



WORKING PAPER IPP/02¹

Missouri Emergency Management Preliminary Analysis

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Introduction

This working paper is the second contribution to The Missouri Transect Project Community Team’s Integrating Responses to Climate Change within a Regional Resilience Framework. The eventual aim is to provide communities with the capacity and tools to prepare resilience plans that can respond to a range of natural and human-made threats, including climate change. The primary purpose of this paper is to present a preliminary assessment of the organizational arrangements that determine the nature and effectiveness of emergency preparedness, response and recovery across the state of Missouri.

The Legislative Framework

The legislative framework for emergency preparedness, response and recovery in the United States is provided by the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988 (the Stafford Act) and the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The Stafford Act authorizes the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to provide federal funding to states for emergency management through the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), which is the most significant source of emergency management funding in the United States.³ In Missouri, the authority of state government to organize and oversee emergency management derives from Chapter 44 of the Missouri Revised Statutes, which delineates state government functions and responsibilities.

Primary responsibility for the state’s emergency management lies with the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), which is located within the state Department of Public Safety (Figure 1). SEMA

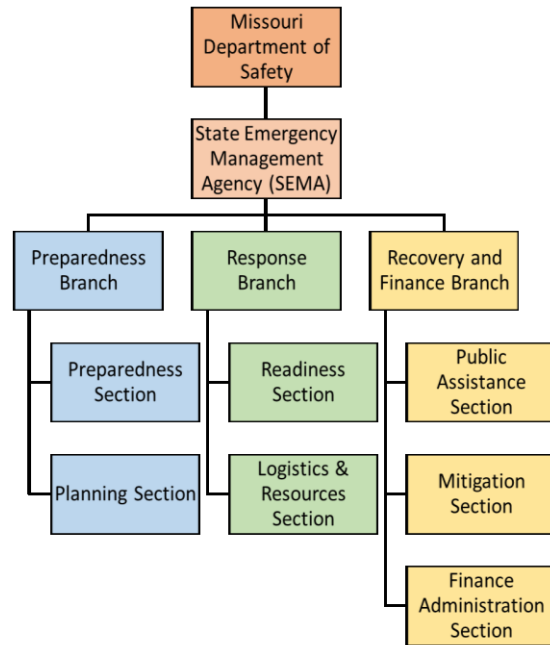


Figure 1: Structure of the State Emergency Management Agency

¹ This material is based upon work supported by the National Science Foundation under Award Number IIA-1355406. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

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³ National Emergency Management Association. 2014 Biennial Report, p. 8.

has 95 full-time employees, and an operating budget of just over \$3,000,000. In addition to federal grants, the state funds its emergency operations with general revenue appropriated by the General Assembly to the Missouri Disaster Fund, which is administered by the Director of SEMA. Funds can be used for emergency management or to implement the state disaster plans. Under Missouri statute, the governor has significant authority in allocating disaster funds.⁴

While SEMA is responsible for statewide emergency management in Missouri, in practice, preparing for and responding to emergencies is a shared responsibility. As a Home Rule state, authority during an emergency is delegated from Missouri state government to its sub-units of governments, so local jurisdictions have the primary responsibility to plan for, respond to and recover from a disaster. However, because these events rarely respect civic boundaries, or may be too big for local jurisdictions to manage alone, local emergency management responsibilities are integrated within a larger statewide and national preparedness and response structure.

To support this structure, SEMA follows the precepts of two important federal documents, the National Response Framework (NRF) and the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF), which provide guidance to the emergency management community to ensure that the nation is prepared for and can respond to all manner of disasters. The NRF includes five key principles of emergency management, known as the “national response doctrine”: Engaged Partnership; Tiered Response; Scalable, Flexible and Adaptable Operational Capabilities; Unity of Effort through Unity of Command; and Readiness to Act.⁵ This paper will consider emergency management in Missouri as it reflects these five principles.

Engaged Partnership

Effectively preparing for and responding to a disaster must be a collaborative effort. The principle of “engaged partnership” is based on the idea that successful emergency management lies in “developing shared goals and aligning capabilities to reduce the risk of any jurisdiction being overwhelmed in times of crisis.”⁶ Missouri has several entities designed to facilitate cooperation and coordination of emergency management. SEMA employs nine **Regional Coordinators** to monitor the emergency response capacity of local jurisdictions, help them develop emergency operations plans, and assist with training (Figure 2).

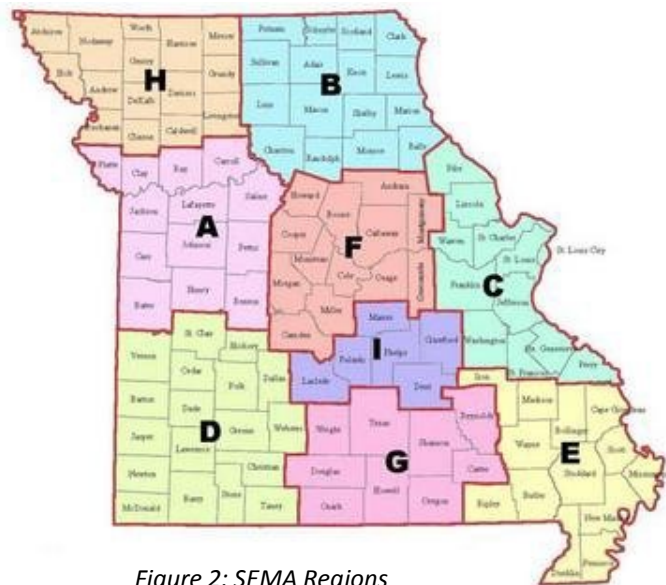


Figure 2: SEMA Regions

The **Missouri Office of Homeland Security (OHS)** also provides planning assistance and oversight through its **Regional Homeland Security Oversight Committees (HSAC)**, which correspond to the same nine regions (both correspond to Missouri’s nine State Highway Patrol regions). The HSACs ensure that homeland security plans are in

⁴ Missouri Revised Statutes, § 44.032.1

⁵ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2013). *National Response Framework*, pp. 5-7.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 5.

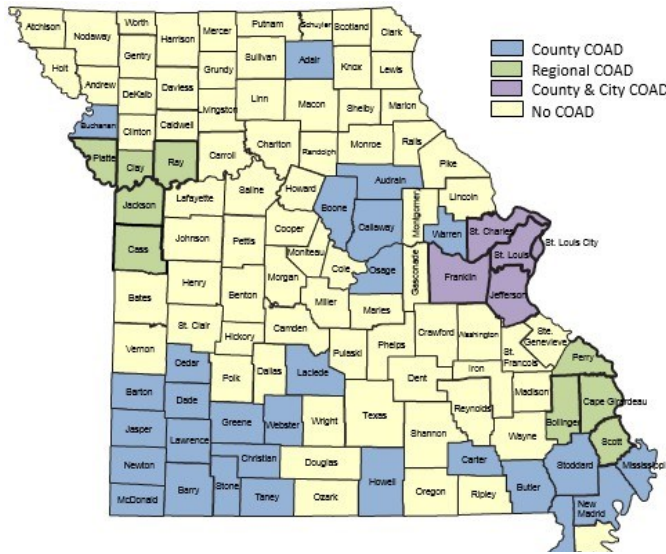


Figure 3: Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs) Areas

place at the state and local level, and that homeland security grant funds are disbursed in a coordinated and efficient manner. Both SEMA and OHS partner with the federal government through FEMA’s Region VII headquarters in Kansas City.

Collaborative organizations also play an important role in this engaged partnership. **Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COADs)**, which can include governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and faith-based organizations, assist local emergency management in planning for community needs in the event of a disaster.⁷ Missouri currently has 31 COADs (Figure 3). **Missouri Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MO VOAD)** coordinates the planning efforts

of many voluntary relief organizations to help ensure a more coordinated disaster response with less duplication of effort.

To further facilitate this cooperation, the state established the **Governor’s Faith-Based and Community Service Partnership for Disaster Recovery (The Partnership)** in 1993, which created a formal relationship between state government, cooperative organizations such as MO VOAD, and volunteer groups, such as AmeriCorps. The Partnership meets quarterly to plan for emergency human service needs after disasters, and to coordinate delivery of those services in an efficient and effective manner. The state has also authorized the direct involvement of the private sector through the **Missouri Public/Private Partnership Committee (MOP3)**. MOP3 provides coordination between Missouri public and private sectors when developing the state’s Emergency Management plan.

Tiered Response

Responding to and recovering from disasters begins and ends at the local level. The principle of a “tiered response” recognizes that incidents should be managed at the lowest possible jurisdictional level and receive additional support when needed. Missouri law requires that all political subdivisions must establish a **local emergency management organization** which is generally a city or county emergency manager supported by city and county government agencies.⁸ This organization is responsible for all aspects of emergency preparedness, including mitigation, planning, response and recovery.

Due to disparities between local government needs and budgets, however, the capacity of local emergency management varies greatly throughout the state. Missouri counties are required to provide 50 percent in matching funds to qualify for EMPG grant monies⁹ and counties which cannot afford the matching funds may be unable to secure a significant amount of federal grant money. Consequently, a county or town with more resources may have a full-time, paid emergency manager, perhaps housed in

⁷ State of Missouri COAD Guidance Manual. (2014).

⁸ Missouri Revised Statutes, § 44.080.1

⁹ DPS: Missouri Department of Public Safety. <http://www.dps.mo.gov/dir/programs/ohs/grantstraining/hsgnants.asp?h=0>

an emergency management center with additional staff, while a county with fewer resources might have a staff member embedded in a different department, such as law enforcement, who works part-time as emergency manager and part-time in another capacity. Other counties may have an emergency manager who serves in a voluntary capacity only.

To help mitigate against these disparities, SEMA’s Regional Coordinators work to ensure that each region has access to the state resources necessary to effectively plan for and respond to an emergency or disaster. If an incident exceeds the response capacity of local emergency management, a state of emergency can be proclaimed by the governor which expands the response effort to include state resources through SEMA’s Response Branch and OHS. Missouri law also grants the governor the authority to “assume direct operational control” over incident command, and to call out the National Guard if necessary.¹⁰ Likewise, if state resources cannot adequately respond to a disaster, the governor, through the director of FEMA Region VII, can request that the President declare a major disaster or emergency, which would then designate the area eligible for federal assistance (Figure 4).

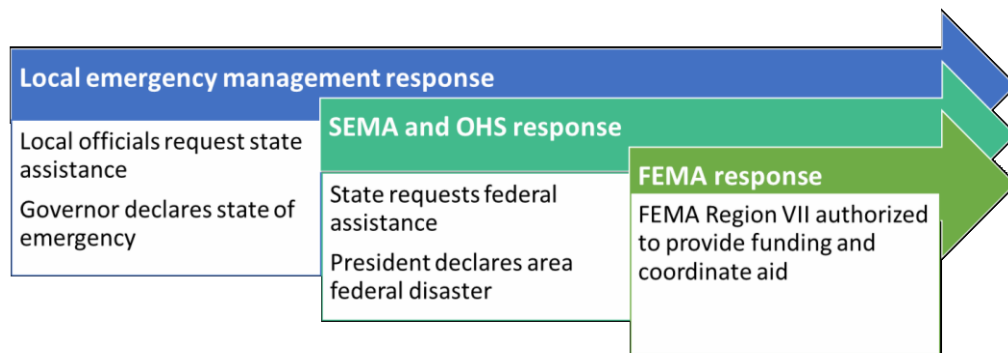


Figure 4: Intergovernmental coordination of disaster response

Scalable, Flexible and Adaptable Operational Capabilities

Closely related to the principle of a tiered response, the principle of “Scalable, Flexible and Adaptable Operational Capabilities” recognizes that response efforts must be nimble enough to “to meet the changing needs associated with a given incident and its cascading effects.”¹¹ Emergency management programs and policies must be designed to facilitate quick response under difficult conditions. In Missouri, this is done through specialized response teams, integrated communication systems, and cooperation between the public and private sector.

If response to a disaster must be scaled up beyond the local level, **Missouri Incident Support Teams**, which work closely with SEMA and are overseen by the Department of Public Safety (DPS), can assist local jurisdictions with incident management. SEMA Regional Coordinators can assist in bringing in state resources, including funding, personnel, and equipment. The state also has specialized resources such as **SEMA’s Geographic Information System (GIS) program**, to assess and visualize damage statewide and develop response priorities and logistics planning, and the **Missouri Structural Assessment and Visual Evaluation Coalition (SAVE)**, which deploys volunteer engineers, architects and building

¹⁰ Missouri Revised Statutes, § 44.022.1. The General Assembly is also empowered to declare a state of emergency through resolution.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2013). *National Response Framework*, p. 6.

inspectors immediately after a disaster to conduct building damage inspections. To link the state's emergency response to private sector resources, SEMA can activate the **Business Disaster Response Cell**, which uses private sector representatives to assist with restoring important business services as quickly as possible.

To enable emergency managers to communicate changing needs in real time, **SEMA's Virtual Emergency Operations Center (VEOC)**, connects them to the **State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC)** via telephone, email, and other virtual portals, while the **Missouri Homeland Security Alert Network**, administered by DPS, provides cell phone and email access to key individuals in the emergency management community. **SEMA's Business Emergency Operations Cell (BEOC)** coordinates with the VEOC and the SEOC to provide private sector disaster communications, while the **Missouri Interfaith Disaster Response Organization (MIDRO)** provides a communication and resource link between individuals, churches, and emergency management. Should an incident, or its cascading effects outpace the state's response capabilities, FEMA Region VII will connect federal assistance to the impacted area, facilitating communication between state and federal entities through the **Missouri WebEOC**, an online tool used to share information and track resource requests.

Unity of Effort through Unity of Command

Responding to a disaster in a coordinated, efficient and effective manner requires "unity of effort through unity of command." This principle is "requires a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each participating organization."¹² In Missouri, the **State Emergency Management Program (SEMP)** directs officials to concentrate emergency response functions at the lowest level that will ensure operational effectiveness.¹³ Therefore, a community's **Local Emergency Operations Center (LEOC)**, the protected site from which government officials exercise direction and control in an emergency, is activated as the first command center.

Should an event span multiple jurisdictions, or exceed the capacity of local government, Missouri law grants the governor the authority to declare a state of emergency and SEMA will activate the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), which operates under the Unified Command of the Director of the Department of Public Safety (DPS), and is coordinated by SEMA's Director. The SEOC serves as the link between local, state and the federal disaster response systems, and plays the primary role in assisting the governor in carrying out state emergency responsibilities. SEMA can also activate the Business Emergency Operations Center (BEOC), which brings the resources and expertise of the private sector into the incident chain of command, including assessing damage to essential services and helping to restore them.¹⁴

When a disaster affects multiple states, the SEOC coordinates response efforts with those states as directed by the **Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)**. The EMAC, which was ratified by Congress in 1996, enables states to share resources during times of disaster.¹⁵ This sharing of resources is known as mutual aid, and can include emergency medical services, incident management, law

¹² Ibid.

¹³ SEMA: State Emergency Management Agency, *State of Missouri Business Emergency Operations Center January 2012*, p. 8. available at: <http://sema.dps.mo.gov/programs/lrmfm/BEOC.pdf>

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 14

¹⁵ FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency. "Emergency Management Assistance Compact," p. 1, available at: <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/emergency/nrf/EMACoverviewForNRF.pdf>

enforcement, mass care and public works. Finally, once a federal disaster is declared, FEMA establishes a **Joint Field Office (JFO)** near the affected area, from which federal, state and local officials coordinate disaster response and recovery efforts.

Readiness to Act

The ability to respond must be established long before a disaster strikes. The principle of a “readiness to act” emphasizes that an effective response to a disaster requires “proper planning, organizing, equipping, training and exercising.”¹⁶ In Missouri, this preparation takes place through the **SEMA Preparedness Branch**, state executive departments, federal programs, university extension programs, and incident-specific organizations focused on preparing for a variety of disasters.

SEMA’s Preparedness Branch is responsible for coordinating the state’s disaster assistance plans, developing the **State of Missouri Emergency Operations Plan**, and providing training to local and state personnel (Figure 5).

Each state executive department is responsible for emergency planning and response within its jurisdiction, while a number of state and regional organizations plan and prepare for incident-specific disasters. Missouri also has 19 **Regional Planning Councils** which provide technical staff able to advise and assist counties and municipalities with emergency planning and coordination.¹⁷

Because individual citizens and communities must also be ready to act, SEMA promotes personal responsibility through programs such as “**Storm Aware**,” which offers information and tools to help prepare for, react to and recover from all types of storms.

University of Missouri Extension offers preparedness educational programs such as the **Community Emergency Management Program (CEMP)** to individuals and families, local government, and the private sector. FEMA also offers an emergency preparedness curriculum for individuals through its **Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)**. Currently, Missouri has 84 CERT programs, which offer classes and training to individuals who can then assist their communities, workplaces, or neighborhoods in the critical period following a disaster before emergency personnel have arrived.



Figure 5: SEMA Preparedness Branch Functions

Conclusion

Missouri’s current emergency management structure supports each of the five principles of the national response doctrine. However, in order to determine whether that structure creates resilient communities, further study should be done to assess the impact of funding disparities between local jurisdictions. Also, due to the large number of branches, sections and programs that comprise SEMA, the department risks redundancies and duplication of effort. A more in-depth analysis of SEMA’s organizational structure would identify strengths or weaknesses as they relate to state resiliency.

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (2013). *National Response Framework*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Missouri Association of Councils of Government, <http://www.macogonline.org/AboutRPCs.htm>