



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
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November 6, 2014

**Memorandum:**

To: The Honorable Terry McAuliffe, Governor  
Members of the General Assembly

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey D. Stern".

From: Jeffrey D. Stern

Subject: Annual Statewide Drill on Response to Large Scale Disaster Report – FY2014

Attached is the report required by the *Code of Virginia*, §44-146.17:2 – “Annual statewide drill.” Submitted in the form of an executive summary, the report documents the overall operational and program requirements essential to examine or test the Commonwealth’s response to major disasters.

The annual Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise (VERTEX) series is intended to prepare the Commonwealth of Virginia for potential threats by measuring current capabilities, policies, and procedures against the requirements to properly mitigate, respond to, and recover from man-made and natural disasters impacting the Commonwealth.

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact me.

JDS/bcf

Cc: The Honorable Brian Moran, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security  
Curtis C. Brown, Chief Deputy State Coordinator  
Brett A. Burdick, Deputy State Coordinator  
Susan Mongold, Division Director, Office of Training and Exercises

*“Working to Protect People, Property and Our Communities”*

# 2014 Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise Series

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Executive Summary  
Prepared for the General Assembly



**Publication Date: November 6, 2014**

Abstract: This document contains an overview of exercise discussions that took place during the 2014 Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise (VERTEX) series activities, to include scenario details, exercise objectives, and agency participation.

## ADMINISTRATIVE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

The title of this document is the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) 2014 Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise (VERTEX) After-Action Report.

For more information about this exercise, consult the following points of contact:

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The annual Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise (VERTEX) series is intended to prepare the Commonwealth of Virginia for potential threats by measuring current capabilities, policies, and procedures against the requirements to properly mitigate, respond to, and recover from man-made and natural disasters impacting the Commonwealth. In 2014, VERTEX was a three-part exercise series focusing on state preparedness in the core capabilities areas of operational coordination, operational communications, public information and warning, public and private services and resources, mass care services and public health and medical services.

The overarching purpose of the 2014 VERTEX series was to conduct a series of exercises of varying degrees of complexity that engage the “Whole Community” with the Commonwealth; sufficient to respond and recover from multiple threats and hazards. The purpose of the Hurricane Capstone Series, MACC/Field Operations Functional Exercise (FE) was to improve evacuation procedures, logistical coordination, decision-making, information sharing, and sheltering operations in response to the approach of a Category 3 Hurricane.

The best means to this end was to conduct an operations-based exercise, to run at various times, on each of two consecutive days in response to the approach of a Category 3 Hurricane. The first day included a state-level functional exercise that focused on Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operations in response to a Category 3 Hurricane scenario. The second day of the exercise included a functional exercise of multiple EOC and shelter operations.

MAJOR SERIES STRENGTHS	SERIES AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
<p><i>Requested assets would be staged and localized to the impacted area of our system. This could include staging at our multiple service centers for equipment, materials and could include temporary housing with support systems, i.e. tents, cots, portable generators, laundry cleaning, bathroom facilities, fuel services, comfort control devices, and food catering.</i></p>	<p><i>ESF 12 partners indicated potential challenges with a storm of this magnitude and of such a catastrophic nature that there would need to be additional efforts made related to housing of power crews given the fact of the large evacuated population seeking temporary housing in hotels in other region of Virginia.</i></p>
<p><i>The Virginia Emergency Response Team (VERT) maintained effective communications with federal, state, and local partners, as well as amongst ESFs. The VERT utilized several methods of communication during the exercise.</i></p>	<p><i>Address JIC policies and procedures during a hurricane incident; 2-1-1 should be used to assist with public messaging and public messaging should be linked to Southeast Virginia/Northeast North Carolina Hurricane Annex</i></p>
<p><i>Localities demonstrated the ability to effectively make requests to state for resources in WebEOC and EMAC assistance requests through the Virginia Emergency Operation Center (VEOC).</i></p>	<p><i>Address unified regional coordination of public messaging to regional partners and the stat</i></p>

# SECTION 1: EXERCISE SERIES OVERVIEW

## Exercise Details

### Exercise Name

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) 2014 Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise (VERTEX) and Hurricane Capstone Series Multi- Agency Coordination Center (MACC) Field Operations Functional Exercise

### Type of Exercises

Functional Capabilities-based Exercise

### Exercise Location and Dates

Virginia Department of Emergency Management held exercises as follows:

- Virginia Emergency Operations Center – June 24<sup>th</sup> – Electric and Communications Utility Forum
- Virginia Emergency Operations Center – June 25<sup>th</sup> – Virginia Emergency Response Team exercise activation
- VDEM Region V and I localities - June 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> – opened EOCs and conducted various types of shelter operations
- VDEM Region VII – June 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> - conducted local reception/shelter/long term care operations exercises at various levels

### Duration

6 hours

### Sponsor

Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) sponsored it. The exercise was partially funded by the Hampton Roads Regional Catastrophic Planning Team (HRRCPPT).

### Program

Fiscal Year 2013 State Homeland Security Grant Program

### Mission

Response

### Core Capabilities

Operational Communications and Coordination

Public Information and Warning

Mass Care Services

Public and Private Services and Resources

Public Health and Medical Services

## Objectives

**Objective 1** - Evaluate the ability of local emergency management agencies to quickly analyze information for situational awareness, identify impacts to the public, and make timely protective action decisions (PADs) to evacuate citizens from the region's coastal area in accordance with the Southeast Virginia/Northeast North Carolina Category 3 Hurricane Incident Annex and local plans, policies, and procedures.

**Objective 2** - Participating jurisdictions will demonstrate the ability to gather, analyze, share, and disseminate incident specific information as it pertains to critical infrastructure protection of the whole community during a simulated Category 3 hurricane in accordance with the Southeast Virginia/Northeast North Carolina Category 3 Hurricane Incident Annex and local plans, policies, and procedures.

**Objective 3** - Evaluate the ability of participating agencies to coordinate response activities and communications, including the use of WebEOC, across federal, state, tribal, and local governments during a simulated Category 3 hurricane in accordance with the Southeast Virginia/Northeast North Carolina Category 3 Hurricane Incident Annex and local plans, policies, and procedures.

**Objective 4** - Participating agencies will demonstrate the ability to evacuate and address essential needs for affected populations – including general, access/functional needs, and unique populations – during a simulated major hurricane in accordance with the Southeast Virginia/Northeast North Carolina Category 3 Hurricane Incident Annex and local plans, policies, and procedures.

## Scenario Type

A Category 3 hurricane, approaching Category 4 in strength, hits the Hampton Roads area, making landfall near Virginia Beach, VA and Dare County, NC. Sustained winds are between 126 and 132 mph, with a storm surge of 10 feet or higher. With the majority of the population living in a storm surge zone, large-scale evacuations are required. Coastal areas in Hampton Roads were in the midst of a busy summer tourist season, with hotels and seasonal homes filled to near capacity. The governors of both states and local officials order the evacuation of tourists and people living in certain designated storm surge zones along the coast. Communicating the danger of the storm to the public is critical to ensuring that individuals follow evacuation recommendations. In the days leading up to the arrival of the storm, the region is inundated with heavy rain. The interstates and other evacuation routes are clogged with extremely heavy traffic. It is estimated that 900,000 people in the region will be asked to evacuate; however, only 700,000 are predicted to heed the warnings. Of those evacuating, approximately 70,000 will seek public shelter.

## Number of Attendees

454 exercise participants

## Participating Organizations

The following federal, state, and local agencies attended the 2014 VERTEX Exercise Series:

Federal Agencies/Private Non-Profits	State Agencies	Localities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Homeland Security</li> <li>• Department of Veterans Affairs</li> <li>• U.S. Air Force</li> <li>• U.S. Army</li> <li>• U.S. Navy</li> <li>• U.S. Coast Guard</li> <li>• American Red Cross</li> <li>• Dominion Virginia Power</li> <li>• G-M-Gazette Journal</li> <li>• Intermedix Corporation</li> <li>• Johnston- Willis Hospital</li> <li>• Nusura</li> <li>• Olson Group Ltd.</li> <li>• Towne Insurance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christopher Newport University</li> <li>• Virginia National Guard</li> <li>• Virginia Natural Gas</li> <li>• Virginia Defense Force</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Emergency Management</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Environmental Quality</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Fire Programs</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Forestry</li> <li>• Virginia Department of General Services</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Health</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation</li> <li>• Virginia Information Technology Agencies</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Social Services</li> <li>• Virginia Department of Transportation</li> <li>• Virginia State Police</li> <li>• Voluntary Organization Active in Disasters (VOAD)</li> <li>• North Carolina Emergency Management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amelia County</li> <li>• Arlington County</li> <li>• City of Alexandria</li> <li>• City of Chesapeake</li> <li>• Currituck County, N.C.</li> <li>• City of Danville</li> <li>• Essex County</li> <li>• City of Falls Church</li> <li>• Gates County, N.C.</li> <li>• Gloucester County</li> <li>• Goochland County</li> <li>• Henrico County</li> <li>• Isle of Wight County</li> <li>• Lancaster County</li> <li>• Loudon County</li> <li>• City of Manassas</li> <li>• Mathews County</li> <li>• City of Newport News</li> <li>• City of Portsmouth</li> <li>• Powhatan County</li> <li>• City of Richmond</li> <li>• City of Suffolk</li> <li>• City of Virginia Beach</li> </ul>



## SECTION 2: SCENARIO

In 2014, VERTEX was a three-part exercise series focusing on state preparedness in the core capabilities areas of operational coordination, operational communications, public information and warning, public/ private services and resources, mass care services, and public health and medical services. Scenarios varied for the exercises based on the regional participation priority threats.

On Tuesday, June 24, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management held an Emergency Support Function 12 (Energy) and 2 (Communications) Electric and Communications Utility Representative Forum to share information with relevant stakeholders. Topics of discussion including reviewing power outage reporting during 2014 winter events, making improvements to contact lists, to include specific and multiple contacts for each utility, exploring ways in which the VEOC can provide assistance to utilities via coordination and other resources, cross utility support between electric and communications during events to maintain public safety services, new innovations in response and recovery lessons learned, and utility input on VDEM's planned Hurricane Response Exercise to obtain best guess estimates on restoration times and activities for recovery based on the exercise scenario. Grace Weather Advisories were provided to exercise participants prior to and during the exercise to prepare them for and stimulate exercise play.

On June 25, 26, and 28, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Region VII localities conducted local reception/shelter/long term care operations exercises at various levels. A total of 579 participated in the exercise series throughout Region VII.

On Wednesday, June 25, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) conducted a six-hour functional exercise (FE) in the Commonwealth. The FE began at 9 a.m. and concluded at 3 p.m. The purpose of VERTEX 2014 was to conduct a series of exercises of varying degrees of complexity that engage the "Whole Community" with the Commonwealth; sufficient to respond and recover from multiple threats and hazards. The purpose of the Hurricane Capstone Series, MACC/Field Operations Functional Exercise (FE) was to improve evacuation procedures, logistical coordination, decision-making, information sharing, and sheltering operations in response to the approach of a Category 3 Hurricane. The exercise was conducted as a functional inject driven exercise using a hurricane timeline regarding a Category 3 Hurricane approaching landfall in Southeast Virginia and Northeast North Carolina.

On June 25, 26, and 28, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Region VII localities conducted local reception/shelter/long term care operations exercises at various levels. A total of 579 participated in the exercise series throughout Region VII.

On Thursday, June 26, the VDEM Region V localities conducted a series of field exercises to include shelter opening, testing of shelter registration systems and points of distribution. A total of 132 participated in this component of the exercise series throughout Region V.

## SECTION 3: EXERCISE DESIGN

The VDEM Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise (VERTEX) and Hurricane Capstone Series Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) Field Operations Functional Exercise was designed to establish a learning environment for players to exercise emergency response plans, policies, and procedures as they pertain to a regional response. The purpose of VERTEX 2014 was to conduct a series of exercises of varying degrees of complexity that engage the “Whole Community” with the Commonwealth; sufficient to respond and recover from multiple threats and hazards. The purpose of the Hurricane Capstone Series, MACC/Field Operations Functional Exercise (FE) was to improve evacuation procedures, logistical coordination, decision-making, information sharing, and sheltering operations in response to the approach of a Category 3 Hurricane.

It was agreed by the planning committee that the best means to this end was to conduct an operations-based exercise, to run at various times, on each of two consecutive days in response to the approach of a Category 3 Hurricane. However, to be able to achieve the goals of both the state and the localities participating, the design was customized for this exercise. Customizations include:

- One-on-one meetings with the VDEM Exercise Branch and localities to identify specific elements in their plans to be tested, identify evaluators, and establish their length and level of play in the exercise.
- Development of exercise materials to simulate the days leading up to a weather activation (weather email reports from the VDEM watch, situation reports, weather conference call, regional conference call, simulated VECTOR meeting and minutes, and simulated governor’s declaration to evacuate).
- A separate tabletop exercise, held on May 21, 2014, provided a baseline for this exercise series. Decisions made about evacuation actions, locality resources available and needs, and responses from Hampton Roads volunteer organizations were incorporated into the MACC and FE exercises.

## **SECTION 4: CONCLUSION**

The VDEM sponsored Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise (VERTEX) and Hurricane Capstone Series Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) Field Operations Functional Exercise was designed to validate the coordination and decision making between state and local officials in Southeast Virginia, Northeast North Carolina, and elsewhere in the Commonwealth using current state and local emergency operations plans and frameworks developed under the Southeast Virginia/Northeast North Carolina Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant. Exercise play focused on operational coordination, operational communications, public information and warning, public and private services and resources, public health and medical services, and mass care services in response to a large regional incident with cascading consequences.

The functional exercise successfully captured many areas of strength and improvement that will be used to improve state, local, nongovernmental, and commercial emergency plans and develop future training and exercise efforts. The Improvement Plan, with recommendations and corrective actions, will help improve the Commonwealth's "Whole Community" response to a hurricane by strengthening emergency response plans, policies, and procedures.