

NEMA Committee Reports

NEMA 2026 MID-YEAR FORUM

MARCH 10-14, 2026 WASHINGTON, D.C.

NEMA Legal Counsel Committee
March 11, 2026
Meeting Summary

Review of Lawsuits Over FEMA Grant Programs

Legal Counsel Committee Chair, Will Polk, welcomed everyone to the meeting and began by providing an overview of the status of four key lawsuits related to FEMA’s Building Resilience Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC), Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), and Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) programs.

Polk started by discussing the case involving the termination of the BRIC program and the recent updates. In December 2025, a federal court issued a ruling ordering reversal of the “Hamilton Memo” and reinstating the 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the BRIC program. On March 6, a coalition of 23 states asked the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts to enforce the December ruling. In their court filing, the coalition of states argued that FEMA has not abided by the court’s previous order to reverse BRIC’s termination and enable existing BRIC projects to move forward.

In the motion, the coalition makes several requests to the court, including ordering FEMA to reverse the Hamilton Memo and the April 4 press release and to communicate the reversal to all relevant stakeholders. The states also asked the court to order FEMA to issue an FY24 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the BRIC program, order FEMA to inform each plaintiff state as to the status of all BRIC projects impacted by the BRIC termination, and require FEMA to file status reports with the court explaining the steps they have taken to comply with the order.

FEMA’s motion noted that the ongoing shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) complicates the Department/FEMA’s efforts to comply with the court order due to the lack of FEMA staff to process NOFOs. Polk noted that civil fines, additional litigation, or holding FEMA in contempt of court could serve as enforcement mechanisms for the March 6 ruling. An audience member volunteered to create a series of ‘vignettes’ to highlight the impact of the BRIC grant and the agency's lack of communication regarding the December order.

Polk then discussed the case *Illinois v. FEMA*. In this case, filed on May 13, the State of Illinois (joined by a coalition of states) challenged the FY25 grant conditions that involved sanctuary jurisdictions and immigration enforcement actions. The District Court of Rhode Island issued an initial injunction in October. The conditions were ultimately vacated, and FEMA issued Information Bulletin 538 in response. On November 11, 2025, FEMA appealed the case to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, and the case is ongoing. Additionally, on September 29, 2025, the State of Illinois (joined by other states) filed a second suit against DHS regarding the reallocation of funds for EMPG and HSGP. On December 22, 2025, the U.S. District Court in Rhode Island ruled in Illinois’s favor.

Finally, Polk discussed the case *Michigan v. FEMA*. This case is focused on FEMA grant terms and conditions. On November 4, 2025, the state of Michigan filed a lawsuit against DHS. The U.S. District Court of Oregon ruled in favor of Michigan on December 23, 2025, and granted a summary judgment vacating the one-year period of performance and the population certification requirement tied to immigration status. FEMA appealed the case on February 20, 2026, and the ruling remains in

place.

Lawyers, Floods, and Money: Building Legislation for State-Level IA and PA Programs

Polk then turned the discussion over to the committee's Vice Chair, Morgan Middleton, to provide an example of how some states are responding to the new political environment. She emphasized that states are finding new ways to adapt, including by taking on increased emergency management responsibility as the federal government's support retreats. This past summer in Mississippi, they began working on a state Individual Assistance (IA) and Public Assistance (PA) plan. Middleton noted that the first step in that process was to create a broad bill to establish a fund that the state would leverage for its disaster assistance programs and expand its authority to write plans.

Mississippi's existing trust fund is focused on response, with limited funding available for recovery. They presented a draft bill to the Mississippi State Legislature in January 2026, but ice storms in northern Mississippi delayed further debate. Ultimately, Mississippi created a hybrid plan that allowed counties to participate in a revolving loan program for ice storm recovery, while providing the authority to move forward with the state IA/PA plan.

In response to a question about preventing the duplication of benefits with revolving loan funds, Middleton noted that applicants to Mississippi's fund must show that they have completed all prerequisite steps to maximize their chance of reimbursement. Mississippi's fund will issue a loan worth 75 percent of the requested funds, which cannot be forgiven per the language of the legislation. Mississippi is working with FEMA to prevent the duplication of the remaining 25 percent, which is a matched share between the state and the loan applicant. Additionally, in response to a question about using the state as a pass-through to prevent duplication of effort in the loan application process, Middleton stated that Mississippi is contracting with loan administrators to keep the state out of the application process as much as possible.

Grant Agreements: Legal Sufficiency & Audit Compliance

Polk then transitioned to a discussion of legal sufficiency and audit compliance. Polk noted that while these processes often work hand-in-hand, legal sufficiency addresses whether grants meet the legal requirements and match the controlling authority, while auditing compliance refers to how an agency can prove that the allocated funds were spent in the intended manner. Compliance is required for all types of grants, including pre-disaster mitigation programs and non-disaster preparedness grants.

Polk discussed how state, local, and tribal governments must comply with the guidelines in 2 C.F.R. § 200.317 and 2 C.F.R. § 200.318, respectively. Applicants must note the specific grant agreement, award information, period performance, scope of work, cost-sharing information, updated term obligations, deadlines, record access, audit responsibilities, monitoring rights, and remedies for non-compliance. Polk emphasized that agencies must ensure their grant agreements contain the correct information, particularly given ongoing litigation and shifting requirements. He recommended that attendees utilize "blue-sky" periods to read NOFOs to prevent conflicting terms between grant articles.

NEMA Legislative Committee
March 12, 2026
Meeting Summary

Partner Update

Legislative Committee Chair, John Benson, welcomed everyone to the meeting and began by providing a brief update on several meetings NEMA leadership held in recent days with other partner organizations, including the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Governors Association (NGA). He then introduced Josh Morton, President of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM), to make remarks. Morton emphasized the strong partnership between IAEM and NEMA, stressing the importance of unity (“one team, one fight”) as both associations work to secure the future of emergency management. He noted that both organizations share aligned goals and agendas and are collaborating closely on key initiatives. Despite ongoing legislative and operational challenges, Morton highlights IAEM’s continued focus on elevating and advancing the profession.

Conversation with Current Hill Staff

Benson then transitioned to a discussion of the ongoing FEMA reform efforts in Congress with several current committee staff members. He first introduced Johanna Hardy, Staff Director for the House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee’s Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management.

Hardy’s comments centered on the development and current status of proposed reforms to FEMA, with particular focus on the *FEMA Act of 2025*. She described the bipartisan research and drafting process led by committee leadership, kicked off in response to concerns about FEMA’s performance following recent disaster responses, including major wildfires and hurricanes. Drawing on lessons from prior reform efforts, the committee sought to better understand persistent shortcomings. Hardy noted that, to inform the bill, the committee conducted extensive outreach, consulting more than 150 stakeholders across emergency management, utilities, insurance, and environmental sectors. After circulating a discussion draft for feedback, the bill was revised and formally introduced, ultimately approved by the committee with strong bipartisan support. It now awaits further action in the full House, and a companion has not yet been introduced in the Senate.

Hardy also discussed the gap between congressional intent and FEMA's implementation. While Congress expects agencies to follow statutory language and, where necessary, consult legislative history and other means to determine specific congressional intent, she noted that FEMA often diverges from this expectation. In contrast to some agencies that limit regulatory action unless *explicitly* required, FEMA has demonstrated a tendency to issue extensive regulations, even when statutory language is clear. She noted that this pattern has led to frustration among many in Congress, who believe that FEMA sometimes follows its own regulatory framework rather than adapting quickly to new legislation.

To address these issues, the drafters of the *FEMA Act* emphasized precision and clarity in legislative language. Hardy described a careful effort to minimize any potential ambiguity by scrutinizing word choice line by line to prevent alternative interpretations. In some cases, this included replacing existing statutory provisions entirely rather than building on them, to avoid interpretations that had undermined past reform efforts.

Finally, the discussion explored whether FEMA’s challenges are primarily structural or cultural. While some meeting participants suggested the agency suffers from a deeply ingrained risk-averse culture, driven in part by oversight pressures and fear of audits, Hardy framed the issue as more historic than cultural. For example, past actions by inspectors general, including “clawbacks” of previously approved funds, likely encouraged overly cautious behavior and excessive reliance on regulation. She also cited agency leadership transitions as something that influences how policies are implemented over time.

Benson then introduced Naveed Jazayeri, Staff Director for the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee’s Subcommittee on Disaster Management, District of Columbia, Census. Jazayeri highlighted the key contrast between House and Senate approaches to FEMA reform. While the House has advanced comprehensive legislation in the *FEMA Act*, Senate leadership has opted to hold off on formal action until the FEMA Review Council releases its findings. This approach means that there is currently little legislative momentum for FEMA reform in the Senate, despite growing interest among some Senators. Jazayeri noted that while they are waiting for the Council’s report, committee members have pursued oversight and investigative efforts. One example he discussed was a report examining DHS’s \$100,000 approval rule, which whistleblower documentation revealed causes significant delays in grants and contract approvals.

Beyond FEMA-specific reform, Jazayeri highlighted broader homeland security concerns shaping the Senate’s priorities. Members are increasingly focused on emerging threats tied to international conflicts, particularly cyber risks to domestic infrastructure, alongside questions about the nation’s preparedness and capacity. Concerns were raised about resource constraints within agencies such as CISA, which has experienced substantial staffing reductions, weakening its capabilities. Jazayeri also noted that ongoing negotiations over DHS funding and immigration policy remain unresolved, though there are early signs of progress tied to leadership engagement and confirmation processes. Overall, Jazayeri stated that while movement is possible, meaningful legislation will likely take time as political differences continue to be worked through.

Conversation with Former Hill Staff

Benson then transitioned to a discussion of the ongoing FEMA reform efforts in Congress with *former* committee staff members Daniel Mencher and Logan De La Barre-Hayes. The discussion focused on how perspectives around FEMA reform have evolved and what realistic pathways for change may look like going forward. De La Barre-Hayes noted that compared to a year earlier, the conversation in 2026 is more constructive and less centered on existential debates about FEMA’s role. Instead, recent legislative efforts have helped reframe the conversation and elevate awareness of emergency management and its priorities. This shift has been supported by stakeholder advocacy and leadership changes at the Department of Homeland Security, creating a more favorable environment for future reform. However, she emphasized that passing major legislation remains unpredictable, requiring sustained coalition-building and often external drivers such as severe disasters.

A key point of discussion was whether large-scale (“big R”) reform is feasible in the current political environment. Mencher expressed skepticism, suggesting that momentum for sweeping changes at FEMA may be overstated and tied to specific political narratives rather than just necessity. Instead, he stated that incremental (“small r”) reforms, particularly through the appropriations process (which

allows for targeted, annual adjustments), may be the better approach. Mencher noted that these smaller changes, such as modifications to grant requirements, are often driven by coordinated advocacy from state and local stakeholders and can yield real impact without the complexity of comprehensive legislation.

NEMA EMAC Committee
March 12, 2026
Meeting Summary

EMAC Committee Chair Director Sweeney (MI) opened the meeting at 3:00 pm.

Roll call was completed. There was a quorum.

Brief and Discussion: Turning on the Tap: Preparing for Water System Emergencies and Scaling from WARN to EMAC, Kevin Morley, American Water Works Association

Mr. Morley highlighted that federal frameworks for the water sector do not reflect operational realities, resulting in fragmented coordination and unclear leadership during water emergencies. This gap led to the development of mutual aid systems like the Water/Wastewater Agency Response Network (WARN), but these systems are primarily effective at the local and intrastate level. A key issue identified across multiple disasters is that water utilities are not consistently granted priority access during response, despite their critical role in protecting public health and supporting life safety operations. Morley emphasized that states have a legal responsibility to ensure emergency drinking water, but stronger coordination mechanisms are needed to fulfill that obligation during large-scale incidents. Mr. Morley outlined the opportunity to scale response from WARN to EMAC, positioning EMAC as a critical tool for interstate support of water system emergencies. A recent deployment example demonstrated that EMAC can effectively support water missions, but broader integration and standardization are needed.

Brief and Discussion: Leveraging the Mutual Aid Support System and Mission Ready Packages for Expedited Response, Cris McCombs, Hagerty

Cris McCombs provided an update on enhancements to the Mutual Aid Support System (MASS 4.0) and ongoing efforts to expand the use of Mission Ready Packages (MRPs) and Pre-Scripted Resource Requests (PSRRs) to accelerate EMAC deployments.

She highlighted that MASS 4.0 introduces more intuitive workflows, improved search and mapping capabilities, and customizable dashboards, making it easier for states and resource providers to develop, manage, and locate resources. These enhancements are designed to improve usability and increase adoption across the EMAC network. McCombs emphasized that MRPs significantly reduce the time required to submit and process resource requests, enabling faster deployment of personnel and equipment and ultimately improving response outcomes.

She also outlined NEMA's ongoing support efforts, including training, technical assistance, and template development to help states and resource providers build MRPs and PSRRs. While progress has been made across several disciplines (e.g., National Guard, transportation, urban search and rescue), she noted that participation remains limited, with only a portion of states fully leveraging available support.

Ms. McCombs reinforced the importance of increasing adoption of MRPs and MASS tools to streamline EMAC operations and improve the speed and efficiency of mutual aid response, and invited attendees to participate in upcoming webinars on the development of MRPs. These webinars will be held in May and June.

Discussion: Reimbursement Improvements: Angela Copple, NEMA

Angela Copple shared the results of the EMAC Member reimbursement survey, which was conducted to gauge the viability of changes to EMAC reimbursement. In summary, survey findings indicate that there is a strong interest in the standardization of jurisdictional policies, which could help to simplify the review of reimbursement packages. There is also an opportunity to expedite reimbursement for Resource Providers who have submitted their reimbursement package by not making them wait until all Resource Providers have submitted from that mission. This would allow for quicker reimbursement to those Resource Providers who submit their R-2 packages sooner.

Ms. Copple then reviewed the barriers to removing the proof-of-payment requirements for Resource Providers – proof that the Resource Provider paid Deployed Personnel for per diem and any expenses they paid. NEMA will continue to conduct research on the barriers and will report back to the EMAC Committee.

The survey also proposed an expedited reimbursement process option in which the Assisting State would audit and pay the Resource Provider 100% upfront, then send the Requesting State proof of payment, the R-1, the R-2, and the W-9. Even though 65% of the states liked the idea, they also had concerns that it did not follow strict audit practices and may open the door to abuse. It was proposed that 10% of the reimbursement packages that go through the expedited process be subject to a full audit to maintain the program's standards and integrity.

Delila Bruno (MT) asked what reimbursement guidelines would look like if NEMA re-wrote them today without a previous policy in place. Ms. Copple noted that if she could change 1 thing right now, it would be to remove the proof-of-payment requirements and said she will take that on as a project.

Kevin Guthrie (FL) asked if EMAC reimbursement could be submitted as a Public Assistance project worksheet and referred to the PAPPG for rates. Ms. Copple noted that EMAC reimbursement is more flexible than FEMA, but it would be up to the states.

Gabe Lavine (AZ) asked what the restrictions are for treating the Resource Support Agreement (RSA) like a contractor agreement. Ms. Copple stated that she did take that question forward and was told it was not possible, given the federal contract requirements that would be imposed upon EMAC.

Report from the EMAC Executive Task Force

EMAC Executive Task Force Chair, Butch Wise (AZ), reported on the recent winter storms. Massachusetts and Rhode Island received a combined 306 personnel for snow-clearing missions from Vermont, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Maine, and New York.

Mr. Wise provided an overview of the work completed by each of the Special Assignment Task Forces during his term:

- Continuous improvement led by Jonathan Anschutz (PA) completed updates to EMAC policy, which added additional guidance on integrating EMAC into continuous improvements.
- Improvements to EMAC Liaisons, led by Matt Cook (MI), focused on the positions of the NELT and RELT – the EMAC liaisons that serve at the National Response Coordination

Center or a Regional Response Coordination Center. Mr. Wise highlighted the Liaisons application – the interface that liaisons are assigned to when they are deployed, which went well beyond what was recommended to provide a state-of-the-art system for liaisons, including automated reports that are pre-locked down to EMAC Committee-approved fields.

- Reimbursement Jurisdiction Simplification, led by Chasity Brown (FL), focused on the simplification of jurisdictional policies, which, as you heard from Ms. Copple, has been very well received. NEMA will continue to highlight simplification as a best practice and will host a webinar for states in the next few months.

Mr. Wise highlighted the Transition Exercise, which was recently completed in preparation for Massachusetts to take over the role of Executive Task Force Chair and National Coordinating State.

Mr. Wise thanked the Committee and the EMAC Executive Task Force for their trust in him, as well as Director Lavine and Cameron Wiskow for their support while he served as the Chair.

Mr. Wise moved forward the EMAC Executive Task Force's nomination of Kiona Black (MD) to the EMAC Committee.

Mr. Sweeney asked if there was a motion to accept the nomination of Kiona Black (MD) to serve as the Chair-Elect to the EMAC Executive Task Force?

Motion made by: Director Gabe Lavin (AZ)

Motion seconded by: Director Delila Bruno (MT)

The motion to accept the nomination of Kiona Black (MD) to serve as Chair Elect to the EMAC Executive Task Force passed.

The leadership of the EMAC Executive Task Force was transitioned to Jaci Hamel from Massachusetts. Ms. Hamel reviewed her nominations to serve as Members At Large on the Executive Task Force: Jake Ganieany (MT), Faith Staples (ME), and Jordan Abshire (AR), and noted she looks forward to working with the Committee, the EMAC Executive Task Force, and NEMA to advance EMAC.

Adjournment

Director Sweeney (MI) asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

The motion to adjourn was made by Director Bryan Fisher (AK)

The motion was seconded by Director Trevor Denney (CO)

Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58 pm.

NEMA Resilience Committee
March 13, 2026
Meeting Summary

Highlighting the Role of VA’s Chief Resilience Officer and Office of Commonwealth Resilience
Committee Chair Bill Turner welcomed everyone to the meeting and then introduced John Scrivani, Coordinator of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, and Greg Steele, Chief Resilience Officer at the Office of Commonwealth Resilience, to provide a briefing on how the two distinct agencies work together towards a common goal. Scrivani outlined Virginia’s coordinated approach to resilience and hazard mitigation, emphasizing the importance of clearly defined roles and collaboration across state agencies. He explained that resilience and hazard mitigation have been formally codified in Virginia law to ensure consistency in definition. Scrivani explained that emergency management maintains a central coordination role, overseeing preparedness, response, recovery, risk awareness, and funding distribution. This includes responsibility for Virginia’s hazard mitigation plan, 22 regional mitigation plans, and close collaboration with local governments, private partners, and federal agencies to ensure alignment and effective implementation.

Steele described the relatively new Office of Commonwealth Resilience, established to focus on long-term, statewide resilience strategies. Despite its small size (3 staff members), the office plays a key role in coordinating efforts across agencies and with external stakeholders, including local, tribal, federal, and private stakeholders. Steele leads an interagency resilience management team that meets regularly to assess hazards, align agency missions, and improve collaboration. The office also produces biannual resilience reports for the Governor and General Assembly and serves as a central point of contact for federal agencies, including coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Scrivani and Steele noted that the key distinction between the two agencies is their operational and strategic responsibilities. Emergency management teams focus on program implementation, including disaster-specific planning, grant management, and recovery efforts. The resilience office emphasizes long-term planning, cross-sector coordination, and policy alignment. Both agencies engage with overlapping stakeholders, making close coordination essential to avoid duplication, inefficiency, and potential for confusion.

Finally, Scrivani and Steele detailed ongoing efforts to identify and prioritize risks across Virginia. Through interagency collaboration, 73 hazards have been identified and grouped into 13 categories, with particular focus on complex, high-impact areas such as flooding, energy resilience, public health, and water infrastructure. Steele noted that the Office of Commonwealth Resilience prioritizes proactive investment strategies, highlighting that pre-disaster mitigation yields stronger returns on investment than post-disaster recovery spending. Additional priorities include innovative financing, improved integration of state and local plans, and strengthened collaboration through interagency mechanisms to enhance efficiency and long-term resilience outcomes.

Building Resilience to Extreme Heat Events in North Carolina

Turner then introduced Andrea Webster from the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality’s State Resilience Office to discuss efforts to build resilience to extreme heat in the state. Webster emphasized that while North Carolina is accustomed to hot weather, extreme heat remains a significant and underestimated public health threat. She highlighted that heat-related illnesses are

increasing, with emergency room visits frequently underreported due to misclassification as other health conditions. She noted that extreme heat causes more annual deaths than all other natural weather disasters combined and highlighted the need to view it as a major public health issue rather than solely an environmental issue.

Webster highlighted data demonstrating that all populations are vulnerable to heat-related issues, though certain groups face elevated risks. Older adults (65+) and working-age men (25–44), especially those who work outdoors, have the highest rates of emergency room visits for extreme heat. Additionally, she highlighted the dangers of compounding events, such as the overlap of heat waves with hurricane season. Webster presented a case study from Tropical Storm Chantal to show how flooding followed by extreme heat created dangerous conditions for survivors and responders, especially due to power outages that limited access to air conditioning.

Webster also explained that the State Resilience Office has implemented a statewide Extreme Heat Planning Cohort Program aimed at supporting local governments. This free, virtual program provides training, technical assistance, and networking opportunities to help communities develop heat action plans, integrate heat considerations into emergency operations and hazard mitigation plans, and adopt response strategies. The program involves cross-sector participation, including emergency managers, public health officials, and other local stakeholders, leveraging partnerships with academic institutions and health professionals to provide guidance on addressing extreme heat. Webster noted that the program has already shown significant progress, with multiple jurisdictions developing heat action plans that collectively cover approximately 22 percent of North Carolina's population. The participating jurisdictions are adopting both short-term response measures (e.g., cooling centers, public education) and long-term mitigation strategies (e.g., urban tree planting, reflective roofing).

NEMA Preparedness Committee
March 13, 2026
Meeting Summary

To begin the meeting, the Preparedness Committee Chair, Director Sima Merick (OH), announced that the Preparedness Committee has been reestablished under President AJ Gary’s direction. She thanked him for this effort and began the meeting.

Presentation on Disaster Assistance High-Risk Series: State and Local Response Capabilities Report

Director Chris Currie provided an overview of the U.S. Government Accountability Office’s (GAO) December 2025 report, “[State and Local Response Capabilities Report](#).” He provided an overview of the report’s motivation, including the President’s and Congress’s interest in reforming FEMA. As a result of this interest, GAO was asked to evaluate challenges in federal disaster response efforts. This report is the second in the series, following the first, which examined federal disaster response workforce challenges during recent disasters and important considerations for future workforce changes. He then offered a few insights into the report’s research process, which included evaluating ten large states that had recently received major disaster declarations, such as Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the 2025 Los Angeles Wildfires, and the July 2025 Texas Floods. To evaluate variation in state capabilities, GAO examined state assessments in their respective Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) documents.

The report found wide differences in preparedness levels across jurisdictions. The report also demonstrated that states rely heavily upon FEMA and other federal agencies to prepare for and respond to disasters. Currie shared that the assistance could take the form of preparedness grants, technical support, and response support. Currie then facilitated a discussion with state directors regarding the report’s findings and recommendations. Other points discussed included whether THIRA was the best tool for evaluating preparedness levels; concerns about having the runway to implement changes at the state level; and concerns about securing funding to do so.

Montana’s Preparedness Listening Tour

Administrator Delila Bruno of the Montana Disaster and Emergency Services Division briefed on a recent effort by her division to engage local and state-level partners. The engagement was conducted for various reasons, including that the emergency management system in Montana was designed in a different era, that the hazard and threat context is now more complex, and that potential federal policy changes may decrease preparedness resources while increasing disaster assistance thresholds. Bruno explained that to undertake this effort, several listening sessions were held with staff from local and state agencies and the Department of Emergency Services. Additionally, data collection methods included local and state agency questionnaires and a review of statutes, plans, and processes.

Over the course of the sessions, three main themes emerged: policy and strategic themes, statewide operational themes, and tactical and administrative findings. Bruno explained that some of the policy and strategic themes identified were that shifting grant rules require nearly constant local adaptation, that mitigation and resilience are longer-term needs, and that the emergency management mission has expanded. Statewide operational themes that arose were to strengthen the state agency’s

emergency support function and make mitigation support easily accessible. Finally, key takeaways from the tactical and administrative findings included establishing a single alert and warning system and providing practical tools for smaller jurisdictions. Bruno shared that the next steps would include additional listening sessions and refining findings into actionable next steps for policy, legislative, and fiscal change.

Maintaining National Standards: A Discussion on EMAP

Director William Turner, Vice Chair of the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) Commission, briefed on recent organizational changes EMAP has adopted to improve its financial standing. In his brief, Turner explained that the organization recently had a federal grant, the Emergency Management Baseline Assessment Grant (EMBAG), rescinded. EMAP has consequently broadened its considerations for sustainable funding sources. Turner provided an overview of recent EMAP organization changes.

Turner reported that EMAP has been in place for over two decades and that its efforts have strengthened national preparedness. He shared further that, in an effort to shore up its financial position, EMAP is currently transitioning its programs to a Continuous Administrative Compliance Process (CACP). In doing so, the programs will pay an annual fee rather than pay a large amount once every five years, and the applicant fee will now be a one-time fee, reducing its cost burden. The emergency management program's size and type will determine the annual payment amount. Turner also briefed that there are over 90 accredited programs to date and that demand for the program remains strong. Additionally, the organization is implementing several cost-cutting measures, including shifting to virtual assessments. Other improvements underway include plans for developing how-to guides to help ease the process for programs pursuing accreditation as well. Finally, Turner communicated that there is interest in using technology, such as artificial intelligence, in the future for some parts of the assessment process.

NEMA Private Sector Committee
March 13, 2026
Meeting Summary

Chair: Erica Bornemann, AC Disaster Consulting
Vice Chair: Lee Siler, Walmart

Private Sector Committee White Paper

- In the interest of educating NEMA members about public-private partnerships, the committee created a static reference for members to understand the Private Sector Committee's role and purpose.
 - The committee utilized feedback from the 2025 Annual Forum in Wyoming to collect recommendations.
- The paper was reviewed by state directors prior to the 2026 NEMA Mid-Year Forum, and then was submitted for endorsement by directors and committee members. The white paper draft is available in the Forum app.

Nonprofit & NGO Subcommittee

Karl Fippinger, Vice President of Fire and Disaster Mitigation at International Code Council, Subcommittee Chair

- The purpose of the subcommittee is to raise the voices of nonprofit and non-governmental organization (NGO) committee members and advance related initiatives.
 - NGOs are not part of the government and are classified by their activities and scale. Nonprofits operate for collective public benefit, are classified by states, and receive tax-exempt status from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service.
- The subcommittee conducted informal interviews with state directors to discuss focus areas such as:
 - Information sharing
 - Advocacy and legislative activities
 - Integration into long-term relationships and coordination
- The subcommittee will approach all state directors about their top priorities when working with NGOs and nonprofits.

State-Private Sector Leads Subcommittee

Jon Hanian, State Private Sector Liaison for Idaho, Subcommittee Chair

- The goal of the subcommittee is to determine best practices, establish private sector engagement, and increase situational awareness.
 - Subcommittee Chair, Hanian, noted that this is increasingly important given recent FEMA funding uncertainty.

- The subcommittee currently represents 40 private sector liaisons and has added 6+ states to the group.
 - Subcommittee Chair Hanian called on NEMA to bring in the remaining states without liaisons.
 - Chair Hanian also encouraged businesses to contact the committee if they do not have a relationship with the private sector liaisons in states in which they conduct business.
- The subcommittee is establishing a partner network— including the retail, disaster housing, communications, and AI industries—to maintain a whole-of-community approach.
- As of February 2026, the subcommittee provided feedback on the Private Sector Committee’s white paper to clarify the legal boundaries and operational responsibilities of state private sector liaisons.
 - The subcommittee emphasized integrating liaison and EOC perspectives.
 - Liaisons are not permitted to facilitate state contracts, but can generally facilitate coordination between corporate teams on costs and resources.
- On March 16, 2026, regional private sector liaisons in the Western U.S. will collaborate on a newly formed advisory council that engages the private sector as primary partners before, during, and after disasters.

Legal & Ethical Public-Private Sector Engagement

- Disaster Recovery Coalition of America General Counsel Danielle Amon has developed a guide for navigating ethical private-public relationships.
 - As a best practice, Amon recommended that state directors invite private sector partners to trainings and public events to help them gain an understanding of each organization.
 - The committee plans to host a webinar on legal and ethical public-private engagement. Details of the webinar have not been announced.

Private Sector Committee Problem Solver Series

Colt Hagmaier, Infrastructure Recovery Lead, AECOM
 Alexis Balde, Assistant Director, iParametrics
 Joel Wish, Chief Executive Officer, Bright Harbor
 Joe Delaney, Director of Government Solutions, Visa

- The Private Sector Committee plans to host the Problem Solver Series at future NEMA forums.
 - Topics will be anchored to a clear and defined state problem. The committee called on state directors to suggest future topics.

Hagmaier: Problem Framing

- Federal support for disasters has been developed over time, and there is now an expectation of federal support that is not codified into law. In the absence of federal support, states should consider public policy before a disaster.
 - The state and local interpretation of public support does not need to be identical to FEMA's guidelines.
 - In Maryland, the state utilized relevant, existing programs during post-disaster periods that had not previously been employed.
- The presenters suggested that states have four options when altering public policy:
 1. Cease support, similar to the federal government.
 2. Build a bespoke program that replicates all or part of FEMA.
 3. Partner with a private sector entity to deliver third-party services on the state's behalf.
 4. Expand existing social service programs to capture gaps in public service.

Balde: State and Local Considerations

- States are encouraged to create contingency plans, similar to what has been enacted in Florida, California, and Texas.
- The primary gap occurs between the end of immediate recovery and the start of long-term recovery, when survivors must wait 11–14 months until their case is accepted.
 - States should develop a contingency plan for disaster case management to provide resources during this 11–14 month gap.
 - Assistance during this period was previously provided by FEMA.
- Contingency plans must include what is feasible for the community to continue running. Non-congregate sheltering plans and a risk assessment of socially vulnerable communities may help facilitate this.
 - Continuing the norm in communities is critical when developing contingency plans. In the Florida Keys, a critical component of the recovery plan includes hospitality to facilitate economic revitalization and the continuity of community activities.

Wish: Technological Solutions

- Wish noted that the Individual Assistance system involves survivors in multiple bureaucracies, which can be difficult to navigate.
- The Bright Harbor app provides a streamlined survivor experience using artificial intelligence, including:
 - Guides
 - Funding and referrals pages
 - Contact information and locations for critical agencies, shelters, etc.
 - Data layers on top of personal grant information and statuses
- Bright Harbor hopes to empower survivors to independently navigate the individual assistance system.

Delaney: Executing Last Mile Payments Safely & Securely

- Delaney emphasized that Visa is a network of services in the payment community, not a bank.
 - If a state receives and makes decisions about individual assistance, the last-mile payment is likely conducted through a Visa partner.
- Delaney noted that Visa intends to facilitate technological and leadership discussions about how to get funds to individuals quickly and safely.
 - Delaney stated that the payments industry is productive in its ability to move funds.

Closing Remarks

- The Committee encouraged states to contract private sector partners prior to a disaster. Members noted that the cost of private-sector partnerships will be higher post-disaster because partners will need to evaluate associated risks.

NEMA Homeland Security Committee
March 14, 2026
Meeting Summary

Temple Israel Vehicle Attack Briefing

Committee Chair A.J. Schall welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Brianna Briggs, Assistant Division Commander for the Michigan State Police's Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division, to provide a briefing on the response to the recent vehicle attack on Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Michigan. She began by providing an overview of the incident, which occurred on Thursday, March 12, at approximately 12:18 PM. The driver entered the building with the vehicle, driving through double glass doors and down a hallway within the facility. The vehicle came to rest inside a classroom, where it caught fire, though it's unclear whether the fire was intentional or accidental.

Temple Israel staff immediately initiated lockdown procedures, and a large law enforcement presence arrived. After isolating the vehicle, about 50 staff members and 104 children were evacuated without injury. The suspect was located deceased inside the vehicle after the fire was extinguished. She noted that a local Incident Management Team (IMT) was deployed immediately to support unified operations and that the local Emergency Support Plan (ESP) was activated to coordinate resource support.

Briggs explained that the Jewish Federation Security Services established a reunification site at a local country club across the street from Temple Israel. The organization initiated its accountability plan for students, staff, and families. The Jewish Federation of Detroit activated its internal emergency messaging system to notify members and provide updates, while the Oakland County Emergency Management issued a Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) to notify the surrounding community. Michigan State Police, Oakland County Sheriff's Department, and other local law enforcement agencies implemented additional patrols and security support around facilities across Southeast Michigan.

Briggs also addressed recent preparedness efforts in the region that supported the response. Over the last ten years, facilities in Southeast Michigan have received security upgrades through the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). Temple Israel received security improvements in 2018 through this program. In 2018, Oakland County Emergency Management partnered with FEMA's National Emergency Training Center to host a course focused on preparing the community for complex coordinated attacks. The program included a full-scale exercise involving four separate incidents across the county. The Jewish Federation of Detroit provided facilities, staff, leadership, and security support for the exercise.

Additionally, from 2022 through 2025, the National Exercise Program and local training and exercise teams supported the Jewish Federation of Detroit by facilitating tabletop exercises. Briggs noted that these exercises brought together Jewish community leadership; synagogue security teams; local, county, and state law enforcement; fire departments; and private-sector companies, with the goal of developing response plans and strengthening coordination between jurisdictions.

Understanding National Defense Priorities of Governors

Schall then introduced Renee Antoine, Legislative Director for the National Governors Association

(NGA). Antoine focused the discussion on the NGA's emergency and security policy priorities, emphasizing the importance of strong state-federal coordination and the preservation of gubernatorial authority. She highlighted NGA's bipartisan structure and the work of its Public Health Emergency Management Task Force in advancing coordinated advocacy with federal partners. The NGA's Public Health Emergency Task Force continues to support security advocacy efforts, particularly as threats grow in frequency and complexity. Antoine underscored the increasingly critical role of the National Guard in disaster response and emergency operations, highlighting its contributions to public safety, infrastructure protection, and crisis management. Antoine emphasized the need to maintain governors' authority over National Guard operations. She stressed that governors, as commanders-in-chief of their state National Guard units, must be consulted on decisions involving deployments, especially under federal authorities such as Title 10 and Title 32. She noted that ensuring that governors retain decision-making power within their states is essential to effective and timely emergency response.

Antoine also addressed ongoing challenges related to National Guard capacity and funding. The NGA is actively working to secure adequate resources and personnel to support both domestic emergency missions and broader national security responsibilities. However, recent federal funding lapses have raised concerns about operational readiness and continuity, highlighting the need for more stable and reliable funding mechanisms.

Additional discussion focused on upcoming large-scale events, including international gatherings such as the FIFA World Cup, and the National Guard's role in supporting security, crowd management, and emergency preparedness. Antoine emphasized the need for investment in equipment and logistical capabilities, including proposed reforms.

Presidio Endeavor Wargame Pilot Program

Schall then turned the discussion over to Dawn Thomas, Center for Naval Analysis (CNA), to provide a briefing on the Presidio Endeavor Wargame Pilot Program. Presidio Endeavor is a CNA wargame designed for the National Guard Bureau (NGB) and rolling out this spring to all 50 states and four territories. It was designed to accomplish three objectives:

- Identify time-phased National Guard (NG) force requirements to support military and civilian authorities
- Support state-level NG Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQs) development of Integrated Support Plans
- Assess the impacts on domestic response operations if large portions of the NG are mobilized for combat operations

Thomas then provided a brief overview of the wargame scenario, which describes an escalating crisis between China, Taiwan, and the United States that unfolds over several months and results in open conflict. Overseas, China increases aggressive activities (e.g., deploying maritime militia near disputed islands, conducting surveillance, staging military exercises) before imposing a blockade on Taiwan, which leads to direct clashes with U.S. forces. The U.S. responds with warnings, prepares military options, and places National Guard forces on standby. Domestically, the U.S. faces growing cyberattacks, infrastructure sabotage, and information warfare, ultimately leading to heightened social unrest.

Thomas noted that Presidio Endeavor provides state emergency management directors, homeland

security advisors, governors, and other state consequence management leaders an opportunity to consider the availability of National Guard troops during different geopolitical stages (e.g., competition, conflict, and warfighting). It also allows for more informed state and local response and recovery planning and enables participants to evaluate state internal and external capabilities to respond to and recover from cyber, kinetic, and supply chain attacks on the U.S.

Thomas stated that the NGB will receive the game in early Spring 2026 and will play internally at least once. The NGB will reach out to their emergency management contacts to engage for further iterations. She recommended that the states consider who should be at the table and suggested (at minimum) operational leadership from emergency management, departments of transportation and health, law enforcement, and the governor's office of communications.

State Snapshot: Lessons Learned from D.C.

Schall then transitioned to a briefing on the National Guard deployment in Washington, D.C., from Clint Osborn, Director of the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA). He explained that the National Guard deployment is part of an Executive Order issued in March of 2025.

Osborn explained that the National Guard presence in Washington, D.C. is part of a broader federal initiative called the "Safe and Beautiful" task force, established shortly after the 2025 inauguration. Following a high-profile assault that drew national attention, the President deployed about 800 National Guard troops, and additional reinforcements from other states quickly increased their numbers. The Guard's role was split into two tracks: a "safety" effort, involving visible patrols mainly in the downtown and federal core, and a "beautification" effort, which included maintaining public spaces, especially federal lands managed by agencies like the National Park Service.

Osborn noted that the deployment has not been without challenges. A tragic incident in November, when two National Guard members were shot (one fatally), led to further increases in troop levels. The deployment has since been extended through the end of the year, partly tied to upcoming national events such as America 250, at an estimated cost of around \$300 million. Despite legal and logistical complexities, including debates over federal control of local policing, agencies report a strong working relationship with the Guard.

Osborn noted that crime in D.C. has dropped significantly. Violent crime is down 29%, homicides are down 63%, and carjackings are down roughly two-thirds compared to the prior year. While multiple factors likely drive this trend (e.g., stricter detention policies and firearm reductions), the visible presence of armed National Guard personnel is believed to play a meaningful role.

NEMA Response and Recovery Committee
March 14, 2026
Meeting Summary

Director Kevin Guthrie (FL), Chair, opened the meeting by explaining the new mission for the committee. The vision for this year is to identify solutions to common issues and to provide guidance documents that showcase states that are successful in those areas. The committee is excited to be helpful to all states within the responsibilities assigned to it by the association and will continue to seek ways to share knowledge and guidance.

Wildland Fire Service

Chief Brian Fennessy of the Department of the Interior’s Wildland Fire Service was unable to join the committee. In his place, however, a discussion on issues states face with wildfire was hosted by Chair Guthrie. One consideration for discussion is that some states may not encounter wildfires as often as others. Florida is concerned about burns this year due to drought conditions – 100% of the state is in drought, with 20% in severe drought. When considering using EMAC or mutual aid to assist with fires, it is important to understand that muck fire response and mountain fire response are two completely opposite exposures. Muck fires that happen in the East go underground to burn, then pop up in random spots, spreading the risk. In the West, most fires are on the ground; however, they can also ‘hop’ as wind enhances their spread. New Mexico and Colorado shared their experiences with public safety power shutoffs as a mitigation practice to help reduce wildfire spread. However, rural electric associations do not have the resources of a large utility to swiftly conduct the shutoffs and then restore power. Tabletop exercises help to share communication processes and messaging, which may be helpful for the committee to share with each other and the states. Other considerations, such as what post-fire looks like, were raised. Oregon has not received mitigation funds in its recent FMAG, so it is seeking other avenues for mitigation in a fire-prone area. For the Wildland Fire Service, the committee is interested in how the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service are involved in their partnership. In particular, what their initiatives are for post-fire tactics to help restore communities after a burn.

NEMA World Cup Task Force Update

The National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) established the World Cup Task Force, led by Dawn Brantley (MA), to unify state engagement, improve situational awareness, and provide a direct coordination channel with federal partners and FIFA. The task force convenes executive-level leadership and subject matter experts across host and impacted states, incorporates federal, public health, and host city perspectives, and includes direct participation from FIFA safety leadership—marking a significant advancement in state-level engagement. Since its launch in December 2024, the task force has rapidly matured into a national coordination hub, facilitating consistent information exchange, addressing resource and mutual aid planning through EMAC, and aligning preparedness efforts across jurisdictions to reduce risk and ensure a cohesive, nationwide approach to World Cup readiness. The scale, pace, and geographic distribution of the World Cup will continue to generate complex planning questions and information gaps for host and impacted states. The task force provides a trusted structure through which states can raise issues, access key stakeholders, share insights, and explore approaches to resource prioritization. This assistance supports informed decision-making without duplicating operational coordination functions. A central priority is to sustain effective information sharing as the planning matures. As FIFA timelines

advance and host city activities accelerate, states will require clear, accurate, and timely information to support preparedness decisions.

The task force will continue to serve as a forum for clarification, validation, and the escalation of questions to the appropriate partners. Additionally, EMAC considerations will remain an important area of discussion. While the task force will not coordinate mutual aid or manage resources, it will provide a venue for examining potential demand and identifying resource prioritization challenges well in advance. The task force stands ready to support states as they navigate an event of enormous scale and complexity. By continuing to highlight shared challenges, bridge gaps in state-level engagement with FIFA and federal partners, and foster meaningful partnerships, the task force will ensure that states can collectively and confidently prepare for this event. Together, the task force will provide a platform for collaboration, clarity, and coordinated action – turning challenges into opportunities and setting the stage for a successful, historic FIFA World Cup.

Response and Recovery Committee Working Groups. Each working group was asked to provide an update to the committee.

Response Planning. Working group discussions highlighted that while response planning approaches vary, successful strategies consistently combine multiple frameworks—including all-hazards, hazard-specific, and consequence management planning—with an emerging emphasis on “impacts-based” planning to better anticipate downstream effects. Many states employ a hybrid model supported by structured planning cycles, gap analyses to prioritize training and resource allocation, and regular exercises to validate readiness. A key enabler of success is strong state support for local jurisdictions through pre-incident planning, training, and technical assistance, including tools such as standardized templates, EOP assessments tied to funding, and enhanced alerting and operational procedures. Additionally, the group emphasized the importance of shared, web-based platforms and standardized reporting tools to streamline information flow and maintain clarity during high-tempo response operations, ultimately strengthening coordination, consistency, and overall preparedness across all levels of government.

Response Operations. Effective response operations depend on robust pre-incident groundwork, including established partnerships, pre-qualified personnel, standardized tools, and well-defined mutual aid systems that enable rapid, coordinated action. The working group emphasized the value of having readily available operational information and pre-scripted messaging to maintain consistency during crises, as well as integrating partners—such as community leaders and cross-sector agencies—to enhance situational awareness and capture real-time public sentiment. Capabilities like the National Qualification System (NQS), including states that have their own version of the standards, pre-negotiated contingency contracts, and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) were identified as critical enablers for resource sharing, credentialing, and real-world training, while many states are also developing internal mutual aid systems to support local jurisdictions below declaration thresholds. Tracking systems for resource movement, combined with expanded use of GIS-driven dashboards and common operating pictures, are improving real-time decision-making and reducing operational friction for leadership. Overall, states are aligning around scalable, data-driven, and partnership-focused approaches, with continued efforts needed to refine and standardize best practices across jurisdictions.

Response Logistics. Logistics emerged as a critical determinant of response success, with leading state programs emphasizing proactive planning, clear communication, and strong partnerships to ensure speed, flexibility, and operational self-sufficiency during disasters. Effective approaches include managing expectations through transparent communication about resource timelines and delays, planning for extended supply chain disruptions with alternate transportation, pre-staged resources, and mutual aid, and addressing unique geographic challenges, such as island access, through contingency models like air bridges. States highlighted the importance of integrating logistics into evacuation planning, maintaining strong documentation for cost recovery, and establishing pre-disaster contracts for staffing, fuel, and equipment while coordinating with NGOs, VOADs, and federal partners to expand capacity. Both stockpiling and just-in-time delivery models can be successful when supported by tested vendor relationships and exercised contracts. Additionally, investments in cloud-based inventory systems, GIS-enabled visibility, and structured vendor integration into emergency operations centers enhance real-time decision-making and coordination. Overall, the most effective logistics programs are disciplined, data-driven, and partnership-focused, enabling states to sustain operations independently while remaining positioned to scale and integrate federal support when needed.

Recovery Public Assistance. States invest in their own disaster recovery frameworks—particularly state-level Public Assistance programs—enhance resilience, reduce dependence on federal aid, and accelerate support to local communities. Successful programs are built on clearly defined structures that align assistance delivery methods (e.g., grants, loans, or direct aid) with state capacity and long-term recovery goals, supported by dedicated, flexible funding streams established in statute to ensure continuity, rapid deployment, and reduced administrative burden. States emphasized the importance of codifying program elements, establishing clear activation thresholds and eligibility criteria, and aligning administrative rules with statutory authority to ensure consistency and transparency. Leveraging technology to streamline the full grant lifecycle—from damage assessments to project closeout—along with proactive practices like early assessments during pre-declaration phases, has proven effective in reducing delays and expediting recovery. Overall, states are converging on modernized, well-structured, and process-driven recovery programs that prioritize speed, clarity, and scalability to better serve communities after disasters.

Recovery Individual Assistance. Discussions on Individual Assistance programs highlighted that, while many foundational elements mirror those of Public Assistance—such as alignment with state statutes, authorities, procurement rules, funding structures, and eligibility criteria—successful programs distinguish themselves through targeted strategies that strengthen legislative support, cross-agency coordination, and survivor-focused service delivery. States emphasized the importance of building coalitions with partner agencies like human services, public health, and housing to expand recovery capacity, as well as implementing robust community outreach efforts, including call centers and long-term engagement strategies, to ensure individuals can access and navigate available resources. Increasingly, states are also assuming responsibility for Disaster Resource Centers and Multi-Agency Resource Centers as centralized hubs for service delivery. Overall, the effort is focused on developing a clear, scalable roadmap that enables states to design, fund, and sustain effective Individual Assistance programs that improve accessibility, coordination, and long-term recovery outcomes for survivors.