NEMA 2026 Annual Forum
October 19 – 22, 2026
Little Rock, Arkansas

Minutes

PRESENT *p = proxy

Region I	**Region II**	**Region III**	**Region IV**
Connecticut	New Jersey	Delaware	Alabama
Massachusetts	New York	District of Columbia	Florida
New Hampshire	Puerto Rico	Maryland	Georgia
Rhode Island	Virgin Islands	Pennsylvania	Kentucky
		Virginia	North Carolina
		West Virginia	South Carolina
			Mississippi
			Tennessee

Region V	**Region VI**	**Region VII**	**Region VIII**
Illinois	Arkansas	Iowa	Colorado
Indiana	Louisiana	Kansas	Montana
Michigan	New Mexico	Missouri	North Dakota
Minnesota	Oklahoma	Nebraska	South Dakota
Ohio			Utah
Wisconsin			Wyoming

Region IX	**Region X**
Arizona	Alaska
California	Idaho
Hawaii	Oregon
Nevada	Washington

President AJ Gary asked Secretary Dawn Brantley to call the roll of the states. A quorum was declared. The forum opened with a video message from Arkansas Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders and in-person opening remarks from Arkansas Senator John Boozman.

Hon. Cameron Hamilton, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency
Administrator Hamilton shared his vision for FEMA and the agency's programs built around the message of reducing risk and building state and local capacity. He said states need adequate financial resources, the ability to spend funds rapidly to expedite recovery, appropriate staffing, and less dependency on the federal government. He broadly discussed some efforts FEMA is considering to speed up recovery including simplified procedures, greater delegation from FEMA headquarters to the regions for decision-making, EHP waivers, and more. Hamilton promoted the use of mutual aid and the sharing of best practices between states.

Ken Graham, Director, National Weather Service
Director Graham focused his comments on the NWS initiative to place a meteorologist in every state emergency management agency and hopes to meet that goal by the end of 2027. The NWS is also hiring at a rapid pace. He discussed replacing radars, a website update in 2028, and internal reorganization.

Beyond the Final Whistle: Lessons from the NEMA FIFA 2026 World Cup Task Force - Dawn Brantley, Task Force Chair and Director, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency

The overarching theme was emergency management activities cannot begin when the event does. The jurisdictions best prepared for success started early, involved stakeholders, strengthened existing systems, established trusted relationships, clarified governance, exercised their plans, and continuously adapted as conditions changed.



This Land is Whose Land? National Security and Foreign Land Ownership - David Kaufman, Vice President and Director for Safety and Security, Center for Naval Analyses; Wes Ward, Secretary, Arkansas Department of Agriculture; Lynn Budd, Director, Wyoming Department of Homeland Security

The panel examined the homeland security and emergency management implications of foreign governments acquiring large parcels of land across the United States. Panelists discussed potential risks to national security, critical infrastructure protection, supply chain resilience, and impact to state and local preparedness, especially when foreign-owned property is located near military installations, energy facilities, transportation corridors, communications infrastructure, or other sensitive assets. The discussion covered the challenges these acquisitions present for state and local governments, including information sharing, threat assessment, land-use planning, and coordination with federal partners to identify and mitigate emerging security risks.

SBA ODR: Agency Updates, Service Improvements, and Our New Structure - Chris Stallings, Associate Administrator, Office of Disaster Recovery, Small Business Administration

Cooperative Continuity: Strategies for Faster Restoration and Stronger Rural Power Systems - Cris McCombs, Regional Client Services Director, Hagerty Consulting, Inc.; Kelli De Mello, Director of Regulatory Affairs, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association; Tom Wright, Vice President, Power Delivery, Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation; Eric Gibson, Director, Kentucky Emergency Management

As federal disaster support may decline or become less predictable in the future, rural electric cooperatives are actively strengthening their resilience planning to ensure faster recovery, reduced outage impacts, and more resilient power delivery. The session explored practical, cooperative-driven strategies to prepare before disasters, harden critical assets, and accelerate restoration when resources are constrained. The panel also discussed the role of emergency management as a critical energy sector partner.

Reimagining Emergency Management: Pennsylvania's Bold Path Forward – Randy Padfield, Director, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency
Pennsylvania's Executive Order to modernize emergency management provides a forward-looking approach to strengthening statewide coordination, clarifying responsibilities, and ensuring the Commonwealth is prepared to meet today's evolving and increasingly complex threats.

Business Session

Reports by Officers

Secretary's Report – Dawn Brantley, Sec.

The minutes from the 2026 Mid-Year Forum were presented for approval.

Moved:	IA	DISPOSITION: Passed Unanimously
Second:	MD	

Treasurer's Report – Robert Ezelle, Treas.
FY27 Year-to-Date Financial Report: The budget approved by the Board calls for spending down the fund balance by $100,662. As of August 31st, NEMA had revenue over expense totaling $1,055,086. Cash on hand with CSG totaled $3,210,630.54.

Baird Trust Report: The NEMA Finance Subcommittee received its annual briefing from Baird in September and a copy was shared with the Board of Directors. NEMA made an initial investment of $1M in 2023 and has since invested another $750,000. The most recent investment of $500,000 was made in August 2026. Over 3 years, NEMA's investment growth after fees is $918,515. Over those same 3 years, NEMA's gross rate of return is 17.38%, and net is 16.63%. Our rate of return exceeds the average market rate. The portfolio is valued at $2,668,515.00.

FY27 Year-to-Date Development Report: To date, NEMA has received $3.465M in federal grant funding. Of that amount, $3M is the EMAC grant which Congress increased from $2.5M this year. Thank you to our federal partners at FEMA, DOE, and CDC for their support.

Reports by Committees
Preparedness Committee – Greg Engle, Vice Chair
A position paper to Enhance State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Capabilities to Lead Disaster Response and Increase National Preparedness.

Moved:	NH	DISPOSITION: Passed Unanimously
Second:	DC	

Response and Recovery Committee – Erv Portis, Chair
National recovery program reform recommendations were developed by the committee based on the principle that states are prepared to take on greater responsibility for disaster recovery, but it must be matched with the authority, capacity, resources, flexibility, and federal support necessary to succeed.

Officer Elections – Lynn Budd, Past President
Past President Budd introduced the candidates for officer:
Vice President – Delila Bruno, Montana
Treasurer – Robert Ezelle, Washington
Secretary – Dawn Brantley, Massachusetts

There was a call for nominations from the floor. With no floor nominations, a motion was made to close nominations.

Moved:	MD	DISPOSITION: Passed Unanimously
Second:	NH	

The slate of candidates was presented for approval.

Moved:	DC	DISPOSITION: Passed Unanimously
Second:	NE	

Outgoing President AJ Gary thanked the membership for their support over the past year. Incoming President Marc Pappas presented Gary with the NEMA Presidential Citation and thanked him for his service. Pappas then shared with the group that his presidency will be focused on a shared vision for the future of emergency management and working together to achieve common goals.

There being no further business, the 2026 Annual Forum was adjourned.

Moved:	MD	DISPOSITION: Passed Unanimously
Second:	AK	