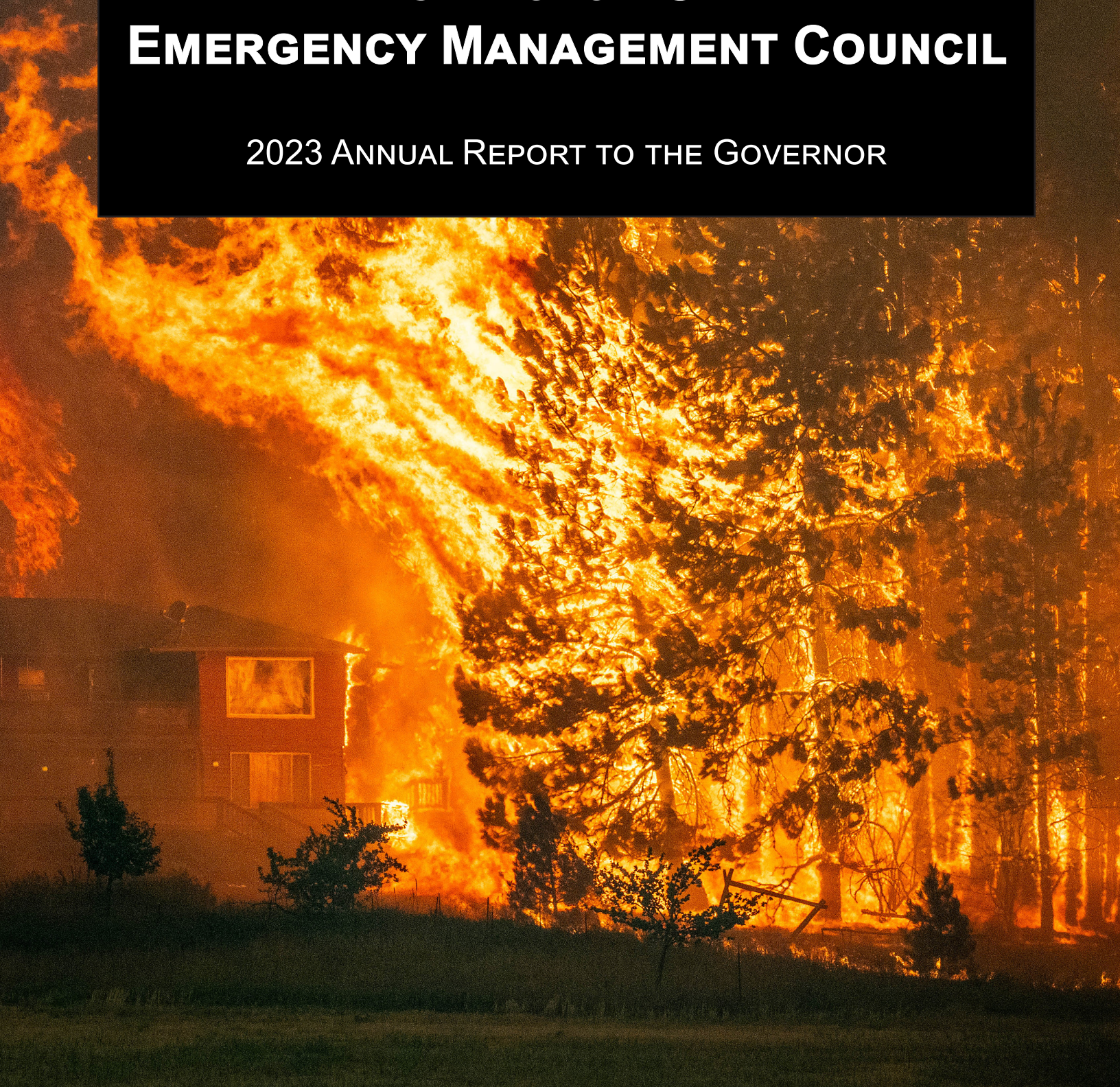




WASHINGTON STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

2023 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR



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Cover photo credit: Colin Mulvany/The Spokesman-Review, Gray Road Fire, Spokane, August 2023.

June 30, 2024

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of Washington
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

On behalf of the Washington State Emergency Management Council (EMC), I am honored to present the 2023 EMC Annual Report on the status of statewide emergency preparedness. This document fulfills the Council's responsibility to provide an annual assessment of statewide emergency preparedness (RCW 38.52.040) and contains recommendations the Council believes will improve the state's emergency preparedness. The EMC members, constituents, and stakeholders value the opportunity to inform you on the status of emergency management in our state and to provide recommendations that address identified issues.

The EMC, through its committees and workgroups, continues to support activities that strengthen our state's collective ability to respond to, and reduce the risks of natural, technological, and human-caused hazards.

We remain appreciative of your support of the Council's work and intend to provide you with additional recommendations on state and local emergency management issues annually. We appreciate any feedback you or your staff have on this report and the recommendations included. If you would like to discuss the report further, please contact Robert Ezelle, Director, Washington Emergency Management, at 253-512-7001 or robert.ezelle@mil.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chandra Fox', written in a cursive style.

Chandra Fox, CEM
Chair, Washington State Emergency Management Council
Deputy Director, Spokane County Department of Emergency Management

Washington Emergency Management Council

RCW 38.52.040 lists the membership of the EMC as follows:

Representatives of City and County Governments
Representatives of Federally Recognized Tribes
Sheriffs and Police Chiefs
County Coroners and Medical Examiners
The Washington State Patrol
The Military Department
The Department of Ecology
State and Local Fire Chiefs
Seismic Safety Experts
State and Local Emergency Management Directors
Search and Rescue Volunteers
Medical Professions with Expertise in Emergency Medical Care
Building Officials
Private Industry
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Eastern Washington Tribes
Western Washington Tribes
Two Members at Large

Executive Summary

Purpose: In accordance with RCW 38.52.040, this report fulfills the Emergency Management Council's (EMC) responsibility to provide an annual assessment of statewide emergency preparedness to the Governor and the Adjutant General (TAG).

Scope: This EMC Annual Report covers the 2023 calendar year and contains recommendations the Council believes will improve the state's preparedness. These are high level recommendations that are not currently resourced or funded, and are presented for future consideration by the Governor, the Legislature, TAG, and all EMC stakeholders.

Background: Washington is the fourth most disaster-prone state in the country. Its emergency management community faces a myriad of challenges, including, but not limited to, earthquakes, severe winter storms, extensive wildfires, civil unrest, cybersecurity, and threats to critical infrastructure. The EMC identified and analyzed critical issue areas for this report. These issues, including recommendations to address them, are summarized below and the full annual report provides additional narrative about each topic.

Issue #1: Take Measured Steps to Manage the Potential Impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Emergency Management

Synopsis: Artificial intelligence (AI) is a part of our daily lives, from weather forecasting to internet search functions. It is imperative for governmental agencies, especially emergency management, and public safety agencies, to adopt generative AI policies to ensure the public's trust is maintained throughout the life cycle of an emergency or disaster.

Recommendations

1. Provide additional training for all state government employees and an AI toolkit for local government.
2. Establish a state task force to create response expectations if AI is nefariously used in a way that disrupts our ability to effectively respond to or recover from an emergency or disaster.
3. Expand legislation to prohibit intentional misinformation, disinformation campaigns, or deep fake digital manipulation as it relates to incidents and emergencies, and disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery; and detail associated agency responsibilities and legal consequences.
4. Establish an Emergency Management Division-led task force to collect, coordinate, and share AI best practices and policies as they develop.

Issue #2: Improve the Ability of Local and Tribal Emergency Management to Respond to and Recover from Disasters and Emergencies

Synopsis: The growing expectations and requirements placed upon local and tribal emergency managers pose a significant issue throughout Washington. In the post-pandemic environment, we now realize that local and tribal emergency management must be able to perform the full spectrum of their responsibilities during multiple, recurring, concurrent, and/or compounding disasters. This new paradigm stretches the capacity and capabilities of local and tribal emergency managers beyond their limits.

Recommendations

1. Establish a six-person Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) at the state Emergency Management Division (EMD).
2. Establish a local and tribal emergency management capacity building grant.

Issue #3: Address Fire Danger in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Areas

Synopsis: As the population in Washington grows, housing density increases, and we experience hotter and drier weather conditions, we are seeing an increase in wildfires occurring in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones. The competing priorities of housing development, critical infrastructure, environmental protection, and wildfire mitigation measures can work against each other to undermine the resilience needed to protect populations in WUI zones.

Recommendations

1. Develop a statewide strategic plan specifically for the prevention and mitigation of wildfires in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones.
2. Conduct statewide WUI hazard mapping and risk assessment that will accurately identify areas of high risk to better inform land management and land use policies.
3. Advocate for the implementation of regulatory mechanisms for homeowner insurance policies aimed at protecting property owners from unjust termination or exorbitant premium increases.
4. Implement a statewide public engagement program which supports more resilient communities and increases the public's situational awareness.
5. Increase the response capability of critical resources to local jurisdictions during wildfire events.

Issue #4: Ensure that People with Limited English Proficiency Get the Information They Need in an Emergency

Synopsis: Messaging systems and message translation services continue to be a challenge in Washington. It is critical to identify the specific language needs in a jurisdiction. Being equipped with this data will allow emergency messaging to be effectively delivered and can help improve the message dissemination systems.

Recommendations

1. EMD should work with FEMA, the FCC, wireless providers, and other public safety authorities to update the WEA messaging system.
2. EMD should establish a task force to create a pool of pre-translated emergency-related messages or on-call resources.

Issue #5: Prioritize Cybersecurity Risk to Critical Infrastructure

Synopsis: Cyber-attacks are increasing in frequency and sophistication. Given the central role of critical infrastructure systems in the everyday functioning of society, cyber-attacks impacting these systems can create severe consequences for our state's residents, economy, and environment. The potential for these severe impacts motivates threat actors to target our critical infrastructure through attempts to gain unauthorized access to computer systems, networks, data, or other valuable assets. This threat highlights the need for our state to be

proactive in securing the information and operational technologies necessary to operate these critical systems and facilities.

Recommendations

1. Define a methodology for characterizing cybersecurity risk and vulnerability to guide committee recommendations and inform a statewide critical infrastructure cybersecurity strategy.
2. Explore an approach that identifies state agencies as sector-specific leads to facilitate cybersecurity advice and recommendations for each of the 16 critical infrastructure sectors.
3. Document all federal and state laws that pertain to cybersecurity for critical infrastructure owner/operators and cross-examine them for consistency and policy gaps.
4. Prioritize cybersecurity technical assistance and resources to critical infrastructure with the most significant risk and least capacity to manage risk.

Issue #6: Take Steps to Mitigate Known Hazards and Reduce the Risk of Disasters

Synopsis: Disaster risk continues to increase in Washington, due to the combination of more frequent and severe climate-related natural hazard events (e.g., floods and wildfires) along with continued development and population growth in hazard-prone areas (e.g., in high-risk seismic zones in western Washington). The resources required to reduce these risks long-term are substantial and should include investments in hazard mitigation and resilience projects as well as planning-related efforts, such as hazard analysis.

Recommendations

1. Bolster state funding to support hazard mitigation projects and planning-related activities.
2. Continue and grow seismic and tsunami resilience.


Introduction

This is the Washington State Emergency Management Council's annual report to the Governor. It fulfills the Council's responsibility to provide an annual assessment of statewide emergency preparedness (RCW 38.52.040) and contains recommendations the Council believes will improve the state's preparedness.

In 2023, local, state, tribal, and federal emergency management partners were focused on severe winter weather, a high-profile trial, a massive gasoline spill in Whitman County, and a devastating fire season that resulted in seven Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG), as well as a federally declared disaster in Spokane County.

This report covers the 2023 calendar year. The recommendations contained in this report are based on assessments of certain events, activities, and emerging issues identified by the Council.

The Emergency Management Council recognizes that this annual assessment is a representation of the opportunities our stakeholders have before them. This is not intended to serve as a comprehensive assessment, but rather focus on areas that, if prioritized and resourced, could yield significant benefits for our residents by improving preparedness, response, and resilience across the state in the years to come. This report does not supersede or replace the recommendations provided in previous annual reports, and those recommendations continue to be supported by the EMC.



Take Measured Steps to Manage the Potential Impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on Emergency Management

Issue

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a part of our daily lives, from weather forecasting to internet search functions. In emergency management, there are significant opportunities to lean into artificial intelligence to improve information gathering, decision-making, and augment limited human resources and time-intensive manual workloads. Conversely, AI can lead to information security concerns, the application of misinformation in emergencies, and potential distrust before, during, or after an emergency or disaster. It is imperative for governmental agencies, especially emergency management, and public safety agencies, to adopt generative AI policies to ensure the public's trust is maintained throughout the life cycle of an emergency or disaster.

Background

A Presidential Executive Order on the Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence was published October 30, 2023, stating "Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds extraordinary potential for both promise and peril. Responsible AI use has the potential to help solve urgent challenges while making our world more prosperous, productive, innovative, and secure. At the same time, irresponsible use could exacerbate societal harms such as fraud, discrimination, bias, and disinformation...and pose risks to national security. Harnessing AI for good and realizing its myriad benefits requires mitigating its substantial risks." The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, as a result, is beginning to engage stakeholders in discussions about AI, cyber security, and impacts to the emergency services sector.

Within the state of Washington, WaTech has created Interim Guidelines for Purposeful and Responsible Use of Generative AI and there is an existing Governor's Executive Order (January 2024) to develop guidelines for how the state adopts generative AI into its own systems to ensure its ethical and transparent use. These guidelines include recommendations such as thoroughly read and edit an AI-generated document for accuracy and potential biases; label the documents (attribution) as having been created with the assistance of AI; implement measures to protect data; do not use sensitive or confidential information; and do not substitute human interaction for AI or assume it will correctly understand a query.

The Washington State Legislature also passed legislation in 2023^[1] requiring any “synthetic media” (digitally manipulated audio or video to create a realistic but false image) used in electioneering be labeled as having been manipulated; and in 2024^[2] legislation regarding artificial intelligence, specifically “deep fake” videos where some digitally fabricated images are now illegal under law. Currently, that law is limited to fabricated intimate or sexually explicit images of a minor and do not address other threats such as cybersecurity, false emergency notifications, or other manipulations that may create mistrust, misinformation, or harm to the public during or after disasters.

Other thought leaders including Rand, McChrystal, Deloitte, and the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) are engaging in research, stakeholder outreach, and analysis to help understand AI impacts on emergency management, but definitive paths forward have not yet been defined.

Evaluation of Issue

AI capabilities are multiplying exponentially and at a rate greater than government, industry, and the public can absorb. A recent panel discussion at the Washington Emergency Management Council highlighted how AI is currently being used in emergency management, how it can be utilized in the future, and concerns about AI in emergency management.

AI is currently being leveraged in emergency management in ways including, but not limited to:

Language translations	Grant Applications
Development of standard operating procedures an emergency response plans	Culturally relevant avatars for outreach and language translation
Hazard modeling	Damage assessments
Public information and outreach	Training plan development

Panel participants shared that several agencies have adopted initial AI policies and believe that AI can assist emergency management in the future by helping identify impacted buildings after a disaster and the associated demographics and needs of occupants; identifying most vulnerable hazards; rapidly acquiring and compiling incident information; and automating workload to better utilize the limited personnel who work in emergency management and associated fields.

Publications and panel participants both express concerns about trust, vetted and accurate information, the potential threat or amplification of misinformation as a result of AI, deep fake videos to create unrest, the lack of systems and processes to address unforeseen events related to AI in emergency management, and the ability for state and local jurisdictions to remain ahead of the multiplying technology.

AI does not replace the soft skills needed to develop trust with response partners and the community. It is a powerful tool that may both benefit and cause harm, and if we do not fully understand it at all levels of government and take actionable steps to manage the results of AI, we may be well behind the planning curve when it is misused both in steady-state operations and emergencies.

Recommendations

1. Provide additional training for all state government employees and an AI toolkit for local government about:
 - a. Generative AI and the state’s interim guidelines. State and local governments may not understand that all information entered into an AI prompt becomes public domain and ownership is lost once it enters the public domain.
 - b. Validating any AI generated information for accuracy.
 - c. A clear explanation of what may and may not be put into an AI prompt.
 - d. Ensuring anything fully or partially generated with AI is attributed as such.
 - e. Creation of model policy that can be emulated by state and local governmental agencies.
2. Establish a state task force to create response expectations if AI is nefariously used in a way that disrupts our ability to effectively respond to or recover from an emergency or disaster.
3. Expand legislation to prohibit intentional misinformation, disinformation campaigns, or deep fake digital manipulation as it relates to incidents and emergencies, and disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery, and detail associated agency responsibilities and legal consequences.
4. Establish an EMD-led task force to collect, coordinate, and share AI best practices and policies as they develop.

[1] Electioneering Communications – Use of Synthetic Media, ESSB 5152, Washington State 68th Legislature (2023).

[2] Fabricated Intimate or Sexually Explicit Images, HB 1999, Washington State 68th Legislature (2024).



Improve the Ability of Local and Tribal Emergency Management to Respond to and Recover from Disasters and Emergencies

Issue

The role of local and tribal emergency managers has drastically changed in the last two decades. Emergency managers previously focused on preparations for and response to a disaster “season” (e.g., fall flooding on the west side of the state or summer fire season on the east side). In recent years, local and tribal emergency management agencies must be able to perform the full spectrum of their responsibilities during multiple, recurring, and/or compounding disasters while managing daily preparedness, prevention, and mitigation activities for a variety of expected and unexpected threats and hazards. This new paradigm stretches the capacity and capabilities of local and tribal emergency managers beyond their limits, with no long-term solution to increase staffing levels to support these essential activities and services.

Background and Evaluation

Emergency management, whether local, state, tribal, or federal, represents an expansive body of work that relies on qualified personnel to coordinate planning efforts, engage stakeholders, conduct training and exercises, procure and manage equipment, and simultaneously manage and recover from disasters. While the federal government provides limited and targeted grant funding to support local and tribal emergency management, this funding comes with expectations to meet federal objectives and burdensome administrative requirements, rather than a focus on the immediate needs of the jurisdictions they support.

The Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency published the National Preparedness Goal prescribes five mission areas (prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery) and 32 core capabilities to measure jurisdictional progress toward these goals^[1]. Achieving such progress entails coordinating multiple, concurrent planning efforts, some of which are requirements for other funding (e.g., the hazard mitigation plan); developing, participating in, and documenting the results of exercises that may involve multiple response agencies and/or community members; delivering; or coordinating the delivery of, training that ensures elected officials, responders, and community members have adequate skills to respond to disasters; helping partner agencies to develop and submit projects for

competitive grants to improve their capabilities; and managing federal emergency management grants received by the jurisdiction. In addition to these expectations, federal grants come with time-sensitive quantifiable organizational and individual reporting requirements that do not directly improve a jurisdiction's emergency response preparedness. To remain eligible for federal grants, organizations must participate in a specific number of exercises and individuals funded by certain grants must complete prescribed courses within strict timelines.

The state also places expectations on local and tribal emergency management. RCW 38.52.070 states that each political subdivision of this state is "directed to establish a local organization or to be a member of a joint local organization for emergency management" that must "submit its plan and program for emergency management to the state director and secure his or her recommendations thereon, and verification of consistency with the state comprehensive emergency management plan, in order that the plan of the local organization for emergency management may be coordinated with the plan and program of the state." The RCW and WAC 118-30 establish very clear parameters for the plan and program, which requires significant effort and allocation of resources to meet this basic requirement.

With increasing frequency, these must be accomplished by local and tribal emergency managers while they are simultaneously coordinating their community's response to and/or recovery from disaster. "All disasters begin and end locally" remains a basic premise of emergency management doctrine^[2]. To adequately respond, local and tribal emergency managers maintain and staff emergency operations centers, which coordinate support to their first responders. When the response is over, local, and tribal emergency managers also often serve as a primary point of contact for recovery efforts, activities that may take years to complete^[3].

Local and tribal governments may place additional requirements on their respective emergency management organizations, such as county codes requiring the local emergency management agency to coordinate hazardous materials incidents^[4]. This appears more common in Washington's larger counties, and those counties appear to make a greater local investment to ensure their emergency management department remains adequately staffed. Unfortunately, most counties and tribes remain insufficiently staffed and funded to meet federal and state requirements, perform the full scope of what an effective emergency management program entails, and respond to and recover from incidents and disasters.

The 2023 FEMA-required State Preparedness Report for Washington State indicated significant resource gaps to effectively prepare for, respond to, and recover from the identified threats and hazards in our state.

Most local and tribal emergency management programs are in critical need of additional staff. Many small counties and tribes have only one or two full-time personnel assigned to emergency management - some have only a part time person. Basic local emergency management requirements and effective disaster response cannot be met with insufficient staffing. During large scale or extended incidents, every county struggles to effectively manage a response while continuing its required emergency management program development and sustainment requirements. For example, Snohomish County was unable to staff its Emergency Operations Center for 40 consecutive days without outside assistance during the 2014 State Route 530

landslide response. Spokane County, Washington’s fourth largest county, was challenged by response and recovery from the devastating Gray and Oregon Road wildfires in August 2023 and required significant emergency management staffing assistance from the state.

Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT) have been used at the federal level for many years, serving as a forward response team during disasters. Federal IMATs are limited to disasters with presidential declarations, which in Washington may come long after the initial response phase is over. The IMAT concept (sometimes referred to as Emergency Management Assistance Teams (EMAT)) can also be applied to state, local, and tribal emergency management, by providing just-in-time trained resources to supplement local emergency management response capabilities. Depending on the scope of the emergency and the capabilities of the jurisdiction, this scalable team could provide EOC support in coordination with existing staff or could temporarily replace staff during prolonged deployments – either to provide rest periods or to allow that jurisdiction’s emergency management staff to ensure existing programs can continue while the disaster is being managed.

Recommendations

It is unlikely that any funding stream will be able to fully and sufficiently staff or fund local and tribal emergency management. These recommendations provide a more immediate stop gap that ensures the jurisdictions with significant capacity limitations are provided immediate surge assistance during a disaster and an opportunity to create a more resilient emergency management program.

- 1. Establish a six-person Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) at the state Emergency Management Division.** This team will provide needed expertise and assistance to local and tribal jurisdictions to help them respond to and recover from incidents and disasters. When not actively responding, team members will assist local jurisdictions with planning, exercising, training, and other technical assistance as required.
- 2. Establish a local and tribal emergency management capacity building grant.** The grant will provide funding equivalent to fifty percent of an FTE to small counties and to tribes. The funding would be matched by local funds to support the establishment of a full-time FTE dedicated solely to emergency management work. This is intended to supplement existing emergency management capabilities and supplanting of local funds will not be permitted.

1. “National Preparedness Goal”, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, last modified March 21, 2023
<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/goal>.

2. DHS/FEMA’s National Incident Management System Frequently Asked Questions (n.d.)

3. For example, the final dedication of the SR-530 Slide Memorial occurred ten years after the incident occurred.

4. Pierce County Code 2.118.030, Powers and Duties, (F).



Address Fire Danger in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Areas

Issue

As the population in Washington grows, housing density increases, and we continue to experience hotter and drier weather conditions, we are seeing an increase in wildfires occurring in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones.

Background

As the need for housing grows, building development increasingly pushes into Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones. This can have disastrous results. For example, in the 2023 Gray Road fire in Medical Lake and Oregon Road fire in Elk, the proximity of residential areas to wildland spaces resulted in the loss of two lives and significant property losses. Combined, the two fires destroyed 366 homes and 710 structures with a tax assessed value of more than \$166 million. Also, in 2023, the Winona fire in Winona burned down the main rail trestle serving the town's grain facility. The Bolt Creek Fire in Snohomish County in 2022 not only threatened homes, but also critical infrastructure by shutting down a heavily used state highway and a main rail line that handles large volumes of rail service across the Cascades. The 2023 Ft. Steilacoom Park fire in Lakewood came dangerously close to burning through a densely populated suburban neighborhood, like the 2023 wildfire in Lahaina, Hawaii.

The competing priorities of housing development, critical infrastructure, environmental protection, and wildfire mitigation measures may work against each other to undermine the resilience needed to protect populations in WUI zones. This could result in significantly greater losses of human life, property, and critical infrastructure unless we take significant steps to mitigate the threat.

Evaluation of Issue

Washington has experienced a steady increase in population, which is expected to top 8 million in 2024, with more than 71 percent of this growth occurring in the five largest metropolitan counties — Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Spokane. This population growth has outpaced housing growth which resulted in further expansion into undeveloped and traditionally fire-prone areas. For example, the amount of land in WUI zones has increased 33 percent since 1990 while housing units in those areas have increased by 58 percent. Currently, 32 percent of all residential structures in the state are in WUI zones.

Many jurisdictions are adopting land use policies that increase housing density by allowing smaller lot sizes, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), and loosening requirements for off-street parking. Stricter building codes can help mitigate the risk of wildfire to structures but also increase costs at a time when affordable housing is in short supply. Current land use planning may not fully consider the risks of natural hazards, particularly wildfires. These measures can

all negatively impact community resiliency by increasing the number and density of vulnerable residences in wildfire prone areas, restricting access by firefighting equipment, and hindering adequate firefighting water supply.

Balancing urban development with the preservation of green spaces becomes crucial in mitigating the impact of rising temperatures. Trees provide natural shade, help regulate temperatures, and serve as a crucial component in the overall resilience of ecosystems. Many jurisdictions are instituting stricter regulations for tree removal to preserve the benefits of an increased tree canopy. However, this can be at odds with creating defensible space around structures in WUI zones, a key mitigation tactic.

Addressing the fire danger in the WUI requires a comprehensive approach that balances proactive land use planning, housing needs, environmental protections, and mitigation measures to ensure the safety and sustainability of communities.

Recommendations:

- 1. Develop a statewide strategic plan specifically for the prevention and mitigation of wildfires in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones.**
 - a. Create a working group comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders to develop an inclusive long range, strategic plan that addresses the needs of all types of communities across the state. At minimum, the plan should address:
 - i. Critical infrastructure coordination
 - ii. Land use policy development for WUI areas (and all natural hazards):
 1. Growth Management Act
 2. City/County Comprehensive Plans
 3. Building codes
 - iii. Public engagement
- 2. Conduct statewide WUI hazard mapping and risk assessment that will accurately identify areas of high risk to better inform land management and land use policies.**
 - a. Develop a standard definition of what constitutes Wildland Urban Interface/Intermix zones.
 - b. Complete statewide WUI hazard and risk mapping as required by SB 6120 (2024 Legislative Session).
 - c. Develop a WUI Risk Assessment Tool to assist local jurisdictions in accurately evaluating the risk in identified WUI hazard zones to guide local jurisdictions in determining protection and mitigation measures.
 - d. Assess critical infrastructure vulnerability in WUI zones.
- 3. Advocate for the implementation of regulatory mechanisms for homeowner insurance policies aimed at protecting property owners from unjust termination or exorbitant premium increases.**
 - a. Request legislation that would prevent the statewide wildfire hazard or risk maps from being used as a basis for increasing premiums, canceling policies, or refusing to renew existing policies.
 - b. Collaborate with the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, insurance companies, and community stakeholders to ensure proper coverage is available in post-disaster areas.

- 4. Implement a statewide public engagement program which supports more resilient communities and increases the public's situational awareness.**
 - a. Support higher density areas with the development of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP).
 - b. Increase support of defensible space programs such as Firewise and Fire Adapted Communities.

- 5. Increase the response capability of critical resources to local jurisdictions during wildfire events.**
 - a. Provide funding for the deployment of All Hazard Incident Management Teams to support local jurisdictions during wildfire events. Current fire mobilization reimbursement does not cover the costs, making them unaffordable to local jurisdictions.



Ensure that People with Limited English Proficiency Get the Information They Need in an Emergency

Issue

Messaging systems and message translation services, which are imperative tools to provide emergency information to the public, have limitations that affect the ability to message critical information to targeted geographic areas in the required languages.

Background

The Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) is a system that broadcasts public safety messages (AMBER Alerts, earthquake early warning alerts, and tsunami alerts) over the commercial cellular system. Customers with compatible mobile phones can receive geographically targeted, text-based messages alerting them to threats to safety in their area. This system is managed by the Washington State EMD. Although this system is useful, it is limited in the number of characters that can be used in a single message. It is also difficult for the alert sender, using WEA or Reverse 911, to know what languages the message must be sent in to reach limited English proficiency populations. Any required translation may delay notification and would require multiple notifications for a single event.

The National Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) is FEMA's national system for local alerting and serves as the backbone for the WEA messaging and other emergency messaging systems such as National Weather Radio and radio/television alerts via the Emergency Alert System.

Evaluation of Issue

There is currently no standardized list of language translation requirements in each jurisdiction. Being equipped with this data will allow an emergency messaging plan to be developed and emergency messaging to be effectively delivered. If a jurisdiction does not understand language needs prior to an incident, there can be significant delays in securing qualified translators.

When an emergency or disaster occurs, there is no guarantee that language translation services will be immediately available for all required languages. These services must be contracted in advance, if in-house services do not exist, and is compounded in complexity because emergencies do not always occur during regular business hours.

Many challenges still exist with the National Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS). EMD conducted a survey through social media after the IPAWS test earlier this year. Results showed that 85-90 percent of customers successfully received the message as planned; however, some users also reported anomalies that they received the message multiple times, in different languages, or did not receive the message at all. Current demographic information is critical for alerting authorities to have to ensure all communities receive the right information within an appropriate amount of time.

Recommendations

- 1. EMD should work with FEMA, the FCC, wireless providers, and other public safety authorities to update the WEA messaging system.** WEA should be adjusted to include more characters, so all pertinent information can be provided in an alert. Artificial Intelligence speech translation is usually adequate in meeting the needs but is not 100 percent accurate for all dialects.
- 2. EMD should establish a task force to create a pool of pre-translated messages or on-call resources.** While counties have made progress translating messages that are frequently shared and are working to ensure non-English messages reach their intended audiences, a statewide pool of pre-translated messages or on-call resources for little/no notice translation or a single statewide mass notification system with vetted translation capability would enhance efforts.



Prioritize Cybersecurity Risk to Critical Infrastructure

Issue

Cyber-attacks are increasing in frequency and sophistication. Given the central role of critical infrastructure systems in the everyday functioning of society, cyber-attacks impacting these systems can create severe consequences for our state’s residents, economy, and environment. The potential for these severe impacts motivates threat actors to target our critical infrastructure through attempts to gain unauthorized access to computer systems, networks, data, or other valuable assets. This threat highlights the need for our state to be proactive in securing the information and operational technologies necessary to operate these critical systems and facilities.

In addition to the apparent impacts from disruption of critical infrastructure – especially life-safety, life-sustaining, and quality-of-life services relied on by people in Washington – organizations that experience these events are also subject to regulatory and financial punitive actions:

- The Federal Trade Commission is aggressively enforcing the False Claims Act. This can result in additional fines and potentially consent decrees to perform continuing oversight. This is especially true of sectors doing business with federal agencies, notably the Department of Defense.
- Privacy information, when exposed through cyber-attacks and due to emergent statutes, such as the California Consumer Privacy Act, is now the cause of nearly immediate class action suits that can run into the millions of dollars.
- Claims of executive negligence are now appearing routinely. Gartner, a Connecticut-based technology research and consulting firm, predicted in 2020 that “three in four CEOs will be held ‘personally liable’ for cyber-attacks and security incidents regarding cyber-physical systems (CPSs) by 2024.” Indeed, the University of Minnesota, Paypal, and others are currently facing lawsuits for negligence.
- Insurance companies, as the de facto cyber regulators for all sectors, will deny claims if it is determined that attestations regarding the presence and effectiveness of cybersecurity controls do not match the findings after an incident, thus impairing the ability to transfer risk.

It must be noted that the regulatory and financial punitive actions just referenced are not limited to critical infrastructure cybersecurity. These actions are, and will continue to be, applied to information security programs irrespective of industry.

Background

The Cybersecurity Advisory Committee (CAC) to the state’s Emergency Management Council was created per Senate Bill 5518 to “provide advice and recommendations that strengthen cybersecurity in both industry and public sectors across all critical infrastructure sectors.” The CAC is authorized by [RCW 38.52.040](#) and will meet regularly throughout the year and provide formal recommendations to this annual report. The CAC held its first meeting on October 26, 2023. This introductory meeting produced initial recommendations to help frame the group’s approach to strengthening cybersecurity for critical infrastructure.

Organizations Represented on the CAC

- Washington Air National Guard, Cyber Plans & Operations
- BNSF Railway
- WA Department of Commerce, State Energy Office
- Costco
- Washington Department of Financial Institutions
- City of Everett
- Asotin County
- Critical Insights
- Washington Department of Health, Office of Drinking Water
- Department of Homeland Security, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
- Washington Military Department, Emergency Management Division
- Microsoft
- NoaNet
- Washington Secretary of State’s Office
- PISCES International
- Washington State Auditor’s Office
- Port of Tacoma
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- University of Washington
- Washington State Fusion Center
- Verizon
- Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech)

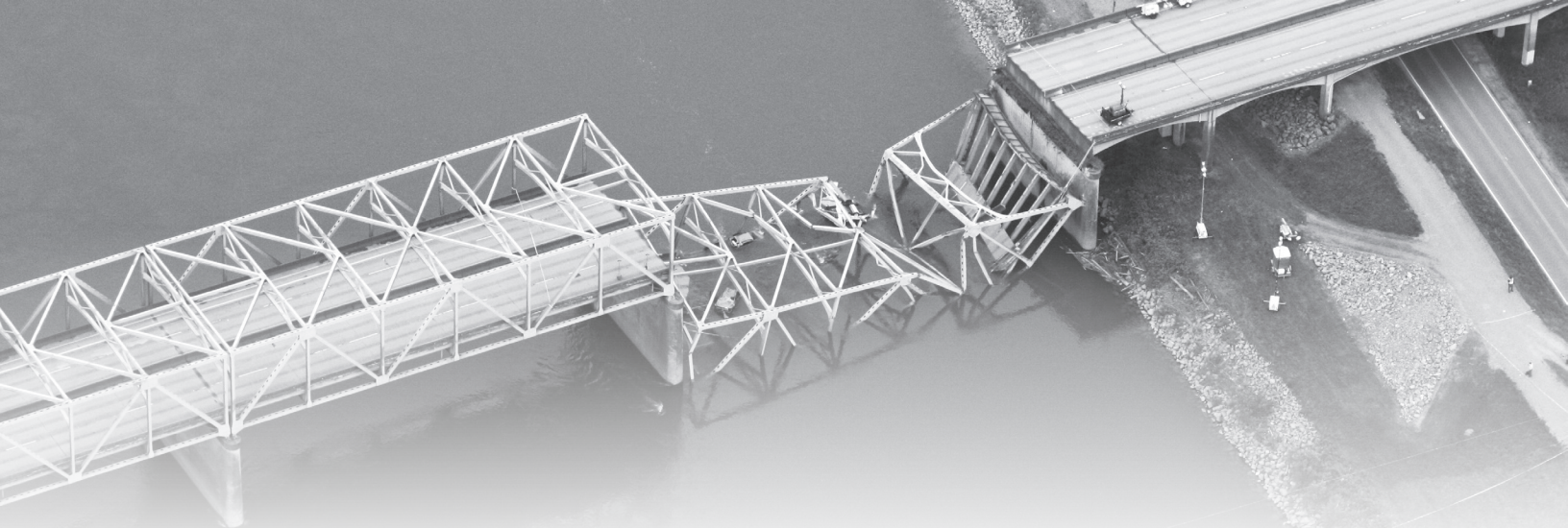
Evaluation of Issue

At the national level, the methodology for defining critical infrastructure and our approach to protecting it from natural and human-caused hazards comes from [Presidential Policy Directive 21](#). This directive is further implemented by the [National Infrastructure Protection Plan \(2013\)](#). This plan provides a framework for all levels of government and private sector critical infrastructure owner/operators to “strengthen the security and resilience of the Nation’s critical infrastructure by managing physical and cyber risks through the collaborative and integrated efforts of the critical infrastructure community.” To provide context for what constitutes critical infrastructure, these documents lay out detailed descriptions of 16 sectors, each with a Sector-Specific Plan:

Chemical Sector	Financial Services Sector
Commercial Facilities Sector	Food and Agriculture Sector
Communications Sector	Government Facilities Sector
Critical Manufacturing Sector	Healthcare and Public Health Sector
Dams Sector	Information Technology Sector
Defense Industrial Base Sector	Nuclear Reactors, Materials, and Waste Sector
Emergency Services Sector	Transportation Systems Sector
Energy Sector	Water and Wastewater Systems Sector

Recommendations

- 1. Define a methodology for characterizing cybersecurity risk and vulnerability to guide committee recommendations and inform a statewide critical infrastructure cybersecurity strategy.** Determine a statewide methodology for quantifying and characterizing cybersecurity risk by sector and for the critical infrastructure community. The National Institute of Science and Technology’s (NIST) Cybersecurity Framework (CSF) should be validated as the guiding principle for a risk management framework. The CAC should determine where additional guidance is needed and consider additional resources such as the Center for Internet Security’s (CIS) Critical Security Controls. Once a risk management methodology is determined, the advisory committee can move toward creating a statewide cybersecurity strategy for critical infrastructure. A strategy should explore baseline cybersecurity goals for owner/operators that align across sectors and consider sector-specific issues.
- 2. Explore an approach that identifies state agencies as sector-specific leads to facilitate cybersecurity advice and recommendations for each of the 16 critical infrastructure sectors.** As outlined in the National Critical Infrastructure Protection Plan, the federal government recognizes Sector Specific Agencies (SSAs) for each critical infrastructure sector. These SSAs provide specific coordination and advice to their assigned sectors. As Washington pursues coordinating cybersecurity advice and recommendations across all 16 critical infrastructure sectors, it should determine which state agencies best serve as coordinating entities for a given sector. In some sectors, this is pre-determined by existing state law. E.g., RCW 43.21F.045 authorizes the Washington State Department of Commerce to “Prepare and update contingency plans for securing emergency infrastructure against all physical and cybersecurity threats.” In other sectors, there is no clear authorization for a state agency to lead coordinating efforts.
- 3. Document all federal and state laws that pertain to cybersecurity for critical infrastructure owner/operators and cross-examine them for consistency and policy gaps.** Washington has a diverse community of critical infrastructure organizations. Our state’s infrastructure varies in ownership from small, publicly owned, and operated utility districts to some of the world’s largest corporations. This variation increases the potential for inconsistency between cybersecurity preparedness and response requirements across organizations and sectors. Aggregating and analyzing all relevant federal and state laws will provide insight into current policy gaps and opportunities for the state to pursue to streamline regulation and improve the cybersecurity posture for specific sectors and the critical infrastructure community.
- 4. Prioritize cybersecurity technical assistance and resources to critical infrastructure with the most significant risk and least capacity to manage risk.** Significant disparities in cybersecurity capabilities and regulatory requirements exist between critical infrastructure owner/operators. Efforts to coordinate cybersecurity improvements across these sectors must account for these disparities to manage risk and maximize security improvements effectively. While a given sector may have significant regulatory requirements for cybersecurity, another sector may lack any regulation. To account for these variations, statewide support for improving cybersecurity should prioritize critical infrastructure owner/operators who have the least capabilities and greatest need for technical assistance and support resources.



Take Steps to Mitigate Known Hazards and Reduce the Risk of Disasters

Issue

More must be done to meet the ongoing challenge of reducing the potential for disaster in Washington.

Background

Disaster risk continues to increase in Washington, due to the combination of more frequent and severe climate-related natural hazard events (e.g., floods, wildfires) along with continued development and population growth in hazard-prone areas (e.g., in high-risk seismic zones in western Washington). The resources required to reduce these risks long-term are substantial and should include investments in hazard mitigation and resilience projects as well as planning-related efforts, such as hazard analysis.

Evaluation of Issue

Washington's Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan (SEHMP) was approved by FEMA Region 10 in October 2023. This approval ensures all state agencies are eligible to apply for and receive FEMA hazard mitigation assistance (HMA) grants. The approval also ensures certain kinds of disaster recovery funding is available statewide after a presidential disaster declaration. Most of Washington's disaster resilience efforts are funded between the use of HMA grants and disaster recovery funds that are designed to "build back stronger." Between them, Washington is administering hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funding on disaster resilience.

However, the risk reduction need is far greater. Washington has a dynamic hazardscape that includes climate-related events, such as flooding and wildfire, as well as geological events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanoes. It can be argued that the risk associated with all these hazards is increasing in some capacity. Quantifying the amount of increase, as well as establishing quantifiable relationships among risk drivers, is needed to understand this issue more exactly.

Current efforts to reduce natural hazard risk statewide include:

- Improved outreach and partnership building between EMD and local emergency management agencies on developing strong and implementable hazard mitigation plans.
- Updating the 2012 State Integrated Climate Response Strategy, including continued involvement from EMD's Mitigation staff.
- Conducting scientific research and analyses to help communities understand and evaluate flood risks.

- Updating geological hazard maps, such as seismic hazard maps, and prioritizing areas for more detailed mapping.
- Continued push to increase the number of tsunami vertical evacuation towers in highly vulnerable communities.
- Reducing flood risks through integrated management of floodplains throughout the state.
- Continued development of an updated unreinforced masonry database, which will help the state better understand seismic vulnerabilities statewide.

While the approval of our SEHMP marks a significant step towards bolstering the state’s resilience to a range of natural hazards, and the above (and other) actions show Washington’s commitment to disaster resilience, they also underscore the pressing need for continued and expanded efforts in risk reduction. Washington’s diverse hazardscape demands a multifaceted approach, and ongoing initiatives such as improved outreach, updated climate response strategies, and scientific research are critical components of this endeavor. However, as the risks associated with climate-related and geological events continue to evolve, there is a clear imperative to enhance our understanding of these dynamics and further strengthen our mitigation measures. By harnessing federal funding effectively and prioritizing proactive strategies, Washington can strive towards a more resilient future for all its communities.

Recommendations

1. Bolster state funding to support hazard mitigation projects and planning-related activities. Additional state funding is needed to address the escalating risks posed by climate-related disasters and seismic events in Washington. Such funding would enable the implementation of vital projects aimed at mitigating these risks. This should include further investments in integrated floodplain management initiatives like Floodplains by Design. By bolstering these efforts, the state can enhance its capacity to manage flood risks effectively, safeguarding communities and infrastructure from the devastating consequences of inundation events.
2. Furthermore, increased state funding is essential to provide comprehensive support for measures such as defensible space creation, wildfire fuels reduction, and the establishment of Firewise communities across both eastern and western Washington. Despite the growing threat of urban conflagrations, federal programs currently lack the flexibility to adequately fund wildfire resilience projects in urban areas. Recent incidents, including the catastrophic destruction witnessed in Malden due to the Babb Road Fire, the damage sustained by homes in Pierce County during the Sumner Grade Fire, and the extensive loss of structures in Medical Lake during the Gray Fire, underscore the urgent need to address this gap in funding at the state level.
3. Moreover, the state must allocate funding to support existing programs responsible for analyzing and assessing disaster risk. Establishing a dedicated hazard analysis and resilience planning program within the EMD’s Disaster Resilience Unit would be a strategic step forward. This program could facilitate the development of data-driven and scientifically sound natural hazard analyses, enhance statewide hazard mitigation and resilience planning efforts, and offer technical assistance to local and tribal partners across various natural hazard types.

By investing in these critical areas, Washington can fortify its resilience against the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change and seismic activity. State-funded initiatives aimed at mitigating these risks will not only protect lives and property but also contribute to the long-term sustainability and well-being of communities statewide. In prioritizing such investments, Washington can proactively confront the evolving threats posed by natural hazards.

4. Continue and grow seismic and tsunami resilience. State funding must encompass a wide array of critical initiatives aimed at enhancing resilience across lifeline sectors. This includes bolstering port resilience measures, advancing vertical evacuation structure construction, and continuing to implement key lessons from CR22 and the Resilient Washington State initiative. While recent legislative actions, like the passage of SB 5933, have expanded funding access for school retrofitting and relocation projects, the lack of planning capacity at the district level poses a significant barrier to effectively leveraging state and FEMA mitigation funds. To address this, investments should not only support physical improvements but also provide resources for schools to develop hazard mitigation plans and decision-making tools.

Moreover, prioritizing the construction of vertical evacuation structures is essential for coastal resilience, yet coastal communities struggle to secure funding for these projects and associated infrastructure enhancements. Additional support is also needed to fortify port facilities, ensuring swift recovery post-earthquake and tsunami events to mitigate economic disruptions. These efforts are crucial not only for immediate disaster response but also for long-term adaptation to rising sea levels and associated hazards such as king tides and storm surges, which pose ongoing threats to coastal areas.

Furthermore, as updates are made to the unreinforced masonry database, targeted funding should be directed towards retrofitting critical structures such as schools, hospitals, and emergency facilities. Recognizing the lifeline role these structures play in communities, investment in their resilience is paramount for safeguarding lives and infrastructure against seismic risks.

Hazardous Materials Report

The Revised Code of Washington, Chapter 38.52.040(2), requires an annual assessment of coordination of hazardous materials planning and response activities as part of the EMC Annual Report. This section is intended to fulfill that requirement.

The State Emergency Response Commission (SERC), a subcommittee of the EMC, coordinates hazardous chemical planning and carries out the mandate of the federal Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), which provides guidance to communities in planning for chemical emergencies.

Currently, SERC membership includes 26 individuals who represent the interests of state and local government, emergency services, private industry, and the environment.

In 2023, the SERC met regularly and below are highlights:

Training

Grant-funded training through the WSP/State Fire Marshal's Office was conducted throughout the state. The training involved hazardous materials in awareness, operations, technician, hazmat on-scene incident command, hazmat safety, and other specialized training courses. More than 270 responders received training in hazardous materials.

The SERC continues to provide training and annual events for Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) members, SERC members, and first responders. The first event of 2023 was the Westside HazMat Workshop held at Camp Murray, WA, February 24-26. The hazmat workshops primarily aim to train a first responder audience. Local governmental agencies, state agencies, and private partners have attended for further education. Topics presented at the workshop were the 10th CST capabilities presentation and hands-on learning with equipment, railroad safety, hazmat detection equipment, lithium-ion battery topics, and future local fire code implications.

In 2023, SERC support staff developed two new courses for members of the SERC and LEPC. The first course is entitled Washington State LEPC 101. It educates all LEPC and SERC members on the primary requirements of the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-know Act (EPCRA). The LEPC 102 course is more in-depth and specifically instructs LEPC community coordinators and officers on the more administrative aspects of meeting EPCRA requirements. The first online presentation of both courses, LEPC hosted more than 130 participants.

Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know (EPCRA) Compliance

Nearly 5,000 Washington businesses submit annual Tier Two Emergency & Hazardous Chemical (Tier Two) reports as required under the Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA). State and local planners use collected Tier Two information to identify potential chemical hazards within their jurisdictions. First responders also depend on Tier Two information, such as the business location and emergency contact information; how many people are typically on-site; and chemical-specific information, like physical and health hazards, the maximum and average amount of chemicals on site, and storage locations. First responders can access this information through the Department of Ecology's EPCRA Viewer app. Ecology collects and manages EPCRA information under Chapter 70A.415.020 RCW and WAC 118-40.

LEPC Planning Status

The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act of 1986 (EPCRA, formerly known as SARA, Title III) requires each state to have a SERC. In accordance with EPCRA, federal Public Law 99-499, and 38.52.040(3), RCW created the SERC, which adopted its administrative guidelines under Washington Administrative Code 118-40. Two of the SERC's primary responsibilities include designating the districts for LEPCs and reviewing LEPC plans. Currently, the Washington SERC has designated 43 LEPCs.

LEPCs must develop an emergency response plan and review the plan annually at a minimum. These plans aim to prepare and plan for chemical emergencies and ensure community awareness of the chemical risks around them. LEPCs develop plans with stakeholder participation. Federal regulations in EPCRA clearly state that LEPCs shall have a training program, exercise their plans at least once a year, review their plans every year, and update this plan every five years. These requirements enforce the basic emergency management concept of the preparedness cycle. The intent of the preparedness cycle ensures a process that continually improves plans and improves response capabilities of local communities.

Currently, 32 of the 43 Washington State LEPC hazardous material plans meet or exceed the nine EPCRA planning requirements. These nine planning requirements are broken down into a checklist of 77 items. The LEPCs with insufficient plans are working on their plans or need more resources for a fully functional LEPC. The SERC is considering combining LEPCs by changing the designation of Local Emergency Planning Districts to alleviate the resource demands of local communities to meet these requirements. The first revision to redefining the local emergency planning districts will be a request from the Cowlitz County LEPC and the Wahkiakum County LEPC to combine their planning districts into one LEPC.

Managing the Risk of Lithium-Ion Batteries

Lithium-ion (rechargeable batteries) continues to be a topic of interest. The Energy and Lithium-Ion Battery Symposium in Lacey, WA, is intended to train approximately 200 responders from around the state. This training includes basics on Lithium-ion batteries, strategies and tactics for electric vehicle fire response, cleanup, and disposal, legislation on battery stewardship and residential energy, toxicology of Lithium-ion batteries, and several firsthand accounts of incidents involving energy storage systems.

An energy systems workgroup consisting of state agencies and fire responders was formed in 2023. The mitigation process and responder safety are paramount, as is incident analysis. As residential energy storage systems become more prevalent, they present a hazard with thermal runaway, code enforcement, fire investigations, building inspections, and more.

Hazardous Material Capability Gap

A hazardous material capability assessment was conducted in early 2023. This survey aimed to assess each hazardous material team's capabilities and find improvements and gaps in functionality and training. Based on hazmat response and mutual aid, the SERC sent the assessment to fire defense regions to determine gaps in response coverage. Also, a hazardous material capabilities workgroup is being formed with representation from LEPCs, Washington State Fire Chiefs Association, EMD, and WSP to look at hazmat capabilities throughout the state. The goal of this group and assessing this capability gap is to create and bring forward legislation to state legislators to look at regional teams and funding sources.

Conclusion

The following EMC recommendations are representative of important issues affecting statewide disaster preparedness in 2023. This is not an exhaustive list and rather serves as a guide for the Governor to assist the state in bridging these identified gaps.

Summary of Recommendations

Issue	Recommendation(s)
Take measured steps to manage the potential impacts of artificial intelligence (AI) on emergency management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide additional training for all state government employees and an AI toolkit for local government. 2. Establish a state task force to create response expectations if AI is nefariously used in a way that disrupts our ability to effectively respond to or recover from an emergency or disaster. 3. Expand legislation to prohibit intentional misinformation, disinformation campaigns, or deep fake digital manipulation as it relates to incidents and emergencies, and disaster prevention, mitigation, response, and recovery; and detail associated agency responsibilities and legal consequences. 4. Establish an EMD-led task force to collect, coordinate, and share AI best practices and policies as they develop.
Improve the ability of local and tribal emergency management to respond to and recover from disasters and emergencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a six-person Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) at the state Emergency Management Division. 2. Establish a local and tribal emergency management capacity building grant.
Address fire danger in wildland urban interface (WUI) areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a statewide strategic plan specifically for the prevention and mitigation of wildfires in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones. 2. Conduct statewide WUI hazard mapping and risk assessment that will accurately identify areas of high risk to better inform land management and land use policies. 3. Advocate for the implementation of regulatory mechanisms for homeowner insurance policies aimed at protecting property owners from unjust termination or exorbitant premium increases. 4. Implement a statewide public engagement program which supports more resilient communities and increases the public's situational awareness. 5. Increase the response capability of critical resources to local jurisdictions during wildfire events.

<p>Ensure that people with limited English proficiency get the information they need in an emergency</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. EMD should work with FEMA, the FCC, wireless providers, and other public safety authorities to update the WEA messaging system. 2. EMD should establish a task force to create a pool of pre-translated messages or on-call resources.
<p>Prioritize cybersecurity risk to critical infrastructure</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define a methodology for characterizing cybersecurity risk and vulnerability to guide committee recommendations and inform a statewide critical infrastructure cybersecurity strategy. 2. Explore an approach that identifies state agencies as sector-specific leads to facilitate cybersecurity advice and recommendations for each of the 16 critical infrastructure sectors. 3. Document all federal and state laws that pertain to cybersecurity for critical infrastructure owner/operators and cross-examine them for consistency and policy gaps. 4. Prioritize cybersecurity technical assistance and resources to critical infrastructure with the most significant risk and least capacity to manage risk.
<p>Take steps to mitigate known hazards and reduce the risk of disasters</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bolster state funding to support hazard mitigation projects and planning-related activities. 2. Continue and grow seismic and tsunami resilience.

The EMC welcomes feedback and further discussion on this report and any other statewide emergency preparedness topics. We stand ready to assist you in the next steps toward create a more resilient and prepared state.

Looking to the Future

2024 Legislative Session Review

Although the 2024 legislative session was a short session typically focused on supplemental state government needs, it was an important one for emergency management.

A state Public Infrastructure Assistance program was enacted into law with House Bill 2020. The state budget provided \$250,000 for a study of best practices to help guide the bill's implementation and rulemaking.

The state budget also provided \$361,000 for a study on state building codes and construction standards for earthquake and tsunami resilience.

The **Governor's Emergency Assistance Fund** received \$1,000,000.

House Bill 1012 passed and includes \$1.5 million for the state's **Extreme Weather Events Grant Program** at EMD. These grants will be provided to local governments and federally recognized tribes for costs to respond to community needs during periods of extremely hot or cold weather or in situations of severe poor air quality from wildfire smoke.

House Bill 1924 tasked the state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council and the state Department of Health with establishing a fusion energy work group of state agencies to identify and evaluate new and existing permitting, siting, licensing, and registration pathways for producing fusion energy. The state agencies in the work group include, but are not limited to, the Department of Ecology, the Governor's Office, and the Military Department. The work group must involve the regulated community throughout the process and provide an initial report to the Governor and the Legislature by December 1, 2024.

Senate Bill 6164 established that any local organization that produces a local comprehensive emergency management plan must include in its communication plan an expeditious notification of citizens at risk during a Type 1 or Type 2 hazardous materials spill or release. The state Department of Ecology must provide for at least one public meeting to inform the public about the hazardous material spill or release.

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) is the compilation of all permanent laws in force in our state. Every legislative session results in changes to the RCW – some large, some small. Amendments are added and repealed laws are removed. Chapter 38.52 is the RCW governing Emergency Management. **The Legislature passed two focused updates to the RCW** adding tribal participation to the emergency worker program and expanding mutual aid participation to include special purpose districts and taxing districts (Chapter 38.56.020).

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) are the rules that codify the RCW. The Emergency Management Council is tasked with the review of these administrative rules that govern state, local, and tribal emergency management practices, and with recommending necessary revisions to them. **The EMC will begin a review of relevant rules this year.**

House Bill 1947 moved the administration of the **Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) to EMD** from WaTech effective June 6, 2024.



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