Washington State Emergency Management Council

2024 Annual Report to the Governor

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June 30, 2025

The Honorable Bob Ferguson
Governor of the State of Washington
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Ferguson:

On behalf of the Washington State Emergency Management Council (EMC), I am honored to present the 2024 EMC Annual Report on the status of statewide emergency preparedness. This document fulfills the EMC's statutory responsibility to provide an annual assessment of statewide emergency preparedness (RCW 38.52.040) and contains recommendations the EMC believes will improve the state's emergency preparedness. The EMC members, constituents, and partners 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 appreciate your support of the EMC'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,

Kirk Holmes
Chair, Washington State Emergency Management Council
Director of Public Works
Emergency Services Division
Perteet Inc.

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) of Washington's Military Department.

Scope: This EMC Annual Report covers the 2024 calendar year and contains recommendations the Council believes will improve the state's emergency 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 emergency management partners.

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: Act Now to Secure Future Funding for Emergency Management in Washington

Synopsis: The growing uncertainty surrounding the status of FEMA and the potential loss of funding to support state and local emergency management agencies poses significant challenges to Washington's ability to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters. The federal government is currently signaling a potential dismantling of FEMA, and calling on states, localities, and Tribes to assume primary responsibility for emergency and disaster management. While greater local ownership and innovation in emergency preparedness is essential, the abrupt withdrawal of federal leadership and funding could be catastrophic. Instead, a balanced approach is needed—one that preserves federal coordination while fostering sustainable, locally-driven solutions.

Recommendations

1. **Oppose any federal action that dismantles FEMA** without a realistic and equitable alternative framework in place.
2. **Support reform that strengthens FEMA's role** in disaster coordination, technical assistance, and grant funding.
3. **Support investment in local self-reliance** through sharing of best practices and new financial tools, such as catastrophe insurance products and community resilience bonds.
4. **Support state-led capacity-building grants** targeted to local and tribal emergency management agencies.
5. **Enable state and/or local legislation** that allows counties or municipalities to implement dedicated fees to support for emergency preparedness and response.
6. **Fund the state's Public Infrastructure Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA) programs.**
7. **Establish a state resilience innovation fund** to pilot and scale innovative local financing models.
8. **Create a General Fund State mechanism** to sustain the state's emergency response capabilities, as well as its 24/7 Alert and Warning Center systems.
9. **Support ongoing commitment to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)** to support and maintain statewide interoperability.

Issue #2: Fund a Study to Identify Tax Incentives to Mitigate Earthquake Risk to Unreinforced Masonry Buildings

Synopsis: Washington faces the second highest risk of damaging earthquakes in the nation and is home to thousands of Unreinforced Masonry (URM) buildings that are highly vulnerable during earthquakes. Damage to these structures poses a threat to public safety, economic stability, and our emergency response capabilities. While seismic retrofitting can greatly reduce potential damages, the high cost remains a major barrier for property owners. A study on tax incentives is needed to identify ways to make retrofitting more financially viable.

Recommendations

1. **Fund the study.** Allocate $400,000 through a budget proviso to conduct a comprehensive tax incentive study that would encourage seismic retrofitting of URM buildings.
2. **Engage stakeholders.** Ensure input from county assessors, the Washington State Department of Revenue, tenant rights groups, and preservation organizations to design effective, equitable incentives.
3. **Pursue legislative solutions.** Use the study findings to inform future legislation that enables sustainable financial support for URM retrofits.

Issue #3: Address the Coordination Challenges Created by Public Safety Power Shutoffs During Periods of High Wildfire Risk

Synopsis: Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) are the pro-active de-energization of electrical lines during high wildfire risk to prevent electrical equipment from sparking fires. If done without proper notification or coordination, PSPS can cause challenges for first responder partners and vulnerable populations.

Recommendations

1. **Engage.** Washington should continue to positively engage with utilities to establish best practices in the deployment of Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and to situate PSPS in a broader wildfire mitigation toolbox.
2. **Provide guidance.** The Washington State Department of Commerce's Energy Resilience and Emergency Management Office should publish guidance and a framework to direct the development of PSPS policies toward best practices. They should work with the Wildfire Mitigation Planning Workgroup to socialize best practices and allow for peer learning.

Issue #4: Strengthen Safety and Infrastructure for Washington's Electric Vehicle Transition

Synopsis: Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.392.020 establishes a target that 100 percent of passenger vehicles and light duty vehicles of model year 2030 or later that are sold, purchased, or registered in Washington be electric vehicles. As our communities make this transition, it is important that local governments are prepared for the decisions and actions necessary to effectively protect the public. Additional work is needed to support local communities' understanding of electric vehicles, their related infrastructure, and potential safety impacts of new EV products and services.

Recommendations

1. **Launch a statewide EV fire response training initiative for first responders.** Develop and deliver standardized, state-funded EV safety training across all emergency services.
2. **Fund protective equipment for firefighters responding to EV incidents.** Provide one-time grant funding through WSP/SFMO to resource rural, volunteer, and under-resourced fire departments.
3. **Mandate EV fire safety training for tow operators and provide PPE grants.** Revise Chapter 46.55 RCW to require employers to provide EV fire response training for tow truck operators.
4. **Strengthen environmental reporting and coordination on EV fire impacts. I**mprove hazardous material release notification protocols by updating procedures under WAC 173-303-145 and related RCWs.
5. **Equip law enforcement and support data-driven incident response.** Fund EV-specific PPE and training for law enforcement officers.

Issue #5: Strengthen Community Readiness for Utility-Scale Battery Storage

Synopsis: Concerns about the installation and usage of utility-scale battery energy storage systems (BESS) have arisen as the technology is more widely adopted. In addition to the utilities themselves, local governments, firefighters, other first responders, and community members all have questions about the safety of BESS from their own perspectives.

Recommendation

1. **Develop incident response training.** The project would be in partnership with a local utility company with an active BESS to serve as a replicable training tool used throughout the state.

Issue #6: Prioritize Reducing the Cybersecurity Risk to Critical Infrastructure

Synopsis: As our state faces increased frequency and severity of cybersecurity incidents, it must continue to address the ever-changing cyber landscape and address urgent threats to critical infrastructure. It is imperative for our state to hear directly from the sectors on the front lines, cleverly augment existing options for security, streamline the path to new ones, and remain cognizant of administrative and regulatory burdens already being placed on these sectors by their federal governing bodies.

Recommendations

1. **Establish a statewide cybersecurity volunteer response team.** Create a public-private volunteer team modeled after other state efforts to provide rapid cyber incident response and triage, leveraging existing emergency worker programs and Washington's cyber expertise.
2. **Develop sector-specific cybersecurity action plans.** Following the National Security Council's water sector model, require each critical infrastructure sector in Washington to create tailored cybersecurity plans, ensuring sector-specific risks and strategies are addressed.

3. **Expand cyber support to state and local agencies**. Increase funding to the State Auditor's Office to enhance its free, standardized cybersecurity assessments for local governments, helping it identify and mitigate vulnerabilities.
4. **Sustain and expand SLCGP-driven collaboration.** Continue supporting the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP), ensure match funding, and integrate local cybersecurity project support into ongoing state budget planning beyond the grant's end.
5. **Create a Critical Infrastructure Threat Intelligence Center (CITIC).** Establish a centralized center combining threat intelligence and security operations to support vulnerable infrastructure sectors, enabling cross-sector collaboration, advanced threat detection, and a unified statewide cyber defense strategy.

Issue #7: Build Resilience by Addressing Growing Disaster Risks in Washington

Synopsis: Disaster risks in Washington state are increasing due to more frequent and severe climate-related hazards (e.g., floods, wildfires), continued development in hazard-prone areas (e.g., seismic and tsunami zones), and aging infrastructure. While progress has been made in hazard mitigation and preparedness, more must be done to reduce disaster risks.

Recommendations

1. **Increase funding for hazard mitigation.** Boost investment in hazard mitigation, especially for maritime infrastructure, seismic retrofits, and flood management across Washington.
2. **Enhance seismic and tsunami resilience.** Prioritize funding for evacuation structures, seismic retrofits (including URM buildings), and critical infrastructure upgrades, while expanding support to school districts and coastal communities.
3. **Expand public outreach and education.** Provide stable state funding for EMD's outreach programs to ensure continued education on hazard preparedness and resilience statewide.
4. **Support hazard analysis and resilience planning.** Provide the state with funding to strengthen hazard mitigation planning and support local and tribal partners, especially underserved communities, in building 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 EMC believes will improve the state's preparedness.

In 2024, local, state, tribal, and federal emergency management partners were focused on severe winter weather, elections, and a severe fire season that resulted in four federal Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG) totaling almost $51 million, as well as a submission requesting a federally declared disaster for a bomb cyclone weather event.

This report covers the 2024 calendar year. The recommendations contained in this report are based on assessments of certain events, activities, and emerging issues identified by the council.

The EMC recognizes that this annual assessment is a representation of the opportunities our partners 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 recommendations provided in previous annual reports, and those recommendations continue to be supported by the EMC.

Act Now to Secure Future Funding for Emergency Management in Washington

Issue

The growing uncertainty surrounding the status of FEMA and the potential loss of funding to support state and local emergency management agencies poses significant challenges to Washington's ability to prepare for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters. The federal government is currently signaling a potential dismantling of FEMA, and calling on states, localities, and Tribes to assume primary responsibility for emergency and disaster management. While greater local ownership and innovation in emergency preparedness is essential, the abrupt withdrawal of federal leadership and funding could be catastrophic. Instead, a balanced approach is needed—one that preserves federal coordination while fostering sustainable, locally-driven solutions.

Background

For more than forty years FEMA provided access to critical resources, financial assistance, and coordination during disasters. Its effectiveness is grounded in the Stafford Act, the Code of Federal Regulations, other legislation, and is reinforced through bipartisan support for federal disaster aid. Meanwhile, the frequency and intensity of disasters, the need for local resilience and financial autonomy is growing. State and local governments are exploring supplementary funding options like catastrophe bonds, parametric insurance, and dedicated emergency response sales taxes. In parallel, states can play a stronger role in distributing capacity-building grants to local and tribal agencies that often lack access to scalable resources.

Without adequate federal support, communities may be forced to rely more heavily on state and local resources, which could strain already limited budgets and undermine the effectiveness of disaster response efforts. The erosion of funding could lead to gaps in crucial preparedness programs, leaving vulnerable populations at greater risk during crises. However, this uncertainty also presents an opportunity for innovation in community-driven resilience efforts. By fostering stronger partnerships between local governments, private sector partners, and community organizations, we can create more sustainable, adaptive systems that prioritize local needs and ensure that emergency management remains a shared responsibility. Moving forward, a reimagined emergency management framework will need to balance the reliance on federal aid with a greater emphasis on community empowerment, resourcefulness, and collaboration to navigate an increasingly unpredictable future.

Evaluation of Issue

More than $120 billion in federal disaster aid since 2005 illustrates FEMA's vital role, particularly in supporting under-resourced and rural areas. At the same time, innovative tools are emerging. For instance, California's Earthquake Authority and North Carolina's flood resilience bonds demonstrate how insurance-based mechanisms can supplement federal aid. Colorado and California have considered or implemented local option sales taxes dedicated to disaster response funding. State-administered grants to Tribal and rural communities can help bridge equity gaps, enabling more tailored, grassroots approaches to emergency management. A decentralized model without federal support would fracture coordination, but a hybrid model—grounded in both federal backbone and local ingenuity—can lead to a more resilient future.

Recommendations

1. **Oppose any federal action that dismantles FEMA** without a realistic and equitable alternative framework in place.
2. **Support reform that strengthens FEMA's role** in disaster coordination, technical assistance, and grant funding.
3. **Support investment in local self-reliance** through sharing of best practices and new financial tools, such as catastrophe insurance products and community resilience bonds.
4. **Support state-led capacity-building grants** targeted to local and tribal emergency management agencies.
5. **Enable state and/or local legislation** that allows counties or municipalities to implement dedicated fees to support emergency preparedness and response.
6. **Fund the state's Public Infrastructure Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA) programs** to support communities and people in the aftermath of incidents and disasters.
7. **Establish a state resilience innovation fund** to pilot and scale innovative local financing models.
8. **Create a General Fund State mechanism** to sustain state and local emergency response capabilities, as well as its 24/7 Alert and Warning Center systems.
9. **Support ongoing commitment to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)** to support and maintain statewide interoperability.

Fund a Study to Identify Tax Incentives to Mitigate Earthquake Risk to Unreinforced Masonry Buildings

Issue
Washington faces the second highest risk of damaging earthquakes in the Nation and is home to thousands of Unreinforced Masonry (URM) buildings that are highly vulnerable during earthquakes. Damage to these structures poses a threat to public safety, economic stability, and our emergency response capabilities. While seismic retrofitting can greatly reduce potential damages, the high cost remains a major barrier for property owners. A study on tax incentives is needed to identify ways to make retrofitting more financially viable.

Background
Washington has the second-highest seismic risk in the United States. URM buildings—common in historic districts and often used for affordable housing and small businesses—are particularly prone to collapse in earthquakes. Statistical models suggest the state can expect earthquake building damages of $1.2 billion in any given year, generating more than a million tons of debris, and injuring and displacing hundreds of thousands of people. More than 80,000 people are expected to need sheltering after an earthquake. Deaths, damages, and economic losses can be reduced by conducting seismic retrofits of URM buildings.

Washington's URM buildings suffered extensive damage during earthquakes in 1945, 1969, and 2001. Similar earthquakes around the world have shown just how vulnerable URM construction can be if left unmitigated, contributing to billions of dollars in economic losses, environmental impacts, disaster response and recovery costs. Expanding upon the 2018 ESSB funded statewide inventory of URM buildings executed by the Department of Commerce and guided by recommendations from the SB 5557 (2019) bill report, the state Seismic Safety Subcommittee (SSSC) of the state's Emergency Management Council agreed with the recommendation of a study on tax incentives to reduce the financial impacts associated with seismically retrofitting URM buildings.

The city of Seattle, with the support of the Washington State Department of Commerce, requested a $400,000 budget proviso in 2025 to study tax incentives that could reduce financial obstacles to retrofitting, and it was not funded.

Evaluation of Issue
URM buildings contribute to the architectural character of many Washington communities and provide space for underserved populations. However, without seismic upgrades, they pose a severe safety risk.

Seattle alone has more than 1,100 URM buildings used by an estimated 25,000 people daily. Despite repeated efforts since the 1970s to mandate retrofitting, no progress has been made

due to the financial burden on owners—costs can approach $1 million per building.
Since 2018, the state has continued to identify URM buildings in cities like Everett and Tacoma and explored solutions to support retrofits. Stakeholder meetings included county assessors, tenant advocates, historic preservationists, and property owners. These discussions informed the scope of the proposed study.

The proposed study would analyze the feasibility and potential impact of modifying various tax mechanisms—such as special valuation, property and excise taxes, current use designations, and assessment zones—to support seismic retrofits.

Recommendations

1. **Fund the study.** Allocate $400,000 through a budget proviso to conduct a comprehensive tax incentive study that would encourage seismic retrofitting of URM buildings.
2. **Engage stakeholders.** Ensure input from county assessors, the Washington State Department of Revenue, tenant rights groups, and preservation organizations to design effective, equitable incentives.
3. **Pursue legislative solutions.** Use the study findings to inform future legislation that enables sustainable financial support for URM retrofits.

Address the Coordination Challenges Created by Public Safety Power Shutoffs During Periods of High Wildfire Risk

Issue
Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) are the pro-active de-energization of electrical lines during high wildfire risk to prevent electrical equipment from sparking fires. If done without proper notification or coordination, PSPS can cause challenges for first responder partners and vulnerable populations.

Background
In 2018, the Camp Fire in California ignited and spread into developed areas and destroyed homes. Attributed to a faulty transmission line, the fire caused 85 civilian fatalities and caused an estimated $16.65 billion in damage. This event triggered legislation in CA to hold utilities liable for fires their equipment sparks. That resulted in utilities and citizen groups ratifying the "Public Safety Power Shutoff" concept, which is now spreading to other wildfire-prone states. Public Safety Power Shutoffs are voluntary, proactive de-energization of electrical distribution lines in response to extreme fire weather.

Washington had a similar event in 2020. The Babb Road Fire was ignited by electrical infrastructure destroying the towns of Malden and Pine City. This event triggered a shift in public opinion toward holding utilities legally responsible for electrical ignitions of fires. A Seattle Times article written in January, 2022, "When utilities spark wildfires in Washington, they can 'burn down your house and get away with it'" illustrates the frustration felt by residents and state officials at the lack of accountability and calls for legislative action.

As Washington prepared to write legislation responding to this new threat, California's PG&E was enacting its own PSPS policies, de-energizing millions of customers for many days. In 2023, a class action lawsuit was brought against PG&E by customers for $2.5 billion in damages for spoiled food and medicine and lost income. Ultimately, the lawsuit was settled in PG&E's favor, but the image of poorly coordinated PSPS events and the pain they can cause for customers and utilities influenced a shift in Washington's stance toward more holistic legislation requiring Wildfire Mitigation Plans (WMP) rather than requiring PSPS policies.

Commerce's Energy Resilience and Emergency Management Office (EREMO) worked with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to draft legislation requiring electric utilities to develop WMPs. Washington chose this direction because, unlike California which has a different environmental context, requiring PSPS policies universally is not the right solution for most Washington utilities. By April of 2023, HB 1032 was signed into law requiring all electric utilities operating in Washington to write and maintain a WMP. The law does not require electric utilities to have PSPS policies but does ask that they document all mitigation activities (including PSPS policies) in their WMPs. This was done to encourage utilities to make PSPS policies a last resort.

Two more noteworthy events occurred in quick succession and clarified the need for WMPs. In August of 2023, the Gray Fire was caused by faulty outdoor lighting owned by an electric utility. It burned 10,085 acres and destroyed 259 structures. Also, in August of 2023 the Hawaii fires, ignited by electrical lines blown down onto dry grass, caused widespread damage and killed at least 101 people. This event was notable because Hawaii was not considered at high risk for wildfires. This solidified commitment to writing WMPs by utilities in Washington who are also not historically at risk for wildfires in places like the Olympic Peninsula and coastline.

In December 2023, EREMO established the Washington Wildfire Mitigation Planning workgroup to support utilities developing WMPs. The Workgroup introduced a template, identified datasets for assessing wildfire risk, and allowed for sharing of mitigation strategies.

By the summer of 2024, four utilities had published PSPS policies along with WMPs. By the end of 2024, most utilities had submitted a WMP, and several more were considering PSPS policies in the next year. EREMO staff began researching best practices and developing guidance to help mitigate the impacts of deploying PSPS events.

Evaluation of Issue

A consistently resilient and reliable electrical grid is the goal for Washington. Power outages – from any cause - can prevent critical infrastructure from providing services like water, healthcare, and other life sustaining activities. Outages can also hurt vulnerable populations—particularly medically power-dependent people who rely on electricity to operate durable healthcare equipment—and through food, formula, and medication waste, and through loss of heating or cooling. Additionally, outages can interrupt business and financial transactions which are critical for the health of the community.

These challenges are made worse when the execution of PSPS events are poorly coordinated and notifications miss critical partners or customers. For example, a de-energized line can cut power to water pumps first responders are using to fight fire. It is important for utilities to work closely with public safety partners to understand the downstream consequences of planned outages to minimize the damage caused by the outages.

Recommendations

1. **Engage.** Washington should continue to positively engage with utilities to establish best practices in the deployment of Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and to situate PSPS in a broader wildfire mitigation toolbox.
2. **Provide guidance**. EREMO should publish guidance and a framework to direct the development of PSPS policies toward best practices. It should work with the Wildfire Mitigation Planning Workgroup to socialize best practices and allow for peer learning.

Strengthen Safety and Infrastructure for Washington's Electric Vehicle Transition

Issue
Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.392.020 establishes a target that 100 percent of passenger vehicles and light duty vehicles of model year 2030 or later that are sold, purchased, or registered in Washington be electric vehicles. As our communities make this transition, it is important that local governments are prepared for the decisions and actions necessary to effectively protect the public. Additional work is needed to support local communities' understanding of electric vehicles, their related infrastructure, and potential safety impacts of new EV products and services.

Background
The Washington State Patrol State Fire Marshal's Office (SFMO), per the direction given in SSB 5812, conducted a study of electric vehicle fires which includes impacts to the environment and surrounding residential areas, health impacts to responding firefighters, and best practices for fire response, cleanup, and disposal efforts. Released in January of 2025, The Electric Vehicle Fire Study includes 18 recommendations, "…represent[ing] an implementable and pragmatic approach that allows policy recommendations."

Evaluation of Issue
There are an increasing number of fires in Washington involving electric vehicles and mobility devices requiring emergency response operations. First responders, including fire, law enforcement, and tow truck operators require appropriate training and equipment for safe incident response. According to the SFMO study, "EV cars will soon represent a large percentage of passenger vehicles and light trucks on Washington State's roads and will also come to represent a similar proportion of vehicle crashes and fire responses."

With increased EV and plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) utilization comes additional energy infrastructure in residential, industrial, and agricultural areas. Commercial EV charging stations, residential charging infrastructure, and energy battery storage systems are becoming more commonplace. These energy systems add complexity to emergency response operations in the event of fires.

EV batteries and related energy systems are still evolving, continually posing new challenges in emergency planning and response. As outlined in the SFMO study, some of the risks battery fires can pose include:

- Battery cells burn at a slightly higher temperature than internal combustion engine fires.
- Additional toxic gases, including heavy metal particulates are released when lithium-ion batteries go into thermal runaway, an uncontrollable temperature increase that can

result in catastrophic failures like fires or explosions.
- Gases generated during thermal run away may build up in enclosed spaces such as garages, vehicle compartments, and shipping containers which can result in an explosion. The explosion can result in death or serious injury to those in proximity to the location of the fire.
- Damaged batteries can reignite hours or days after they are initially extinguished.
- EVs involved in collisions may ignite or reignite while in transport or in storage.

Emergency response tactics change in these new environments, requiring different knowledge, training, and equipment for first responders. EVs are designed and built differently than other vehicles, complicating the rescue of victims. Even with caution, extraction activities themselves can trigger an unexpected thermal runaway event. Towing or storing a damaged EV or PHEV comes with risks of reignition of a battery fire. Fires related to these vehicles have occurred on tow trucks, in tow yards, in recycling facilities, and on trucks or ships transporting damaged EVs and hybrid vehicles to bulk recycling.

Hazmat concerns for firefighters and areas surrounding an EV fire have been identified. A 2024 study confirmed "…high concentrations of lithium, nickel, cobalt, manganese, and copper were detected during each lithium-ion thermal runaway event, with lithium being the most dominant." This results in the need for use of specific safety equipment and requires firefighting PPE to be removed from service and isolated after an EV fire event.

Recommendations
From the 2025 Electric Vehicle Fire Study:

1. **Launch a statewide EV fire response training initiative for first responders.** Develop and deliver standardized, state-funded EV safety training across all emergency services, ensuring responders are equipped with up-to-date tactics, tools, and protocols for EV-related incidents.
2. **Fund protective equipment for firefighters responding to EV incidents.** Provide one-time grant funding through WSP/SFMO to equip rural, volunteer, and under-resourced fire departments with specialized PPE and equipment necessary for safe EV fire response and hazmat containment.
3. **Mandate EV fire safety training for tow operators and provide PPE grants.** Revise Chapter 46.55 RCW to require employers to provide EV fire response training for tow truck operators. Direct DOL to distribute training resources and establish a state grant program to fund PPE for tow personnel.
4. **Strengthen environmental reporting and coordination on EV fire impacts.** Improve hazardous material release notification protocols by updating procedures under WAC 173-303-145 and related RCWs. Establish an interagency working group to assess and coordinate environmental and health responses to EV fire events.
5. **Equip law enforcement and support data-driven incident response.** Fund EV-specific PPE and training for law enforcement officers. Expand data collection and sharing across agencies to track EV-related incidents, improve situational awareness, and guide future safety policies.

Strengthen Community Readiness for Utility-Scale Battery Storage

Issue
Concerns about the installation and usage of utility-scale Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) have arisen as the technology is more widely adopted. In addition to the utilities themselves, local governments, firefighters, other first responders, and community members all have questions around the safety of BESS from their own perspectives.

Background
Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) are devices that allow for the storage and release of generated power. They can range from small batteries used in mobile phones, to larger devices used in electric cars, to utility-scale. Utility-scale BESS, also known as grid-scale batteries, utilize significantly larger systems for energy storage, deploying those stores to support electrical grid needs. Maintaining a stable, reliable, and resilient power grid is a primary goal for Washington and utility-scale BESSs play a growing role toward that end.

The size, material composition, and capabilities of battery storage systems continue to evolve at a relatively rapid pace. Factors such as where the battery is in relation to the grid and the chemistry or mechanism used to store electrical energy play roles in determining the size and capabilities of a utility-scale BESS. Those factors can also influence siting considerations, safety concerns, and emergency response plans and procedures.

Evaluation of Issue
As electric utilities begin to plan for and deploy utility-scale BESSs, three related areas of significant concern have initially emerged: hazards, training, and siting.

Hazards
Installed, utility-scale BESS come with risk of failure inherent in other energy infrastructure, including fire and explosion. Compounding those events could be health risks from released toxins, and risk of shock waves radiating away from the initial event site. Battery siting and isolation factors can influence additional impacts such as spreading fire ignition to other infrastructure.

Unanticipated, utility-scale BESS failures are not yet a common event in the United States, and have decreased globally by 97 percent as response activities bring lessons learned. These failure events are, however, increasing in the U.S. over time; with an increase from two in 2021, to 10 failures in 2023. When they do occur, emergency response protocols, even when developed,

are often being tested for the first time in real-world situations. Tested, best-practice based, hands-on emergency training programs that are flexible and scalable to meet utility BESS characteristics do not yet exist to meet the needs in Washington.

Training
As articulated by the Washington State Fire Marshal's Office, when addressing utility-scale BESS, there are currently no standards for what "competency" looks like for first responder training. Information on standards and best practices is just now being developed – influenced by real-world events such as the 2024 Moss Landing fire near Monterey, CA. While National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 855 Standard for the Installation of Stationary Energy Storage Systems requires the owner of an energy storage system to provide safety training, without developed and agreed upon standards or curriculum, that requirement is difficult to meet.

Siting
Local governments and communities are also at a disadvantage within the rapidly changing energy technology landscape. Utility-scale, electrochemical BESS are just beginning to be installed widely in Washington and thus, local governments often encounter utility-scale BESS for the first time at the permitting process stage. Local leaders are then tasked with making decisions without complete information. The community at large is left uninformed and this has produced significant pushback on siting BESS in Washington. Communities often feel un-consulted – and fear that if a worst-case scenario were to occur, they will have to navigate the consequences without enough information.

Recommendation

1. **Develop incident response training.** The Washington State Fire Marshal's Office is partnering with Commerce's Energy Resilience and Emergency Management Office (EREMO) to collaboratively explore opportunities for the development and delivery of first responder training. A US Department of Energy Blue-Sky Training Grant, if awarded in 2025, could provide initial funding to support this work. The project would develop a training program, in partnership with a local utility company with an active BESS, to serve as a replicable training tool used throughout the state.

Prioritize Reducing the Cybersecurity Risk to Critical Infrastructure

Issue
Critical infrastructure operators across the United States are vigilantly working every day to stay abreast of the latest threat information, interpret regulatory changes and rumors of regulatory changes, and advocate for cultural institutional change to ensure cybersecurity is prioritized in their workplace. There is a myriad of reporting requirements across different federal agencies. To gain greater clarity of the trends of incidents, President Biden signed the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act of 2022 into law. CIRCIA will not go into effect until later 2025 but will hopefully provide a more detailed picture of cyber incidents impacting all regulated critical infrastructure systems.

Currently, the only state reporting requirement is to the Attorney General's Office for any entity that experiences a data breach impacting residents or consumers. The most recent annual report states that 11.6 million data breach notes went out to Washingtonians, a significant increase over the last seven years of data reported. This metric represents a notable increase in cybersecurity incidents and is indicative of the increasing risk of more frequent and successful attacks.

As our state faces increased frequency and severity of cybersecurity incidents, it must continue to address the ever-changing cyber landscape and address urgent threats to critical infrastructure. It is imperative for our state to hear directly from the sectors on the front lines, cleverly augment existing options for security, streamline the path to new ones, and remain cognizant of administrative and regulatory burdens already being placed on these sectors by their federal governing bodies.

Background
Throughout 2024, the Washington Cybersecurity Advisory Committee coordinated with public and private entities across the state to best capture and advocate for cybersecurity concerns with critical infrastructure sectors deemed most vulnerable to cyber-attacks, particularly our education system, healthcare, and water/wastewater, especially those in rural and smaller counties.

This cooperation, together with insights gleaned from the results of the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) and other statewide cybersecurity initiatives, resulted in several recommendations generated for the Legislature in the second annual Cybersecurity Advisory Committee – Washington Technology Solutions joint report.

Evaluation of Issue

Between February and May 2024, members of the Committee participated in a series of interviews focused on their sector's cybersecurity culture, posture, and vulnerabilities. These discussions revealed common trends across all critical infrastructure sectors and notable differences between public and private organizations:

- Smaller, underfunded jurisdictions are least capable of defending against and responding to cybersecurity vulnerabilities, due to a combination of personnel, funding, experience, training, and technology gaps.
- All sectors are daily responding to the ever-shifting landscape of cyber vulnerabilities and regulatory guidelines. Regulatory guidelines vary throughout sectors, from nonexistent to decently robust.
- All are affiliated with cyber-centric organizations such as Information Sharing and Analysis Centers (ISACs) and collaborate with federal agencies for guidance and to report cyberattacks. Nevertheless, most members express a desire to reignite a cross-sector, statewide collaborative entity such as the Agora or CIRCAS which previously provided a bridge between cyber services in the state's critical infrastructure sectors.
- Vague and/or poorly delineated liability considerations in the event of a breach, and indeterminate public disclosure laws, leave some sectors and operators reluctant to take a proactive stance to help others if a breach arises, even if they otherwise have the capability.

Recommendations

1. **Establish a statewide cybersecurity volunteer response team.** Create a public-private volunteer team modeled after other state efforts to provide rapid cyber incident response and triage, leveraging existing emergency worker programs and Washington's cyber expertise.
2. **Develop sector-specific cybersecurity action plans.** Following the National Security Council's water sector model, require each critical infrastructure sector in Washington to create tailored cybersecurity plans, ensuring sector-specific risks and strategies are addressed.
3. **Expand cyber support to state and local agencies.** Increase funding to the State Auditor's Office to enhance its free, standardized cybersecurity assessments for local governments, helping them identify and mitigate vulnerabilities.
4. **Sustain and expand SLCGP-driven collaboration.** Continue supporting the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP), ensure match funding, and integrate local cybersecurity project support into ongoing state budget planning beyond the grant's end.
5. **Create a Critical Infrastructure Threat Intelligence Center (CITIC).** Establish a centralized center combining threat intelligence and security operations to support vulnerable infrastructure sectors, enabling cross-sector collaboration, advanced threat detection, and a unified statewide cyber defense strategy.

Build Resilience by Addressing the Growing Disaster Risks in Washington

Issue
Disaster risks in Washington are increasing due to more frequent and severe climate-related hazards (e.g., floods, wildfires), continued development in hazard-prone areas (e.g., seismic and tsunami zones), and aging infrastructure. While progress has been made in hazard mitigation and preparedness, more must be done to reduce disaster risks.

Background
Washington's State Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan (SEHMP) provides a risk-informed strategy to address the state's hazards, ensuring eligibility for federal grants for recovery and mitigation projects. As of January 2025, the SEHMP is tied to about $1.5 billion in funding, including $500 million for pre-disaster hazard mitigation and $1 billion for post-disaster recovery.

The state's location along an active plate margin makes it highly seismically active, with the second-highest earthquake risk in the U.S. It also faces a significant tsunami threat, affecting more than 3,000 miles of coastline, major lakes, and rivers. Washington is home to five active volcanoes, including two of the highest-threat volcanoes in the country. These hazards are low-frequency but high-impact, threatening tens of thousands of people.

In addition to rare hazards, Washington faces cyclical risks like winter storms, floods, and wildfires. Changes in weather patterns have made events like tornadoes and droughts more common. Aging infrastructure, especially those built before the late 1900s, increases vulnerability. Ports, harbors, and military stations are particularly vulnerable to tsunamis, storm surges, and king tides. Wildfires have also demonstrated how hazards can shut down transportation routes, impeding evacuations and supply deliveries. As these hazards increase in frequency and severity, the risks to infrastructure grow.

Vulnerable populations, including the elderly, disabled, and low-income residents, are disproportionately affected. Many of these populations live in rural, high-risk areas, where evacuating or surviving extreme events is especially difficult. Additionally, transient populations like tourists and military personnel are more vulnerable due to their lack of local hazard awareness.

Evaluation of Issue
Over the past decade, Washington has developed hazard-specific programs focused on mitigation, preparedness, and recovery. The Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) oversees the Disaster Resilience Unit, which includes the Hazards Analysis and Resilience Planning (HARP) Section, the Mitigation Section, and the Hazards and Outreach Section. These programs are supported by state and federal funding to improve resilience based on the latest science and best practices.

Current efforts to reduce risks include:

- Assisting local agencies with hazard mitigation planning.
- Producing updated hazard maps (seismic, tsunami, flood).
- Supporting tsunami vertical evacuation structure projects.
- Publishing tsunami maritime response and mitigation strategies.
- Managing flood risks through integrated floodplain management.
- Partnering with the Department of Ecology and Washington Sea Grant to address coastal resilience.
- Creating the HARP unit for data-driven disaster resilience decisions.
- Developing a database to track unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings for seismic retrofitting.
- Coordinating statewide outreach efforts like the Great ShakeOut earthquake/tsunami drill.

Despite these efforts, Washington's hazard landscape requires continuous work. While SEHMP approval is a significant step, there's a need to expand mitigation, outreach, and climate response strategies, and scientific research for long-term resilience.

Washington is at a critical juncture in addressing the growing risks from natural hazards. By increasing investment in hazard mitigation, improving resilience, and expanding public outreach and education, the state can better prepare for the challenges posed by climate change and seismic activity. Continued investment in these areas will protect lives, infrastructure, and communities, ensuring a safer future for Washington residents.

Recommendations
1. **Increase funding for hazard mitigation.** To address growing climate and seismic risks, Washington must increase investment in hazard mitigation, particularly for maritime infrastructure along the outer coast and the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Funding should also support retrofitting seismically vulnerable buildings across the state to withstand earthquake shaking and manage flood risks effectively.
2. **Enhance seismic and tsunami resilience.** State funding should prioritize initiatives to improve seismic and tsunami resilience across key sectors. This includes expanding tsunami vertical evacuation structures, strengthening maritime resilience, and applying lessons learned from programs like Cascadia Rising '22 and Resilient Washington State. While SB 5933 has expanded funding for school retrofitting, many districts need additional support to effectively use these funds. Legislative efforts like HB 1810 should continue to address seismic retrofits for URM buildings, with increased outreach to raise awareness of their importance. Coastal communities face challenges securing funding for evacuation structures, and additional support is needed for these projects. Additionally, as seismic codes and the URM database are updated, funding should focus on retrofitting or replacing critical infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, and emergency facilities.

3. **Expand funding for public outreach and education.** The Hazards and Outreach Section of EMD's Disaster Resilience Unit heavily relies on federal grants, making the sustainability of these programs uncertain. These programs educate tens of thousands of people annually about hazard mitigation, preparedness, and response. Dedicated state funding is needed to ensure these efforts continue and expand, improving local capacity for disaster preparedness and response across Washington.
4. **Support hazard analysis and resilience planning.** Washington should allocate additional funding to support the HARP unit, which provides data-driven decision-making for disaster resilience. This support will improve SEHMP implementation and help local and tribal partners develop effective hazard mitigation plans, ensuring underserved communities have the resources they need to improve resilience.

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 2024, the SERC met regularly and below are highlights:

Training
Grant-funded training through the Washington State Patrol's (WSP) State Fire Marshal's Office was conducted throughout the state. Training involved Hazardous Materials in Awareness, Operations, Technician, Hazmat On-Scene Incident Command, Hazmat Safety, and other specialized training courses. More than 2,000 responders received training in hazardous materials during 2024.

The SERC continues to provide training and annual events essential to the SERC responsibility in WAC 118-40 to provide the state with EPCRA and hazardous material education for Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) members, SERC members, and first responders. Events included annual hazardous materials workshops, an annual LEPC/Tribal Emergency Planning Committee (TEPC) conference, and additional quarterly education opportunities. Topics of interest covered included rail safety, energy and lithium-ion topics, capabilities and access to federal response teams, pipeline safety, planning, exercise resources, legislative updates, incident lessons learned, and various other relevant issues.

Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know (EPCRA) Compliance
More than 5,000 Washington businesses submit annual Tier Two Emergency & Hazardous Chemical (Tier Two) reports as required under EPCRA. These reports provide information about types, quantities, and locations of hazardous chemicals, as well as each site's emergency contacts.

State and local planners use collected Tier Two information to identify potential chemical hazards within their jurisdictions to develop community emergency response plans. First responders depend on Tier Two information to safely respond to accidents at these businesses and to other community emergencies. First responders can access this information through the Washington State Department of Ecology's EPCRA Viewer app. Ecology collects and manages EPCRA information, pursuant to Chapter 70A.415.020 RCW and WAC 118-40.

LEPC Planning Status
In accordance with EPCRA, federal Public Law 99-499, and 38.52.040(3), RCW created the SERC, which adopted its guidelines under Washington Administrative Code 118-40. Two of the SERC's primary responsibilities include designating Local Emergency Planning Districts for LEPCs and reviewing LEPC plans. Currently, the Washington SERC has designated 41 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. 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, 29 of the 41 Washington LEPCs have working hazardous material plans that meet or exceed the nine EPCRA planning requirements.

Hazardous Material Capability Gap
A HazMat capability assessment was conducted in early 2023. The purpose of this survey was to assess the capabilities of each hazmat team and find improvements and gaps in functionality and training. The survey was sent to the nine fire defense regions based on hazmat response and mutual aid to determine which areas are uncovered. The Washington State Fire Chiefs Association, EMD, and the WSP State Fire Marshal's Office will look at hazmat capabilities throughout the state and head the effort to redo the 2016 CBRN assessment. 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.

Managing the Risk of Lithium-Ion Batteries
On March 19, 2024, Gov. Jay Inslee signed SSB 5812, Chapter 189 2024 laws. This is for a study led by the WSP in consultation with Ecology, local fire protection districts, a representative of the towing and recovery industry, and other entities. The study must look at the following elements of electric vehicle fires:

- Impacts to the environment and proximate residential areas, and health impacts to responding firefighters,
- Best practices for fire response; and
- Best practices regarding clean-up and disposal efforts.

This study was completed in December 2024, after a thorough research and discussion period by the SSB 5812 study group. The study outlines the need for training for all first and second responders as well as training on proper personal protective equipment (PPE) for responders. This includes fire, law enforcement, environmental, and towing and recovery personnel.

Disaster Resilience Report

Washington is increasingly vulnerable to a wide range of natural and human-caused disasters, including earthquakes, floods, wildfires, tsunamis, and pandemics. Disasters disproportionately impact communities of color and other vulnerable populations, highlighting the urgent need for a coordinated, equitable, and well-funded disaster resilience strategy.

In response, the Washington State Legislature enacted House Bill 1728 in 2023, establishing a Disaster Resilience Program within the Emergency Management Division (EMD) of the Washington Military Department. This program is tasked with enhancing coordination across agencies and jurisdictions, maximizing investments, supporting hazard mitigation, and addressing resilience gaps across the state, as well as submitting a report about these efforts to the Legislature by June 30, 2025.

Since its launch in 2024, the Disaster Resilience Unit (DRU) has made significant progress by integrating hazard mitigation, outreach, and resilience planning functions. The DRU's efforts have expanded public education, improved technical assistance for local governments, supported tsunami and earthquake risk reduction, and launched planning for climate-resilient infrastructure. This work includes:

- Administering more than $258 million in hazard mitigation grants for critical infrastructure and planning.
- Supporting more than 90 public outreach events and distributing hazard signage and emergency radios.
- Assisting coastal communities with tsunami evacuation planning and identifying seismically vulnerable buildings.
- Launching the Hazards and Resilience Planning (HARP) program to improve hazard analysis, flood modeling, and climate resilience strategies.
- Partnering with state agencies on programs like #FloodAwarenessWeek and the development of the State Enhanced Hazard Mitigation Plan (SEHMP).

Despite these accomplishments, challenges persist. Federal programs that previously supported disaster mitigation—such as FEMA's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program—have been reduced or eliminated. Meanwhile, Washington faces a projected $16 billion budget deficit over the next four years, limiting the ability to expand state-level resilience efforts.

To address these constraints and build a safer future, the legislative report recommends six strategic actions:

1. **Strengthen state investment in hazard mitigation and resilient infrastructure.** Provide state funding for seismic retrofits, flood protection, and tsunami evacuation structures—especially in coastal and rural communities.
2. **Expand resilience planning and technical assistance**. Increase support for local governments and schools to improve hazard mitigation planning, grant access, and implementation capacity.

3. **Enhance public education, outreach, and equity**. Fund outreach programs that serve high-risk populations and reduce reliance on uncertain federal grants.
4. **Build coastal and maritime resilience.** Support long-term coastal adaptation pathways and infrastructure improvements in vulnerable waterfront areas.
5. **Improve data integration and decision-making tools.** Develop a centralized resilience geoportal and expand hazard mapping and infrastructure inventories to inform better risk-based decisions.
6. **Advance a statewide disaster resilience strategy.** Align resilience planning across agencies through a comprehensive, state-led strategy that integrates climate adaptation, mitigation investments, and potential state-managed insurance programs.

Conclusion

Washington has laid a strong foundation for disaster resilience through strategic legislation, interagency collaboration, and innovative planning tools. However, to truly safeguard its communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems against increasingly complex and costly disasters, the state must invest in and scale its resilience programs. These six recommendations will help Washington become a national leader in disaster preparedness, ensuring a safer, more resilient future for all residents.

Recommendation Recaps

The following EMC recommendations are representative of important issues affecting statewide disaster preparedness in 2024. This is not an exhaustive list and rather serves as a guide for the Governor and the Legislature to assist the state in bridging these identified gaps.

Summary of Recommendations

Issue	Recommendation(s)
Act Now to Secure Future Funding for Emergency Management in Washington	1. **Oppose any federal action that dismantles FEMA** without a realistic and equitable alternative framework in place. 2. **Reform and strengthen FEMA's role** in disaster coordination, technical assistance, and grant funding. 3. **Invest in local self-reliance** through new financial tools, such as natural catastrophe insurance products and community resilience bonds. 4. **Support state-led capacity-building grants** targeted to local and tribal emergency management agencies. 5. **Enable state and/or local legislation** that allows counties or municipalities to implement dedicated sales taxes for emergency preparedness and response. 6. **Fund the state's Public Infrastructure Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA) programs** to support communities and people in the aftermath of incidents and disasters 7. **Establish a state resilience innovation fund** to pilot and scale innovative local financing models. 8. **Create a General Fund State mechanism** to sustain the state's emergency response capabilities, as well as its 24/7 Alert and Warning Center systems. 9. **Support ongoing commitment to the National Incident Management System (NIMS)** to support and maintain statewide interoperability.

Fund a Study to Identify Tax Incentives to Mitigate Earthquake Risk to Unreinforced Masonry Buildings	1. **Fund the study.** Allocate $400,000 through a budget proviso to conduct a comprehensive tax incentive study that would encourage seismic retrofitting of URM buildings. 2. **Engage stakeholders.** Ensure input from county assessors, the Washington State Department of Revenue, tenant rights groups, and preservation organizations to design effective, equitable incentives. 3. **Pursue legislative solutions**. Use the study findings to inform future legislation that enables sustainable financial support for URM retrofits.
Address the Coordination Challenges Created by Public Safety Power Shutoffs During Periods of High Wildfire Risk	1. **Engage**. Washington should continue to positively engage with utilities to establish best practices in the deployment of Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) and to situate PSPS in a broader wildfire mitigation toolbox. 2. **Provide guidance.** The Washington State Department of Commerce's Energy Resilience and Emergency Management Office should publish guidance and a framework to direct the development of PSPS policies toward best practices. It should work with the Wildfire Mitigation Planning Workgroup to socialize best practices and allow for peer learning.

Strengthen Safety and Infrastructure for Washington's Electric Vehicle Transition	1. **Launch a statewide EV fire response training Initiative for first responders.** Develop and deliver standardized, state-funded EV safety training across all emergency services. 2. **Fund protective equipment for firefighters responding to EV incidents.** Provide one-time grant funding through WSP/SFMO to resource rural, volunteer, and under-resourced fire departments. 3. **Mandate EV fire safety training for tow operators and provide PPE grants.** Revise Chapter 46.55 RCW to require employers to provide EV fire response training for tow truck operators. 4. **Strengthen environmental reporting and coordination on EV fire impacts.** Improve hazardous material release notification protocols by updating procedures under WAC 173-303-145 and related RCWs. 5. **Equip law enforcement and support data-driven incident response.** Fund EV-specific PPE and training for law enforcement officers.
Strengthen community readiness for utility-scale battery storage	1. **Develop incident response training.** The project would be in partnership with a local utility company with an active BESS, to serve as a replicable training tool used throughout the state.

Prioritize Reducing the Cybersecurity Risk to Critical Infrastructure	1. **Establish a statewide cybersecurity volunteer response team.** Create a public-private volunteer team modeled after other state efforts to provide rapid cyber incident response and triage, leveraging existing emergency worker programs and Washington's cyber expertise. 2. **Develop sector-specific cybersecurity action plans.** Following the National Security Council's water sector model, require each critical infrastructure sector in Washington to create tailored cybersecurity plans, ensuring sector-specific risks and strategies are addressed. 3. **Expand cyber support to state and local agencies.** Increase funding to the State Auditor's Office to enhance its free, standardized cybersecurity assessments for local governments, helping it identify and mitigate vulnerabilities. 4. **Sustain and expand SLCGP-driven collaboration**. Continue supporting the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP), ensure match funding, and integrate local cybersecurity project support into ongoing state budget planning beyond the grant's end. 5. **Create a Critical Infrastructure Threat Intelligence Center (CITIC).** Establish a centralized center combining threat intelligence and security operations to support vulnerable infrastructure sectors, enabling cross-sector collaboration, advanced threat detection, and a unified statewide cyber defense strategy.

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.

2024 EMC Annual Report