

November 9, 2021

## EMAC - SUPPORTING STATES SINCE 1996

### EMAC Impressions of the Then and Now



**You can't have EMAC without her people.** It's the essence of the program as States help States in the most desired need. In celebration of the 25 years of EMAC, one thing that is common is the wonderful people that help to administer the behind the scenes to create the success. And where everyone has their own cherished story, NEMA reached out to hear more from our friends in Kansas on their experience with EMAC: **Angee Morgan, Deputy Director, and Jonathan York, State Coordinating Officer, both with the Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM).**



#### **Angee, in thinking back on your deployments for EMAC missions, what stands out the most?**

I deployed EMAC in 2001 to New York City in support of the World Trade Center and in 2004 to Florida for hurricanes Charley, Frances, and Ivan. There are so many positives it is hard to pick one, but the deployment to New York City was certainly the most life changing. The professional experience you gain and the ability to test your own resiliency is probably the most significant benefit. The deployments validated our own state's program and lessons learned, particularly in disaster logistics, were incorporated into our existing program and plans once I returned.

#### **Angee, when looking at the purpose of the EMAC mission, are we still hitting the mark?**

I'm encouraged by the non-traditional disaster response capabilities states provide without ever leaving their community, such as social media monitoring, GIS, cyber, etc. We should continue to look for unique opportunities to do this. State directors owe it to their citizens, first responders, and emergency managers to understand EMAC and educate their governor on the value of EMAC. You never know when that "worst day ever" is coming and you will need trained, professional resources to assist you.

#### **Jonathan, what does EMAC mean to you today?**

In our profession, there are many things that we can be passionate about and become involved in – whether at a local, state, or national level – EMAC is one of those passions for me. Over the past few years, it seems there has been a steady increase in the number of disasters that states endure, many times with an increased strain on response resources due to the magnitude of an event or longer duration for response. As a state, EMAC is one of the strongest resources we have to assist them to garner additional personnel and equipment to augment disaster response and recovery efforts – no state has all the expertise that may be needed to fully respond to and recover from all disasters that occur and having the ability to leverage personnel talents and equipment from other states helps fill that gap.

#### **How have the EMAC tools and resources advanced?**

**Jonathan:** When I joined the KDEM in February 2009 as the Response & Recovery Branch Director and EMAC Coordinator, the three-part REQ-A was completed in an Excel spreadsheet and faxed or emailed between Authorized Representatives in the Requesting and Assisting States to complete their respective parts.



From the paper request and offer process, evolved the EMAC Operations System, a virtual platform that states can make requests for and offers of assistance, with the processes being fully digitized and archived. This allows for Requesting States to input their requests for assistance and other Member States to see those requests in real-time and put in offers of assistance in the same manner, streamlining the process. The report-generation features of the virtual EMAC Operations System has also advanced, with the ability to see greater information about total number of personnel and equipment resources on the ground for multiple incidents and by individual incidents. And much like the evolution of the EMAC Operations System evolving, the three-part REQ-A has been minimized to a two-part Resource Support Agreement. The EMAC Committee and EMAC Executive Task Force constantly look at successful ways to streamline the EMAC processes.

#### **What are some of your favorite highlights as a National Coordinating State (NCS)?**

**Angee:** The way our KDEM team embraced the responsibility so Jonathan could focus his priority on EMAC. There is also a huge sense of pride in accomplishing this over what were two years of devastating events. I felt like Kansas was in the right place at the right time to support our nation.

#### **Anything you learned as a NCS that you took back to improve your own agency and teams?**

**Jonathan:** I feel one of the most important tasks that an incoming NCS Chair can do is create and train a strong core team within their state emergency management agency that can assist them throughout their tenure. Prior to becoming the NCS, Kansas already had an internal standard operating procedure in place for how we would implement EMAC as both a Requesting and Assisting State. In preparation, we increased our A-Team trained staff, so that we would be able to better support NCS functions, as well as immediate A-Team deployments (virtually or in-person) if needed.

Kansas served as the NCS state from Spring 2016-Spring 2018, during that time the US experienced two back-to-back hyper-active hurricane seasons, along with other natural and man-made disasters that impacted Member States, resulting in multiple states opening events in the EMAC Operations System and making requests for assistance. I approached the NCS EMAC operations coordination much like we would if we were coordinating disaster response for an event that occurred in our state. For larger-scale EMAC operations, like the 2017 hurricane season with Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, I stood up an internal EMAC A-Team that we stationed in our state emergency operations center to assist me with management and coordination of NCS functions. This gave staff, especially newer staff to the agency, greater confidence in their day-to-day roles that they were in. As leadership, we also had the opportunity to see staff excel in other areas that helped us build capacity and depth for future disaster operations.

#### **Angee, what would be EMAC's theme song? Why?**

Hit me with your best shot! [Pat Benatar]. **EMAC is tested under the worst circumstances and continues to rise to the occasion and come back for the next hit.**

Fire away.

**By mutual confidence and mutual aid - great deeds are done, and great discoveries made.**

**-Homer**



Mark your calendar

**NEMA 2022 Mid-Year Forum  
Alexandria, Virginia  
March 27-April 1**

nemaweb.org

