: Interstate Cooperation



Emily Bentley

Interstate Cooperation in Homeland Security: Emergency Management Standards and Accreditation

By Emily Bentley, Emergency Management Accreditation Program

The safety and security of communities throughout the nation are a responsibility that is shared by all residents, by government, and by the private sector. The Emergency Management Accreditation Program was created and operated by cooperation among states to address key needs in securing the homeland and dealing with all types of disasters. Together, states apply high standards throughout the nation, providing better coordinated prevention, preparedness, and response capabilities, to the benefit of homeland security.

Calls for preparedness standards emanating from federal sources in the past year echo the work states have been quietly planning for and conducting since 1997.

Through the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), states, territories and local governments have been working together to apply collaboratively developed national preparedness standards to their systems for preparing for and responding to disasters. This type of assessment, using comprehensive standards, self-assessment and documentation, and validation through structured peer evaluation, provides a rigorous and independent review of a state's emergency management system.

In 32 state and territorial assessments conducted through August 2004, few states fully comply with all standards. Areas where non-compliance is most common are: hazard identification and risk assessment; recovery and continuity of operations plans; and operations and procedures (see general descriptions of standards areas later in this article). A key component of EMAP standards is the requirement for coordination and collaboration across many agencies to provide quality preparedness and response that leverages all state resources and capabilities for maximum benefit. Not surprisingly then, anecdotal evidence from jurisdic-

tions participating to date indicates that strong leadership from the jurisdiction's chief executive (e.g., governor, mayor) has significant positive impact on the ability of a jurisdiction to work toward and attain compliance with national standards.

EMAP was created by the collaborative work of states, through the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA),¹ the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), and a partnership of other local, state and federal stakeholders. Work to build EMAP began in 1997;² EMAP began accepting applications for state accreditation in April 2002. In keeping with EMAP's purpose to provide a methodology for continuous improvement, assessment reports are considered confidential by EMAP and are provided to the state program to serve as a strategic tool to build stronger capabilities and better continuity. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate (DHS-EP&R), EMAP is conducting baseline assessments of all state and territorial emergency management programs (2003-05) against the EMAP standards.

From 33 state and territorial assessments conducted to date, four states have reached full compliance with all 54 standards and received accreditation: Arizona, the District of Columbia, Florida and North Dakota. Two are conditionally

accredited, which is an interim step toward accreditation requiring that areas of non-compliance be addressed in a nine-month period. Those conditionally accredited are Montana and Pennsylvania.

EMAP defines emergency preparedness broadly. In evaluating a state's emergency management program, EMAP looks at more than the agency with "emergency management" or "preparedness" or "homeland security" in its title. EMAP defines "emergency management program" as:

"A jurisdiction-wide system that provides for management and coordination of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery activities for all hazards. The system encompasses all organizations, agencies and individuals responsible for emergency management and homeland security."³

In other words, EMAP looks at coordination of a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary system for all activities that are needed to prevent, mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from a disaster. This is based on the understanding that state governments are structured and resourced differently, and that in a disaster, an array of resources, from transportation department equipment to health department epidemiological staff, may be needed.

Applying Standards

After attention to gaps in private sector preparedness in hearings on the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report* includes the recommendation and use of the NFPA 1600 Standard on Disaster/Emergency Management and Business Continuity Programs as the national preparedness standard for the private sector. The EMAP Commission recognized the value of the NFPA 1600 as it built EMAP, using the 1600 as the basis for the EMAP Standard. The *EMAP Standard* uses the NFPA 1600 standards verbatim and includes supplemental language for most standards to clarify their meaning for government emergency management.

EMAP assessment is based on the *EMAP Standard*, a set of comprehensive standards that can be applied to an emergency management program of almost any size. Local—city, county, parish—programs also can use the standards and apply for assessment and accreditation. While scalable, EMAP standards are considered a high bar to reach for by those working in state emergency management. Issues that are key components in preparedness and response for a terrorist event or catastrophic disaster are addressed, including multi-disciplinary coordination, continuity of operations planning, alternate operating facilities, and interoperability of incident management and communications. The standards are organized in the following 14 program areas and describe a flow of activities that build upon each other and represent the components of a quality disaster management system:

- *Program Management* addresses how a program is structured and organized so that it is capable of coordinating emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery activities across multiple agencies and organizations.
- *Laws and Authorities* addresses the legal underpinnings necessary to authorize and conduct an emergency management program.
- *Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment* requires comprehensive assessment and identification of risks, including potential natural and human-caused events, and potential impact of those hazards. This assessment and analysis, including identification of risks to critical infrastructures, then guide mitigation, resource management, planning, training, exercises and other activities.
- *Hazard Mitigation* requires a strategy to lessen the impacts of disasters. The strategy must take into account results of hazard identification and risk assessment and must prioritize mitigation projects based on loss reduction.
- *Resource Management* involves identifying recourse objectives based on the hazards identified and methodologies for prompt and effective acquisition, distribution, tracking, and use of personnel and equipment needed for emergency functions. This also includes use of mutual aid and other agreements.
- *Planning* addresses development and general content of the program's emergency operations plan, strategic plan, mitigation plan, recovery plan and continuity of operations plans.
- *Direction, Control and Coordination* presents requirements for the ability to analyze a situation, make decisions for response, direct and coordinate response forces and resources, and coordinate with other jurisdictions. Requires use of a recognized incident management system.
- *Communications and Warning* requires ability to communicate in a disaster and effectively warn the public. This is the primary area of the standards where communications interoperability and redundancy are addressed.
- *Operations and Procedures* requires standard operating procedures, checklists and other instructions to execute the emergency operations plan and other plans and ties procedures back to the hazards previously identified by the jurisdiction.
- *Logistics and Facilities* requires facilities and a logistics framework capable of supporting response and recovery operations. This includes the requirement for an emergency operations facility.
- *Training* requires that the program maintain a documented training program for emergency personnel and public officials, including that emergency personnel receive training on the incident management system of the jurisdiction.
- *Exercises, Evaluations and Corrective Action* calls for regularly scheduled exercises and evaluations and requires a process for addressing corrective actions.
- *Crisis Communications, Public Education and Information* requires procedures for disseminating information to the public pre-, during, and post-disaster.
- *Finance and Administration* includes requirement for a financial management framework that complies with applicable government requirements and that allows for expeditious request for and receipt and distribution of funds.

Additionally, EMAP is considering integrating additional standards or concepts related to disaster prevention and deterrence, such as information analysis and security. As with its other standards development work, as EMAP explores these issues, it will involve stakeholders from various disciplines and organizations.

Improving Continuity

EMAP assessment requires documentation of compliance, which means that a program being assessed must show that it has documented procedures and activities. In this way, assessment pushes programs to institutionalize the good things they may do but that may otherwise be “in the head” of a few key people. For example, in the first 19 state and territorial assessments, three states met all the standards under Operations and Procedures, which involves documenting many of the

Continued on page 25

achievement, and ending up with a workforce that's insufficiently educated to compete in the high-skills/high-wage economy of the future. On the other hand, if we weather the storm well, by planning and acting wisely, the West will be a better place to live and work in the future: more ethnically diverse, better educated, and more economically competitive. No matter which way we weather The Perfect Storm, it will be difficult. But the choice is ours—and it's obvious.

Endnotes

¹National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 2012*, (NCES, released August 2002).

²The Western states differ greatly in these statistics. In Hawaii, 87 percent of high school students will come from communities of color; in Nevada, 62 percent of all students will come from communities of color, while in Utah that number is only 8 percent.

³Western states considered here include Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Only one Western state, Hawaii, saw a substantial increase in low-income participa-

tion, from 23.6 percent (below the national average) to 36.5 percent (substantially above the national average).

⁴National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, *Measuring Up 2002*, (NCPPE, 2002). Note: If the region is average, individual states exhibit a wide range of performance on various *Measuring Up* measures. On preparation Montana and Utah do exceptionally well, whereas Alaska, Arizona and New Mexico do poorly. With respect to higher education participation of recent high school graduates, New Mexico leads the West, while Nevada, Idaho and Alaska trail the national averages. On completion, Washington receives an A, but Alaska and Nevada receive a failing grade, trailing most of the rest of the nation.

⁵Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, *Regional Fact Book for Higher Education in the West*, (WICHE, 2002). Note: Interestingly absent from that set of states is California, which has by far the largest community college system in the nation and helped put the community college on the map with the California Master Plan in the 1960s. Despite the exceptionally large number of students who enroll in the California community colleges, the state has an average output of associate degrees.

⁶The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, "18- to 24-Year-Olds with a High School Diploma or Equivalent"

<http://www.higheredinfo.org/dbrowser/index.php?measure=21>.

⁷Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Education at a Glance," Annex 3, Table 2.5 and Annex 2, Table A3.1c, (2001). <http://www1.oecd.org/els/education/ei/eag/>.

⁸Don Boyd, "State Spending for Higher Education in the Coming Decade," prepared for the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS, October 2002), http://www.nchems.org/State_Spending.doc.

Bio

David A. Longanecker is the executive director of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education in Boulder, Colo. Previously, he served for six years as the assistant secretary for postsecondary education at the U.S. Department of Education. Prior to that, he was the state higher education executive officer (SHEEO) in Colorado and Minnesota. He was also the principal analyst for higher education for the Congressional Budget Office. Longanecker has served on numerous boards and commissions and was president of the State Higher Education Executive Officers. He holds an Ed.D. in education from Stanford University. P.O. Box 9752, Boulder CO 80301. (303) 541-0200. dlonganecker@wiche.edu

Interstate Cooperation in Homeland Security Continued from page 19

key procedures a program uses. In this case, as in other areas, non-compliance with a standard does not necessarily mean an activity is not occurring or cannot be accomplished in disaster. It means the steps to accomplish it are not recorded or institutionalized. Without documentation of procedures, a program is gambling that it will not face a disaster situation in which the individual who customarily handles that task is unavailable.

Through EMAP, continuity is improved by providing a catalyst to capture procedures, corrective action steps, and many other aspects of a quality program to ensure that the good work that usually occurs can continue—through changes of administration or the impacts of a disaster. Additionally, EMAP requires procedures for continuity of government. More than succession of key officers, the standard for means of continuing critical government services. By encouraging documentation of procedures and by requiring continuity of operations plans and continuity of govern-

ment procedures, EMAP assists states in ensuring that key functions of government can continue in the face of serious disaster. NEMA and partner organizations began working in 1997 on what was to become EMAP because they identified a need for creation and application of comprehensive standards for state and local disaster management programs. Because of that foresight, as goals for stronger preparedness capabilities are now explored at the federal level, states are able to offer EMAP as the foundation for comprehensive, coordinated disaster preparedness.

More information about EMAP can be found at www.emaponline.org.

Endnotes

¹NEMA is the national professional association representing state/territorial emergency management directors. Both NEMA and EMAP are affiliates of The Council of State Governments.

²*Preliminary Concepts on Emergency Management Accreditation*, (N.C. Division of Emergency Management, August 22, 1997); see also *Accreditation Report*, (Lexington, KY:

National Emergency Management Association, September 9, 1998), (feasibility study).

³*The EMAP Standard*, (Lexington, KY: Emergency Management Accreditation Program): 8.

⁴*The 9/11 Commission Report, Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, July 2004): 397-8.

Bio

Emily Bentley, J.D., is executive director of the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), a voluntary assessment and accreditation process for state and local government emergency management. Bentley has been with EMAP at CSG since August 2000, when it was still a special project of the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA). Before joining EMAP, she served as associate general counsel of the Association of State and Provincial Psychology Boards (ASPPB) and as a newspaper reporter. She has a background in public policy and interest in multi-state, multi-jurisdictional, and interagency cooperation. P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578. (859) 244-8210. ebentley@cs.org.