

# Second Report 24 June 2015

## Alstead Emergency Management Study Group Report Regarding Emergency Management

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### **Background:**

The Town of Alstead Board of Selectmen formed the Alstead Emergency Management Study Group (EMSG) to help determine what the Town of Alstead wants and needs for Emergency Services, and is willing to support financially. The EMSG has previously submitted recommendations regarding staffing of the Alstead Police Department.

### **Mission and Goals:**

As reported in our first set of recommendations, the goals of the EMSG are numerous. Basically, the EMSG is a volunteer advisory committee whose role is to gather, identify, and assess information about the public safety needs of the Town, how the Town currently meets these needs, and how we can continue to meet the needs of the Town in the future. The committee has been tasked with reviewing the Police Department (completed, April 2015), the Emergency Management function, the Fire Department, and the Ambulance Squad. Major concerns of the Board of Selectmen are continuing to attract volunteer staffing where needed and to provide the necessary equipment in a cost – effective and efficient manner.

Emergency Management was tasked as our second topic mainly as the current Emergency Management Director (EMD), Clarence Meyer, would like to move on to other opportunities.

### **Information Gathered by the EMSG:**

In order to form the recommendations below, the EMSG reviewed a number of facts and documents. We also met with both Clarence Meyer, EMD for the Town, and Craig Beaulac (Cheshire County Field Representative for NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HS/EM). Documents and presentations included:

- EMD Resource Manual published by New Hampshire Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- A PowerPoint presentation entitled “Why are Local Emergency management Directors Important” by Craig Beaulac (Cheshire County Field Representative for NH HS/EM). This was followed by a Q and A session.
- NH RSA’s 21-P: 39
  - Please note that there is discussion in the pertinent RSA’s of mutual aid, but not regionalization.

The following facts were gathered:

- NIMS (the National Incident Management System) is defined as NIMS is the first-ever standardized approach to incident management and response. Developed by the Department of Homeland Security and released in March 2004, it establishes a uniform set of processes and procedures that emergency responders at all levels of government will use to conduct response operations. Developed by the Secretary of Homeland Security at the request of the President, the National Incident Management System (NIMS) integrates effective practices in emergency response into a comprehensive national framework for incident management. The NIMS will enable responders at all levels to work together more effectively and efficiently to manage domestic incidents no matter what the cause, size or complexity, including catastrophic acts of terrorism and disasters. Federal agencies also are required to use the NIMS framework in domestic incident management and in support of state and local incident response and recovery activities.  
([https://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hsem/Planning/planning\\_muni\\_nimsFAQ.html#A3](https://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hsem/Planning/planning_muni_nimsFAQ.html#A3))
- As mandated by Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5, beginning in FY 2005, adoption of NIMS will be a condition for the receipt of federal preparedness funds, including grants, contracts and other activities.  
([https://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hsem/Planning/planning\\_muni\\_nimsFAQ.html#A3](https://www.nh.gov/safety/divisions/hsem/Planning/planning_muni_nimsFAQ.html#A3))
- Per NH RSA's, "Each political subdivision shall have an organization and director responsible for emergency management. If there is no EMD (Emergency Management Director) appointed, the chief elected official is directly responsible for all local EM activities."
- EMD's are required to complete three FEMA classes for training: ICS 100, ICS 200, and ICS 700. All involve incident command and can be taken online, at one's own pace, with total time of approximately 4 – 6 hours.
- There are many many additional opportunities for training, most online, but some in person. All courses are free although travel is not (grants may be available to cover travel costs). Typically, training is driven by town need and potential hazards.
- An EMD has four main responsibilities:
  - Main point of contact for EM for the town;
  - Updating community plans
    - Local Emergency Operations Plan
    - Hazard Mitigation Plan
    - Radiological Emergency Plan
    - Other plans as needed, typically pertaining to site specific hazards, continuity of operations, and commodities distribution
  - Coordinating relief activities during an emergency
  - Community Outreach
- The EMD is a member of the command staff responsible for coordinating with representatives from cooperating and assisting agencies and organizations.
- The EMD is responsible for coordinating emergency resources during an incident, such as setting up the Emergency Operation Center (EOC), and other

shelters, and meeting special needs for particular individuals. An EOC staffed by volunteers can help dispense aid to the residents. The EMD's laptop connects with the online Web EOC during an emergency.

- The EMD is responsible for community outreach, such as preparedness programs, volunteer programs, community alerting and public health.
- Community plans are typically updated every five years and go to the state and FEMA for review and approval. Grant funding is available to help as some towns hire contractors to write these documents.
  - It was noted that these plans typically require some level of community meeting for review prior to submittal and, once approved, should be made public, typically on a town website.
- The state will support tabletop testing of community plans with grant funding available to support the process.
- The NH Alert app for cellphones will send out alerts on weather, road conditions, public health, and other emergencies.
- The recommendation to stock three days of food and water in preparation for an emergency is for individuals/families, not a requirement for municipalities. This recommendation applies to domesticated pets and livestock as well.
- The state website, <http://www.readynh.gov/index.htm>, has an immense amount of information available developed to provide information and resources to take action and keep one's family safe from emergencies.
  - The federal government has a similar website which can be found at <http://www.ready.gov/>.
- The Town of Alstead does not have a shelter in town that meets the state/proper definition. We do have buildings that have been used to house people during emergencies (the 2005 flood). The Town Offices are used as a warming shelter when needed.
- There are a number of volunteer programs in NH, which are active during disasters (<http://www.volunteernh.org/html/nhcitizencorps.htm>). NH Citizen Corps is the statewide oversight for five nationally recognized volunteer programs:
  - Community Emergency Response Teams - CERT
  - Medical Reserve Corps - MRC
  - Volunteers in Police Service - VIPS
  - Fire Corps
  - Neighborhood Watch
- Another volunteer organization in NH is NHDART – NH Disaster Animal Response Team (<http://www.newhampshiredart.org/>)

**Recommendations:**

The focus of this report and the following recommendations are for the Emergency Management function for the town of Alstead. To develop these recommendations, the EMSG gave much consideration regarding how to pre-organize for disaster recovery and reduce the burden on the community and an EMD. Much discussion was given to the concern that the requirements imposed on communities and their EMD's by FEMA would only increase over time, potentially necessitating the need for permanent employees or regionalization amongst neighboring towns.

The consensus was that there were three main concerns – a key point of contact at any time, manpower availability when an emergency, or disaster occurred, and update of FEMA required plans.

Given the above background, the following recommendations are made to the Alstead Board of Selectmen by the EMSG:

1. It is the consensus of the EMSG that the Town must be in a position to obtain aid from the state and/or FEMA in the case of an Emergency. Therefore, we recommend that the Town have an Emergency Management Director (EMD).
2. We recommend that the EMD be the Chairperson of the Board of Selectmen or another member of the Board of Selectmen. We understand that this will necessitate that the person so designated must complete the three FEMA online training classes. Please note that the Town must provide NH HS/EM with the name of a new EMD.
3. We recommend that there be **at least** one additional person trained to serve as an EMD in the event that the Chair of the Board of Selectmen is unavailable. This person should be either another Selectmen or the Board of Selectmen's designee.
4. We recommend a Town of Alstead COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) be formed. This organization/team could serve to provide support as follows:
  - a. Review and update emergency plans when needed
  - b. Grant writing
  - c. Community Outreach, which could include preparedness education, opportunities for first aid training, working with the local schools, and developing a home guide to emergency preparedness for residents
  - d. Participate in continuous pre-event planning
  - e. Take part in training
  - f. Reaching out to the community to those with special needs who might want assistance in an emergency
  - g. Reaching out to the community to those with special skills who might be willing to provide assistance in an emergency
  - h. Direct assistance to the EMD in times of emergencies
5. We recommend that the town website be updated to include emergency management planning and preparation information including the town's emergency plan. Please note that we have requested an electronic copy of the plan from the current director, Clarence Meyer.
6. We recommend a target date for the transition in the EMD position no later than September 4, 2015 and that the COAD be formed no later than September 18, 2015.