Bennington County REMC Meeting
Tuesday, November 18
6 PM – 7:30 PM
Meeting Notes

Location
Southwester Vermont Medical Center
100 Hospital Drive, Bennington, VT 05201
or **Microsoft Teams**

In-Person Attendees: Todd Lawrence (Sunderland EMD, Interim Chair), Eddie Pascucci (Southwestern Vermont Medical Center Security, Firefighter & Constable), Paul Dansereau (Shaftsbury EMD), Andy Meyers (North Bennington Village EMC), Linda Schmidt (Sandgate Selectboard), Paul Doucette (Bennington Town EMD, Chief of Police), Jeff Vickers (Bennington Town EMC), Taiga Christie (Vermont Emergency Management – Windham & Windsor Counties)

Virtual Attendees: Bob Briggs (Stamford EMD), Sunny Tier (Arlington Rescue Director of Operations), Marty Irion (Arlington Rescue Board), Seline Skoug (Arlington Rescue), Emily Harris (Vermont Emergency Management Engagement Section Chief), Max Kennedy (Vermont Emergency Management Planning Section Chief)

Welcome (Taiga Christie)

- Status update on EMPG subgrant to Bennington RPC (Emily Harris)
  Vermont Emergency Management typically provides funding to Regional Planning Commissions to provide towns with technical assistance and education, and provide administrative support to these REMC meetings. Unfortunately, we've had a lapse in funding since October 1st, and we still don't know when we're going to be able to renew these agreements as we wait on answers to questions and legal challenges. Until we renew these agreements, if Bennington County Regional Commission is unable to provide support, please reach out to Bill Jones to see what he can do to support you as we wait to get those subgrants back in place. We won't be able to replace everything the RPCs do, but we'll help where we can.

Group Introductions (Taiga Christie)

Call for any business items to be added to the agenda (Taiga Christie)

- Noted that Vinny Thompson is unavailable, but there will be a little discussion on the August Sandgate exercise as well as an exercise at the hospital.

- Speakers:
  - Vermont Emergency Management Planning updates – State Emergency Management Plan update and other planning initiatives (Max Kennedy)
    - State Emergency Management Plan is on a 5 year update cycle, and is a collection of documents to provide strategic framework for response, mitigation & recovery for disasters. It is an all hazards approach and includes roles and responsibilities.
    - Updates to the State Emergency Management Plan in 2025 included:
      - SEMP Base Plan - Vermont's Emergency Management Framework. Sets the roles and responsibilities from the Governor's level to the local level. Includes language about individuals with access and functional needs.

- Response Plan – Provides overview of how information and resource requests flow. Removed a requirement to have a local disaster declaration, though towns may still choose to declare a disaster if they've created ordinances related to additional authorities in an emergency. The Response Plan added a new Recovery Section to the State Emergency Operations Center, so recovery planning can start as soon as the disaster begins.
- Recovery Plan - The Recovery plan talks about short term and long term recovery, including roles and responsibilities.
- Previously, there was a Prevention/Protection Plan that wasn't available outside of a small group. That plan has been replaced with 2 publicly available documents:
  - Technological and Human-Caused Hazard Assessment: analysis and overview of technological or human-caused hazards that are the greatest concern to affect Vermont. The State Hazard Mitigation Plan analyses the natural hazards, this captures the items not in the State Hazard Mitigation Plan. Includes 10 technological and human caused hazards. Something that isn't currently included but is being discussed - Bennington is a few hours from mass population centers - what would you do with a mass influx of people? We're discussing with our Commissioner's office including that in this assessment.
  - Hazard Inventory and Risk Assessment: Formerly known as the Consequence Analysis Table, this document discusses Natural/Technological/Human-Caused hazards and the impact to people, economy, and the environment.

- Vermont Emergency Management's Planning Section is also working on:
  - Common Operating Pictures Dashboard that can share information about what is happening throughout the state. Expected to be a public facing component so EMDs can view it.
  - Distribution Management Plan - how state distributes resources to locals
  - Communications support annex - how we communicate both within the state government, and down to the local level.
  - Volunteer and Donations Management - how we integrate volunteers and donations to support those in need.
    - One town noted that in the past there were donations from organizations, and it would be interesting to have more guidance about how to handle that.
  - Cyber Support Annex - how we deal with Cyber incidents
  - Event-specific annexes for all hazards identified in the HIRA.

- Southwestern Vermont Medical Center Exercise Series (Eddie Pascucci)
  - The hospital is working on next year's emergency management schedule, which includes has a series related to public safety. Active shooter tabletop exercises, partnerships with Bennington Police, and working on a larger Full Scale Exercise around Hazardous Materials. That exercise would include a decontamination demonstration with radioactive materials including donning and doffing gear, and hoping to partner with Fire and Law Enforcement - planning for mid to end of 2026. Hospital added 15 new people to decon team, assessing spill kits and standardizing them and access. Will keep everyone informed as we work on dates.
    - Pam Corbett, the Department of Health Emergency Preparedness Specialist that now serves this region, was made aware of this exercise just before the meeting.
- Sandgate August Exercise (Linda Schmidt)
  - Exercise was held on August 10th related to an incident at the notch, a very narrow S curve. Arlington School District was getting rid of a bus and a van, so they were able to use those in

this exercise along with kids playing victims on the school bus and mutual aid departments responding.
    - Another individual noted the importance of advertising exercises – but that even with good advertisement when the exercise is happening, you will have onlookers stopping by.
  - Exercises (Taiga Christie)
    - Vermont Emergency Management can provide support for exercises including tabletop exercises, functional exercises, and eventually moving up to full scale exercises. Vermont Emergency Management has access to facilitators, evaluators and subject matter experts which can enhance the exercises. You start with talking through the plan you wish to exercise, and creating an exercise timeline. Reach out to Bill Jones if you'd like to start that process with Vermont Emergency Management.
- Old Business: (Emily Harris)
  - Bylaws: Bennington REMC does not have bylaws, it is one of 2 REMCs that don't have them in place.
    - Paul Doucette requested that sample bylaws be sent to him.
  - LEPC appointee: Each REMC is supposed to have an individual representing them at the Local Emergency Planning Commission to discuss Hazardous Materials in their region. Meetings are held quarterly and always include a virtual component. Dara, when Vermont Emergency Management has a subgrant in place, currently goes to represent the region – but if anyone is interested in taking this on, please talk to Emily, Bill, or Dara for more information.
  - THIRA/SPR/IPP Appointee: Each REMC is supposed to have an individual representing them at the Threat and Hazard Inventory and Risk Assessment (THIRA), Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR), and Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP). These documents look at what are the worst things that could impact the state (unlike the most likely things discussed in the State Emergency management Plan), what resources are needed to respond to it, what resources we have, and what we're going to do to decrease gaps in those plans, trainings, exercises, equipment, and organizational changes. Dara, when Vermont Emergency Management has a subgrant in place, currently goes to these represent the region – and would continue to do so even if the REMC appointed someone. It just gives additional information from the region to have 2 folks at these meetings. There are typically 1-2 meetings or requests for information a year for this. If anyone is interested in taking this on, please talk to Emily, Bill, or Dara for more information.
  - Discussed that there are challenges with volunteerism, and many of the folks in the room are doing other jobs so adding additional roles can be a challenge. If there is anything Vermont Emergency Management can do to support your community, please reach out to Bill Jones. His role as a Regional Coordinator is to provide support to Bennington and Rutland Counties, and he can workshop plans with you, deliver training or exercises, or just come talk through some challenges you are having.
- Updates from Vermont Emergency Management (Emily Harris)
  - Your VEM Regional Coordinator Bill Jones is away for the rest of November, so if you need support during that time please reach out to Emily Harris.
  - On October 22nd we held **Binary Blizzard** - Large exercise looking at response to a snow event in southern Vermont - thank you to Stamford for participating! If your town is looking to exercise, please talk to Bill Jones - it can be a simple facilitated discussion, drill - and eventually you can work your way up to a full scale exercise.
  - **Homeland Security Exercise & Evaluation Program** which teaches individuals how to hold exercises, will be held virtually January 5, 6, 7 & 9, 2026, 12:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. each day. IS 120 Introduction to exercises is a prerequisite. If you're ready to register, please visit the State Learning Management System – direct course link for HSEEP If that doesn't work for your schedule, we'll also be offering this same class virtually October 5, 6, 7 & 9, 2026, 12:00 p.m.- 4:00 p.m. each day. Registration is

available at the same link.

- **Shelter Fundamentals** is expected to return to Bennington in the spring. If you have folks that need it before that, there is an online version of the course available anytime
- **ICS 300 (Intermediate ICS)** will be in Pittsford March 24-26, 8-4:30 each day. ICS 300 REGISTRATION
- **G191 ICS EOC Interface** is an interactive course on how Incident Command Posts and Emergency Operations Centers can work together. It will be offered in Castleton, October 21, 2026, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. G191 REGISTRATION
- Vermont Emergency Management is hosting our First **Lunch and Learn - When All Else Fails: Communicating During Helene.** Real lessons from Hurricane Helene on how to stay connected when every system goes down. Virtual event: December 17th, 12-1pm. Registration required.
- Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency (**PACE) communications** training can be delivered in 2 hours in your town, or for the region. Please contact Bill Jones, when he returns in December, if you are interested.
- Vermont Emergency Management has formally sunsetted the RACES program. However, amateur radio operator skills can still be used - anyone interested in continuing this work can join the state's Medical Reserve Corps under the Department of Health. Any questions about the MRC program should be directed to Heather Rigney (KC1PMR), State MRC Coordinator, or John Colt (NV1Y), MRC Volunteer Coordinator.
- This Friday is expected to be the last drought email going out to the 3 points of contact from the LEMP. The task force is still meeting, and the drought.vermont.gov website will continue to be updated, but proactive emails will no longer be sent.
- There has been a shift in VDH EP Specialist regions, and Pam Corbett is now serving Bennington County.
- If you are wanting to register for an Emergency Management class but don't have a state Learning Management System account, please register for a free account.

- Binary Blizzard (Bob Briggs)
  - Stamford participated in this exercise, and it was excellent. Well worth the time to participate.
- Next REMC Meeting: Tuesday, February 10 at 6:00 pm – Location - virtual (BCRC Office)
  - Please refer to the REMC webpage at Regional Emergency Management Committee - BCRC (bcrcvt.org) for updates
- Thank you for attending!