



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Emergency Management

JEFFREY D. STERN, Ph.D.
State Coordinator

10501 Trade Court
North Chesterfield, Virginia 23236-3713

CURTIS C. BROWN
Chief Deputy Coordinator

(TDD) 674-2417
FAX (804) 897-6506

BRETT A. BURDICK
Deputy Coordinator

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor
The Honorable Brian Moran, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security
The Honorable John Harvey, Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs
The Honorable Walter A. Stosch, Co-Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable Charles J. Colgan, Co-Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee
The Honorable S. Chris Jones, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee
Mr. Daniel Timberlake, Director of the Department of Planning and Budget

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

FROM: Jeffrey D. Stern, Ph.D.

SUBJECT: Report on the Commonwealth's Emergency Shelter Capabilities and Readiness

In accordance with Item 393 (B) of the 2014 Appropriations Act, I am pleased to submit the 2015 Report on the Commonwealth's Emergency Shelter Capabilities and Readiness. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or need any additional information concerning this report.

JDS/mmp

Enclosure

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Annual Report on the Commonwealth's Emergency Shelter Capabilities and Readiness

Item 393 (B) of the 2014 Appropriations Act

October 2015

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Preface

Item 393 (B) of the 2014 Appropriations Act established a sheltering coordinator position within the Virginia Department of Emergency Management “to improve the safety and security of the citizens of the Commonwealth upon evacuation and subsequent housing in a local or state shelter.” The duties of the sheltering coordinator are outlined as follows:

The Coordinator shall be responsible for, but not be limited to, improving and coordinating the Commonwealth’s sheltering preparedness and capabilities in the event of evacuations due to natural or man-made disasters by reviewing, evaluating and developing a state-wide master plan for the operation of state and local emergency shelters in the Commonwealth. The Coordinator shall establish an integrated system for coordinating the planning and operation of state emergency shelters, and facilitate cooperation among local entities and state agencies in the sheltering preparedness efforts in the Commonwealth.

This report provides a status update on the Commonwealth’s emergency shelter capabilities and readiness, including the progress of the aforementioned tasks assigned to the sheltering coordinator.

Executive Summary

VDEM is submitting this report in satisfaction of Item 393 (B) of the 2014 Appropriations Act for the year 2015. VDEM has hired a new state sheltering coordinator. The sheltering coordinator is in the process of developing a statewide sheltering strategy. A plan is in place to conduct stakeholder meetings to continue the review and evaluation of the Commonwealth's sheltering capabilities and readiness. VDEM is continuing to work with partners to enhance sheltering preparedness and capabilities across the Commonwealth. Progress is being made on each of the sheltering recommendations from the 2014 "In-Season Review of Hurricane Preparedness for Hampton Roads."

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VIRGINIA'S NEW SHELTERING COORDINATOR

In fulfillment of Item 393 (B) of the 2014 Appropriations Act, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) has hired a new state sheltering coordinator. The sheltering coordinator has an extensive background in emergency management and planning and has been nationally recognized for work in inclusive emergency planning. In addition to the responsibilities outlined in Item 393 (B) of the 2014 Appropriations Act, VDEM has tasked the sheltering coordinator with ensuring that sheltering programs for the state are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

LOCAL SHELTERING

VDEM is continuing to assist localities in addressing regional sheltering issues. This includes helping individual localities solve local problems through technical assistance, subject matter expertise, and pilot projects. VDEM is working closely with local governments and state agencies such as the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) to create sustainable sheltering solutions. The intent is that these solutions be shared and modeled for all localities in the Commonwealth.

There are still sheltering gaps at the local level that the Commonwealth is working to address. Both localities and sheltering assessment reports have identified the following gaps:

- Staffing shelters, both with general staff and medical staff
- ADA compliance: understanding the legal requirements, training emergency managers and shelter staff, and acquiring resources to ensure compliance
- Capacity limitations of currently identified pre-landfall sheltering facilities
- Identification of refuges of last resort
- Funding to increase capacity and capabilities

The gaps identified above are consistent in localities across the Commonwealth and are the most critical issues Virginia needs to address in sheltering. Addressing these gaps will be a priority in the statewide sheltering strategy.

STATE-MANAGED SHELTERS

VDEM is coordinating the development of a comprehensive, tiered, and integrated approach to state sheltering. The state has historically relied on the state-managed shelter program to supplement local sheltering capacity in a catastrophic event. However, the cost of mobilizing and operating a single state-managed shelter site is estimated at more than \$10 million per week; the actual costs are unknown as no contractors bid on the proposal last year. In addition to cost, there are concerns with the logistics of relocating residents who are reluctant to shelter far from home. VDSS plans to open state-managed shelters as close to the impacted region as possible. The issue is, however, in many cases, the nearest state-managed shelter could be hours from residents' home communities.

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INCREASING LOCAL AND REGIONAL SHELTERING CAPABILITIES

VDEM is working collaboratively with localities to employ the resources and state employees to provide direct support and enhancement of local and regional sheltering capabilities. Opportunities that are being evaluated and/or developed include:

- Developing deployable, state-staffed shelter management teams through statewide mutual aid and/or the Adjunct Emergency Workforce program.
- Creating deployable assistive technology kits and other resources for ADA compliance.
- Utilizing memoranda of agreement (MOAs) with established teams and resources such as the Hampton Roads Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) Strike Team and Hampton Roads Shelter Support Unit trailers.
- Establishing a disability integration advisor team to identify and address ADA compliance in shelters.
- Identifying alternate, non-school facilities to be used in sheltering operations.

STATEWIDE SHELTERING STRATEGY

VDEM is in the process of developing a statewide strategy and is undertaking the following preliminary tasks:

- **Regional listening sessions:** The sheltering coordinator will travel to each of the seven VDEM regions to gather input on potential solutions to the sheltering gaps and needs identified in assessment reports and previous years' meetings. These sessions will include input from local emergency management stakeholders, emergency managers, and emergency planners across the Commonwealth.
- **Federal, state, and local partner meetings:** The sheltering coordinator will meet with VDEM's sheltering partners at all levels of government in order to better assess everyone's roles and responsibilities. Together they will identify major concerns and issues and determine how partner agencies may be most effectively utilized in sheltering operations.
- **Mass Care Task Force meetings on a regular basis:** The Commonwealth's Mass Care Task Force typically only engages during an activation of the Virginia Emergency Operations Center when mass care coordination is needed. It would be beneficial to the Commonwealth for this task force to meet regularly with the sheltering coordinator. This will help address statewide sheltering gaps, develop relationships between the partner agencies and organizations, and provide training opportunities in advance of a disaster. The plan is to expand the task force membership to include community partners such as the disability community, non-profit organizations, Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), and members of the private sector who perform sheltering support functions.

With the knowledge gained from engaging local and state partners, the sheltering coordinator will begin developing a draft strategic plan for sheltering in the Commonwealth. VDEM will then

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present the draft strategic plan for review and feedback to federal, state, and local partners, including local emergency managers and community stakeholders.

IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE 2014 IN-SEASON REVIEW

Last year's "In-Season Review of Hurricane Preparedness for Hampton Roads"¹ included an analysis of the Commonwealth's capabilities and readiness to shelter hurricane evacuees. Based on the findings, 12 recommendations were made. These recommendations were the result of numerous meetings with local governments, engagement through several existing intergovernmental and interagency working groups at the regional and state levels, in-depth stakeholder engagement, and federal assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD). One of the recommendations was to hire a sheltering coordinator to fulfill Item 393 (B) of the 2014 Appropriations Act. As previously noted, this recommendation has been completed.

The following details the progress that has been made for each of the other 11 recommendations:

- **State and local shelter locations should be identified to include shelters that can meet the needs of individuals with access and functional needs.** The sheltering coordinator and the Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Working Group are working to validate and update the list of local shelters in VDEM Regions 5 and 1. The information the Working Group is collecting will include data on ADA architectural accessibility. Once Regions 5 and 1 have been completed, the list will be expanded to include the other VDEM regions.
- **Localities should apply to use the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) grant funds to upgrade shelter resiliency.** In 2014, 13 different shelter enhancement projects—totaling over \$360,000 in SHSP funds—were awarded to localities. Sheltering projects have been made a priority in the 2015 SHSP grant funding cycle; proposals will be awarded later this year. In addition to the SHSP grants, other funding sources are also being utilized to upgrade shelter resiliency. Multiple sheltering project proposals were submitted as part of the National Disaster Resiliency Competition grant program. A sub-working group of the Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Working Group is developing a proposal to establish a set-aside from the supplemental Local Emergency Management Program Grants (LEMPG) to be used for engineering assessments, ADA site surveys, and retrofitting local shelter facilities. Last year, 13 localities received almost \$194,000 in supplemental LEMPG funds to carry out shelter investment projects.
- **Virginia should re-evaluate and/or enhance state-managed shelter procedures with input from local governments.** The sheltering coordinator is currently evaluating the state-managed shelter procedures and plan as part of the development of an integrated, collaborative statewide sheltering strategy. The sheltering coordinator has reviewed the

¹ Report to Governor Terence R. McAuliffe, *In-Season Review of Hurricane Preparedness for Hampton Roads*, (August 2014), available at (http://www.vaemergency.gov/webfm_send/1022/GovernorsInSeasonReview-3SEPT2014Master.pdf).

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input already received from local governments and will seek additional input through one-on-one meetings and regional listening sessions conducted over the next six months.

- **Virginia should encourage each locality to increase its shelter capacity and capability.** The sheltering coordinator is working on categorizing known local shelter facilities into storm shelters (pre-landfall), emergency shelters (post-landfall and non-high wind events), and refuges of last resort, in order to more accurately identify sheltering capacity for all hazards. Additionally, the possibility of expanding the City of Chesapeake's pilot program utilizing solar arrays for backup power generation instead of generators is being evaluated.
- **Virginia and localities should consider alternatives to alleviate staffing limitations.** The sheltering coordinator has met with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), VDSS, and the American Red Cross to discuss shelter staffing. The sheltering coordinator is working to clarify agency roles for localities and is evaluating the use of established and new volunteer programs. Agreements are being developed with established teams such as the Hampton Roads MMRS Strike Team. The creation of state employee-staffed shelter management teams that would be able to deploy to an impacted area and assist locals with shelter staffing is also being looked into.
- **Virginia should encourage congregate care facilities to have robust emergency action plans.** VDEM is continuing to work with stakeholders to implement this recommendation.
- **Localities should share local shelters and related information with the state. Shelters should be identified by hazard/risk levels for which they are viable (not just hurricanes).** This is information that the Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Working Group and sheltering coordinator are working to validate and update as they compile the list of local shelters in VDEM Regions 5 and 1. This update will identify pre-landfall shelters, as well as shelters that can be used post-landfall or for non-hurricane events. The update also expands our knowledge from merely capacity to capability (capability is a locality's ability to staff and resource a shelter, rather than just identification of the number of people every facility could potentially house). The new data will include staffing capability, resourcing capability, pet sheltering, backup power, shower facilities, and ADA architectural accessibility. This information will allow VDEM to identify thresholds for when a locality may need assistance from its region and/or the state. Once Regions 5 and 1 have been completed, the list will be expanded to include the other VDEM regions.
- **Virginia should consider conducting an engineering assessment of currently identified shelter buildings.** The Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Working Group and sheltering coordinator are currently identifying the most efficient and effective way to conduct engineering assessments and ADA site surveys of shelters in the Commonwealth. They are evaluating partnerships with higher education organizations and model programs from other areas of the country. They are also considering a pilot program specifically for ADA compliance reviews of architectural barriers and program accessibility. The sheltering coordinator has also submitted a project for consideration in the National Disaster

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Resiliency Competition that would provide funding for an engineering assessment and site survey of at least two shelter facilities in each of the qualified communities.

- **Virginia should provide incentives or enhancements to localities to retrofit shelter facilities to higher wind/storm ratings.** The Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Working Group and sheltering coordinator are developing a proposal to establish a set-aside from the supplemental LEMPG and other returned grant funds. The set-aside will be specifically for conducting engineering assessments, ADA site surveys, architectural barrier removals, and retrofitting. The Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Working Group will provide a recommended process for screening and prioritizing applications. These prioritized applications would be held until funding becomes available through returned grant funds, supplemental LEMPG funds, or a new grant funding year. Once funds are available, the grant projects will be conducted starting with the highest priority projects and working down the list of applications. The process would require that emergency managers obtain a letter of support from the school district if the shelter facilities are owned by the district.
- **Virginia should identify building code guidelines to increase shelter resiliency.** VDEM has begun working with the Department of Housing and Community Development and the localities to identify building code guidelines as they relate to local and state shelters.
- **Virginia should create a list of anticipated resources needed for state and local shelters.** These lists already exist from a variety of resources, including VDSS, FEMA, and the American Red Cross. The Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Working Group is compiling the links to submit to VDEM. VDEM is creating a page on the Ready Virginia website to provide links to the following categorized lists: general shelter supplies; access and functional needs supplies; medical supplies; and pet sheltering supplies.

CONCLUSION

VDEM is committed to working with stakeholders to improve the Commonwealth's sheltering capabilities and readiness. Continued partnerships and collaboration across all levels of government will help realize the development of a statewide sheltering strategy. VDEM has made progress on the sheltering recommendations from the 2014 "In-Season Review of Hurricane Preparedness for Hampton Roads," and will continue to enhance sheltering preparedness and capabilities across the Commonwealth.