

# Inside IEMA

Monthly Newsletter



Illinois Emergency Management Agency

May 2018

## Message From Acting Director William P. Robertson

May was once again a busy time at IEMA. When a water main break at the Rend Lake Conservancy District threatened water service to more than 160,000 people, local emergency managers sprang into action and IEMA's professionals quickly began coordinating state support. Although the event was short-lived, it provided lessons learned for all involved.

Communication during events, no matter how large or small, can help mitigate and speed recovery efforts. It is the key to smooth operations. I plan to reach out to elected officials throughout the state to reinforce the procedures and processes for successful response. It is imperative that we in the emergency management field drive this message so communities are prepared. Preparedness in all we do, from plans to simple checklists, will enhance our readiness for future events.

I want to take a moment to recognize an individual in our organization who has provided nearly 30 years of outstanding service to our organization. I have a great team here at IEMA. Each part of the team has a vital role, especially in communications to the public. That role in our agency requires a person who is well-seasoned in communications and can easily write or report on an event.

As an agency, we are sad to see Patti Thompson retire. Her knowledge base will be irreplaceable, as she has made a mark on the agency for "being ahead of the event."

After nearly 37 years of service to the state of Illinois, she has earned the wonderful retirement that awaits her. We wish her well and hope she doesn't have to take late night calls ever again. She was always been there for us and we are thankful. We are all proud to call her our friend, mentor and fellow warrior in the world of emergency management.

Thank you, Patti, for making our agency and state a better place to work. Your legacy will be long remembered when you retire at the end of May.



Acting Director Robertson and ITTF Chair Mike Chamness congratulate Sangamon County Emergency Management Director David Butt on his upcoming retirement.

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## WebEOC Enhances Information Sharing, Awareness

After several months of input, development, training and exercises, a tool to help local emergency managers increase situational awareness and more easily share information was launched on May 1.

Work on the project began in November 2017, when IEMA assembled a WebEOC Champions panel consisting of 24 coordinators from accredited emergency management agencies. The group included members who brought WebEOC experience to the table, as well as members who hadn't worked with the platform previously. The group reviewed and commented on the existing boards for the WebEOC development site. That input then was incorporated into the platform and reviewed by the Champions group in December.

On Jan. 31, a virtual functional exercise was conducted with members of the WebEOC Champions operating from their offices while IEMA regional staff members monitored board activity and provided injects into the exercise from the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC).

In February, IEMA's eight regional offices conducted

WebEOC workshops for their counties prior to the planned launch of the next version on March 1. However, because several jurisdictions were dealing with response and recovery efforts related to the February flooding and wanted to continue using the development site, the launch was delayed.

A WebEOC exercise also was held during the Illinois Emergency Services Management Association conference in late April. IEMA's regional staff facilitated and evaluated that exercise.

Prior to the May 1 launch, WebEOC was updated to the 8.3 version. The WebEOC Champions group will meet again during the IEMA Training Summit in September to review functionality and begin work on phase 2 of the project.

Local emergency managers are encouraged to log into WebEOC frequently to maintain familiarity with the tool and to keep passwords current. IEMA's regional coordinators post biweekly regional reports in WebEOC, which local emergency managers can see when they access the boards.

## Flood Preparedness Meetings Held Along Mississippi

Snow melt in the Upper Mississippi River Basin caused the Mississippi River to begin rising in early May. To ensure coordinated efforts to protect public health and safety in the event major flooding developed, IEMA met with local officials from several counties along the river to discuss flood preparedness.

During meetings in Milan, Quincy and Fairview Heights, the types of assistance available through the state, the process for requesting assistance and other coordination topics were discussed.

Personnel from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) also participated in the meetings, highlighting the levee and flood-fighting expertise they can provide to communities dealing with rising floodwaters. USACE staff also discussed resources they can make available to communities through a request to the state.

In addition, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Water Resources participated in the Milan meeting.

IEMA coordinates state support to communities before, during and after disasters. Flood-related support often includes pumps, hose, sandbags, sand, plastic, road barricades, offender crews to fill and place sandbags, trucks and other heavy equipment to transport sandbags and assist with debris removal, law enforcement support, boats for patrols and evacuations, and other personnel or resources need to protect public health and safety.



Flood preparedness meeting in Milan.

## New Spots Highlight Functional Needs Preparedness

IEMA recently launched a broadcast campaign to encourage people and caregivers to develop plans and assemble emergency supply kits to help them stay safe and well when disaster strikes. The new TV and radio spots feature White Sox announcer Jason Benetti.

The spots direct listeners to the Ready Illinois website ([www.Ready.Illinois.gov](http://www.Ready.Illinois.gov)) for information on developing an emergency plan and building an emergency supply kit for people with cognitive, mobility or visual disabilities, those with mental health or substance abuse issues, people who are deaf or have hearing loss, seniors, people with service animals, and those who use life support systems.

The new spots are airing as part of the Ready Illinois broadcast preparedness campaign, which is aired in cooperation with the Illinois Broadcasters Association (IBA) Public Education Partnership (PEP) program. The spots are airing on more than 200 Illinois radio stations and more than 30 Illinois TV stations.

IEMA's partnership with the IBA's PEP program have included radio campaigns recorded by actress Marion



**White Sox announcer Jason Benetti.**

Ross of TV's "Happy Days" fame; TV and radio personality Steve Harvey; the late Larry Lujack and now retired radio sidekick Tommy Edwards (reprising their roles as "Uncle Lar" and Li'l Tommy" from the WLS 'Animal Stories' vignettes); Alan Kalter, formerly of "The Late Show with David Letterman;" and TV spots written and/or produced by Illinois high school and college students.

All of the preparedness radio and TV ads can be found on the Ready Illinois website ([www.Ready.Illinois.gov](http://www.Ready.Illinois.gov)).

## SBA Assistance Approved for February Floods

On May 7 the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) approved the state's request for assistance to help people and businesses in Iroquois, Kankakee and Vermilion counties recover from severe storms and floods that occurred in February.

In addition, people and businesses in counties contiguous to the declared counties also are eligible to apply for low-interest, long-term loans. This includes the Illinois counties of Champaign, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Grundy, Livingston and Will and the Indiana

counties of Benton, Lake, Newton, Vermillion and Warren.

To be eligible for an SBA declaration, at least 25 homes and/or businesses in a county must sustain major, uninsured losses of 40 percent or more. A damage assessment conducted in March by the SBA determined 74 homes and nine businesses in Iroquois County, 28 homes and three businesses in Kankakee County, and 21 homes and seven businesses in Vermilion County met that criteria.

## State Participates in Preparedness, Response Workshop

In March, the state of Illinois was notified of selection to participate in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices' Public Health Preparedness and Response Workshop for State and Territorial Gubernatorial and Legislative Leadership.

The state team, led by Acting Deputy Director Jennifer Ricker, attended a workshop in early May with five other states. The workshop focused on public health emergencies, specifically on topics involving legal issues, surge capacity and crisis communications.

The state team included state Rep. Tim Butler, along with staff from the Governor's office, IEMA and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

In June, the Illinois team will convene a larger group of stakeholders to work on specific objectives identified at the workshop, with a goal of strengthening the state's preparedness and capabilities to deal with public health emergencies.



# IEMA Issues Alert on Slightly Radioactive Pendants

IEMA recently issued a consumer alert that some pendants using negative ion technology contain trace amounts of naturally occurring radioactive materials. While the pendants do not pose an immediate health and safety concern, continuous wear over long periods of time may result in a slightly elevated skin exposure to radiation.

Negative ion technology embeds negative ions in personal products and is currently being advertised as a means to maintain health and improve emotional well-being.

Products using this technology include pendants, colorful silicone wristbands and athletic tape. The pendants using negative ion technology are often advertised as Quantum Pendants and Scalar Energy Pendants.

While the radiation levels in these pendants are very low, the agency believes consumers have the right to know they are being exposed to radiation. They can then make an informed decision about whether or not to continue wearing the pendants and, if so, how to reduce exposure.

“In response to an inquiry by an Illinois consumer, the



agency analyzed a pendant in its radiochemistry laboratory and determined it contained naturally occurring radioactive materials, namely thorium and uranium. The source of the naturally occurring radioactive materials in the pendants appears to be from volcanic rock or monazite sands.

IEMA recommends anyone who chooses to continue wearing the pendants should take steps to reduce exposure to the limited radiation present. Those steps include limiting the time you are in

contact with the pendant and wearing the pendant over clothing instead of directly on the skin. Consumers who discontinue wearing the pendants can safely dispose of them in the trash.

IEMA and the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) have determined some pendants being distributed and sold nationally and internationally contain enough naturally occurring radioactive material to warrant increased regulatory controls. IEMA and the NRC will be working with distributors of the pendants in the U.S. to ensure proper controls are implemented.



## Rend Lake Water Main Break

A water main break at the Rend Lake Conservancy District in southern Illinois disrupted water service to more than 160,000 residents in mid-May. The State Emergency Operations Center in Springfield was activated to coordinate support for the impacted counties. That support included three semi truckloads of water from the Salvation Army, 22 pallets of water from Ameren, 3,000 cases of water from Home Depot and two semi truckloads of water procured by the state.



Gov. Bruce Rauner and IEMA Director Robertson traveled to the impacted area to meet with local officials. Gov. Rauner issued a state disaster proclamation to ensure continued state support until water supply issues were resolved. Counties included in the declaration were Franklin, Hamilton, Jackson, Jefferson, Perry, Saline, Washington, White and Williamson.

# Radioactive Materials Program Receives Top Rating

IEMA's radioactive materials program received the highest rating during an Integrated Materials Performance and Evaluation Program (IMPEP) review conducted recently by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

The agency's radioactive materials program licenses and inspects more than 600 radioactive materials licensees.

The purpose of IMPEP is to ensure that public health and safety are adequately protected from the potential hazards associated with the use of radioactive materials, to ensure compatibility with the NRC and to compare performance of the program being reviewed with other state programs. During the IMPEP review, five common performance indicators and four non-common indicators were assessed.

The IMPEP team's preliminary findings for this review

period determined the agency's program is adequate to protect the public health and safety and compatible with the NRC.

During the review, NRC staff commented about the large volume of licensing actions completed by staff and the thoroughness of documentation for licenses and inspections. IEMA's regulations were commended as the most current and comprehensive in the nation. The IMPEP team took several of the agency's licensing and security checklists for use in their own regulatory programs.

The final determination of adequacy and compatibility will be determined by an NRC Management Review Board in July.

The radioactive materials program was last reviewed in 2013. The next review is expected in 2022 or 2023.

# June Preparedness Topic is Summer Time Safety

After a long, cold winter, Illinois residents are embracing the return of balmy weather by spending more time in the great outdoors.

For many people, summer time means vacation time. Whether you're traveling near or far, it's important to spend a few minutes learning about weather or other potential emergencies for your vacation spot. If your vacation spot is prone to hazards not experienced in Illinois, such as hurricanes, tsunamis or wildfires, you can find information on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's website at [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).

Even if your vacation spot is prone to familiar hazards, dealing with those emergencies can be challenging in a new environment. When you arrive at your destination, identify safe locations to go to when severe weather approaches and find out how weather warnings are communicated in the area (Are there outdoor warning sirens? Does your hotel or resort have a public address system?). As always, make sure the Wireless Emergency Alerts on your smartphone are enabled.



While warmer temperatures are welcomed by most people, summer's heat and humidity can be hazardous. Each year, an average of 35 children die from heatstroke after being left in locked cars. Heat effects can be more severe for children because their bodies warm at a faster rate than adults.

Parents should develop habits that will ensure the backseat is always checked before the car is locked, such as putting a purse, cell phone

or other needed item in the backseat or making it a routine to open the car's back door every time the car is parked.

Adults are also susceptible to heat hazards. When heat indexes are high, it's important to stay hydrated, avoid overexertion and strenuous outdoor activities if possible and take advantage of cooling centers, public pools and malls, as even a few hours a day in an air conditioned building can help prevent heat-related illnesses.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer!

### *Tips for removing external radioactive contamination*

A few simple steps can significantly reduce a person's exposure to external radioactive contamination on the body, in the hair and on clothing. In fact, removing the outer layer of clothing can remove up to 90 percent of external radiological contamination.

- **Carefully remove outer layer of clothing to prevent radioactive material on the clothing from shaking loose and contaminating the area or another person.** Stand on a towel or bathmat to catch as much material that shakes loose while removing clothing as possible. Place the clothing and towel in a plastic bag or sealable container and store away from other people and pets until it can be properly disposed.
- **If possible, shower with soap, shampoo and lukewarm water.** Conditioner should not be used as it can cause radiological contamination to stick to hair. Scratching and scrubbing should be avoided. Skin abrasions should be covered to prevent radioactive material from entering opening wounds. If no covering is available, abrasions should be cleansed with copious amounts of water.
- **If a shower isn't accessible, attempt to wash hands, face, ears and other parts of the body that weren't covered by clothing previously removed.** If no running water is available, use a moist wipe or damp towel/paper towel to wipe hands, face, eyelids and parts of the body that may have been exposed. Blow the nose to expel radioactive material from nostrils.
- **Dress in clothing that was stored in a closet or cabinet. Clothing stored in open areas may have been contaminated by radioactive material.** If necessary, clothing stored in open areas should be brushed off or shaken prior to wearing. If no other clothing is available, the original clothing can be reused after brushing off or shaking over a towel prior to dressing. The towel should then be placed in a plastic bag or sealable container and stored away from people and pets. Rewash or re-wipe hands and face after dressing.

You can help decontaminate others and pets. If accessible, waterproof gloves and a dust mask should be worn for protection. After helping others, consider revisiting the self-decontamination techniques described above.

## Anderson Named Region 3 Staff Development Specialist

Lisa Anderson became the new Region 3 Staff Development Specialist on May 16. Anderson is a familiar face around the region, having served as office coordinator in Region 3 since 1993.

From 2014 to 2016, Anderson served a temporary assignment as the region's Staff Development Specialist. She then became the office coordinator for the entire regional organization.





## Training and Exercise Update

### EarthEX

Aug. 22

The second annual Emergency All-Sector Response Transnational Hazard Exercise (EARTH EX) will be held on Aug. 22. EARTH EX is a video-enabled exercise designed to provide a multi-sector, national and international exercise series. The exercise is sponsored by Electric Infrastructure Security (EIS) Council.

The annual exercise series focuses on response to catastrophic events that severely disrupt the normal functioning of critical infrastructures in multiple regions for long durations.

EARTH EX offers participants a unique opportunity to examine preparedness, response and restoration

postures for severe hazard scenarios without extensive preparation for the exercise. As an out-of-the-box senior level exercise, it also provides an opportunity to examine and rehearse critical executive and operational decisions required before a full operational exercise.

The August exercise will involve participation from 20 different sectors that will be grouped in six hub categories, including utilities, government, mass care, health, cyber and situational awareness, and private sector. Interactive participation will be supported by video-enabled and text-based injects.

For more information and to register, visit the EIS Council website at <https://www.eiscouncil.org/EarthEx.aspx>.

## New Online Payment System Easier, More Secure

IEMA has several programs that require the agency to collect fees. With assistance from the State Treasurer's Office, IEMA recently adopted a new online payment system that makes it easier and more secure to pay these fees online.

Visa credit cards are now accepted for online payments. This online payment option is currently available for x-ray registration fees, medical technologist licenses (renewals only) and radon mitigation tag purchases, and vendor and sponsor fees for the IEMA Training Summit. IEMA hopes to expand this option to other programs in the future.



## Save the Date!

22<sup>nd</sup> Annual IEMA Training Summit  
September 4-6, 2018  
Bank of Springfield Center  
Springfield, IL

Sponsor and exhibitor opportunities now available at:  
[www.illinois.gov/iema](http://www.illinois.gov/iema)

# Tips for Staying Safe When Bicycling this Summer

Bicycling is a great form of exercise, allowing you to get around while saving money on gas and reducing pollution. As our communities become more bicycle-friendly, it's important to remember that bicycles often share the road with motor vehicles and paths with pedestrians, creating potential hazards.

Injuries and deaths caused by bicycle-related crashes are often the result of the bicyclist's behavior. This includes not wearing a helmet, riding into a street without stopping, turning into traffic, disobeying street signs and riding the wrong way in traffic.

To increase your chances of a safe ride, always wear a helmet and follow the rules of the road. Check tires, brakes, cranks, chain and reflectors. Watch for and avoid road hazards that can cause a crash. If you must ride at night, wear bright, reflective clothing and use lights on your bicycle.

When riding in traffic, be predictable and signal your moves to others. Bicycles can maneuver quickly, so you don't want to catch a driver off-guard by suddenly crossing into his or her path. You'll need your eyes and ears to stay alert in traffic, so avoid wearing headphones or using cellphones while riding. You'll need to hear other vehicles as well as watch for hazards.

Children less than 10 years old should ride on the sidewalk where allowed. Be alert to vehicles entering



or backing out of driveways when riding on the sidewalk. Bicyclists on the sidewalks need to behave like pedestrians, so stop at corners to look for traffic before crossing the road. Be extra careful around pedestrians. Use a bell, horn or verbal communication to alert them to your presence.

Biking is great form of exercise and cheap transportation. By making sure that your safety equipment and bicycle are properly fitted and maintained and following these tips, you can enjoy safe cycling this summer.

*(Information for this article was obtained from the National Safety Council and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration websites.)*



Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO) Colonel Shannon Miller (4th from right) and her team recently met with Acting Director Robertson (center) at the State Emergency Operations Center in Springfield. Each FEMA region has a DCO who serves as the single point of contact for Department of Defense support. During a large-scale event involving federal support, the DCO and team are a critical point of contact for states.

Previous issues of Inside IEMA are available at:  
<http://www.illinois.gov/iema/Info/Pages/Newsletters.aspx>.



State of Illinois  
Illinois Emergency Management Agency

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