

**NEMA 2024 Annual Forum  
October 1-4, 2024  
Baltimore, MD**

**General Session Minutes**

**October 2, 2024**

**PRESENT** \*p = proxy

**Region I**

Connecticut  
Maine  
Massachusetts  
New Hampshire  
Rhode Island

**Region II**

New Jersey  
New York  
Puerto Rico

**Region III**

Delaware  
District of Columbia  
Maryland  
Pennsylvania  
Virginia (p)  
West Virginia

**Region IV**

Alabama  
Kentucky  
Mississippi  
Tennessee (p)

**Region V**

Illinois  
Indiana  
Michigan  
Minnesota  
Ohio  
Wisconsin

**Region VI**

Arkansas  
Louisiana  
New Mexico  
Oklahoma (proxy)

**Region VII**

Iowa  
Kansas  
Missouri  
Nebraska

**Region VIII**

Colorado  
Montana (p)  
North Dakota  
South Dakota  
Utah  
Wyoming

**Region IX**

Arizona  
California  
Northern Mariana  
Islands  
Guam (p)  
Hawaii  
Nevada

**Region X**

Alaska  
Idaho  
Oregon  
Washington

President Russell Strickland opened the meeting and asked Sec. Bryan Fisher to call the roll. A quorum was declared. In opening remarks, Pres. Strickland asked the audience to keep in mind all those impacted by Hurricane Helene. The hurricane response impacted attendance at the forum and caused some speakers to cancel, but the program will go on as planned.

**Maryland Governor Wes Moore**

Gov. Moore brought warm greetings and referenced the states impacted by Hurricane Helene and those states providing assistance. He also referenced the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge and the ability of the state, and the nation, to come together for rapid response and recovery. He discussed the need for states to work together to address the enormous challenges facing them. Gov. Moore recognized Pres. Russ Strickland for his excellence as Secretary of the Maryland Department of Emergency Management.

### **Victoria Salinas, Federal Emergency Management Agency**

Salinas spoke on behalf of FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell who was deployed to North Carolina in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. Adaptation and resilience should be increased across the nation to prepare for the needs of tomorrow. Progress has been made, and an immense effort has been made to reduce barriers through policy changes and reform. Communities are taking a comprehensive approach, looking at all their shocks and stresses and building active partnerships with agencies and organizations to facilitate more effective mitigation, resilience, recovery, and response efforts. National resilience guidance is meant as an “umbrella doctrine” for all mission areas. It emphasizes strengthening resilience and a collective approach. To best serve communities, trust must be built to better understand their particular needs.

### **Ken Graham, Director, National Weather Service**

The strength of the NWS is its presence within the communities and its connections with experts who can advise it on how to serve the best. Forecasts have been improved and confidence has been increasing over the past decade. Plans are in place to transform the NWS to better serve and work with emergency management are in progress, including placing meteorologists in State EOCs and FEMA regions. Weather resources need to be crafted for communities and officials to use clearly, not just meteorologists. Starting in 2026, all NWS forecasts will have best and worst-case scenarios, along with most likely cases. The NWS needs assistance with encouraging Congress to fund replacing the current radar system that’s been in place since 1988.

### **Francisco Sanchez, Associate Administrator Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience, Small Business Administration**

The SBA has been driven by these pillars: customer first, technology forward, leading from the ground up, and quicker and easier access to resources. The SBA is actively on the ground in 42 states and is actively supporting 31 disasters. These transformations have been the largest scale in its 71-year history. Due to the booming housing market and the cost of construction, home lending was increased from \$200K to \$500K, personal property damage from \$4K to \$100K, and the ability to refinance a home has increased to \$500K. A lot of work still needs to be done to educate partners about the mitigation program. Business owners want to focus on mitigation and resilience but don’t know how, so the SBA is directly working with them in the short and long term to help educate. One of the most sweeping reforms, SBA disaster loans for a first disbursement can be paid for less than 12 months, and no interest accrues.

**Survivor’s Perspective: Navigating Disaster Response and Recovery:** *Elizabeth Ash, FEMA; Russell Strickland, Secretary, Maryland Department of Emergency Management; Robert and Kimberly Noel-Clark, Maryland; Steve Hewitt, Kansas; Jonathan “Jonny” Varona, Hawaii, Ester Ashton, Wrangell Cooperative Association, Alaska*

This panel discussion delved into the firsthand experiences of disaster survivors with various response and recovery programs. Stories were shared that highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of current systems and provided invaluable insights into how these programs impact lives on the ground.

Key Points: Surviving a disaster is traumatic and often a lifelong challenge; The recovery process is a critical component of emergency management; Flexibility in recovery plans is necessary to minimize survivor trauma; Disasters have a profound impact on both individuals and communities; and emergency managers have a responsibility to ensure survivors’ stories are heard and acknowledged.

**The Homeland is No Longer a Sanctuary: Key Lessons for Catastrophic Wartime Planning:** *Clint Osborn, Director, District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management; Dawn H. Thomas, Managing*

*Director, Institute for Public Research, CNA; Jason T. Ogden, Senior Advisor to Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, Office of the Director of National Intelligence; Dr. Clark Ritz, Senior Research Scientist, Center for Naval Analyses, CNA*

Nation-state actors maintain the capabilities to conduct complex disinformation campaigns and attacks on our infrastructure to influence our public and disrupt or destroy critical services. Attacks on our energy, water, transportation, financial, and communication sectors present tremendous challenges in coordinating emergency consequence management and recovery operations. In partnership with FEMA, Virginia convened a large cross-section of interagency partners to establish a state plan to manage this complex scenario. A panel of experts discussed the project's initial lessons learned. Key points: Adversaries are targeting U.S. infrastructure to stress government capabilities and create public anxiety; Disrupting critical infrastructure (logistics, communications, energy) can cause cascading failures; Exercises revealed gaps in DoD reliance on critical infrastructure, showing the need for improved planning; and Response requires a whole-nation approach, from local municipalities to state and national levels.

**AI for EM: Challenges and Opportunities of Next-Generation Solutions:** *Ann Lesperance, Director, Northwest Regional Technology Center, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory; Jonathan Barr, Senior Research Engineer, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory; Dan Cotter, Executive Director, Office of Science and Engineering, Science & Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security; Carrie Speranza, President, USA Council of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM-USA); Russell Strickland, Secretary, Maryland Department of Emergency Management; NEMA President*

Emergency management is rapidly evolving, driven by more frequent and intense disasters that demand quick data sharing and analysis. New technologies, like AI, offer both opportunities and challenges. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Emergency Management of Tomorrow Research Program, led by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, discussed their exploration in AI's role in emergency management. It presents both challenges and opportunities. AI can be used across the entire spectrum of disaster event planning. It has a compelling role in showing us what the consequences of a disaster could be before it hits. It gives the ability of predictive modeling and allows EM to plan for various contingencies while being able to see many different scenarios and the likeliness of each. AI can support in the realm of staffing needs and efficiency. Automating things like communications and generating shift assignments quickly and efficiently are a given. AI can share and streamline operational plans in real time between teams. Generative AI being used to predict outcomes can give jurisdictions chances to truly prepare and determine what might have to be done to recover after a disaster.

## **Closing Business Session**

### **NEMA Officer Reports**

Secretary's Report – Bryan Fisher, Sec.

A motion was made to approve the draft general session minutes from the 2024 Mid-Year Forum.

Moved: ND DISPOSITION: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Second: NE

Treasurer's Report – Bryan Fisher, Sec. on behalf of Robert Ezelle, Treas.

FY24 Year-End Financial Report: The budget called for \$46,291 in revenue and the year-end amount was \$407,525 in revenue over expense. All states, DC and 4 territories paid membership dues with the

exception of Georgia. The FY24 ending fund balance is estimated at \$3,906,363 and a significant portion of that is invested with Baird. This is an estimate until the annual audit is completed this fall.

Baird Investment: As of July 31<sup>st</sup>, the NEMA portfolio with Baird Trust is valued at \$1,623,780. The cash investment currently totals \$1,250,000. The NEMA Finance Subcommittee will receive an annual briefing from the Baird team at the end of October. After, we'll discuss whether to make any recommendations to the Board for further investment actions.

FY24 Year-End Development Report: NEMA received federal grant awards totaling \$2,914,751.

FY25 Year-to-Date Financial Report: The approved budget calls for spending down the fund balance by \$120,000. As of July 31<sup>st</sup>, NEMA had \$758,000 in revenue over expense. Most of that is membership dues revenue and Annual Forum registrations and sponsorships. This report only represents one month into the fiscal year.

**Adoption of Updated Strategic Plan – Russ Strickland, Pres.**

Moved: DC DISPOSITION: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY  
Second: MN

**NEMA 2024-2025 Officer Elections – Brad Richy, Past Pres.**

Candidates for office:

President: A.J. Gary (AR)  
Treasurer: Robert Ezelle (WA)  
Secretary: Bryan Fisher (AK)

A motion was made to close nominations and accept the slate as presented:

Moved: DC DISPOSITION: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY  
Second: MN

A motion was made to approve the slate of candidates as presented:

Moved: DC DISPOSITION: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY  
Second: RI

President Strickland thanked the forum attendees, sponsors, and speakers for a great week. He also thanked the Board of Directors for their support. He then presented the NEMA gavel to incoming President Lynn Budd.

**Remarks by Incoming President Lynn Budd**

President Budd shared her vision for the year. She noted the divisions that exist, with the aid of foreign adversaries, but NEMA and the emergency management community must come together as they always do to bring people together. Budd emphasized the need to not leave anyone behind, including rural populations which are highly independent and proud, but that can sometimes work against them. Funding and staffing levels continue to be challenges and we need to do all we can to convince decision-makers to invest appropriately in emergency management and resilience. She discussed the need for increased information and intelligence sharing considering the nation-state threat. In closing, Budd stated “We have always been a group that steps up to meet the variety of challenges we are presented

with. We are problem solvers as well as forecasters as we look for and prepare for all of the “what ifs”. That talent has value, and we need to continue to find ways to realize that value.”

There being no further business, a motion was made to adjourn the 2024 Annual Forum:

Moved: DC

DISPOSITION: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Second: RI