



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Emergency Management

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe, Governor
Members of the General Assembly

VIA: The Honorable Brian J. Moran, Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security

FROM: Dr. Jeffrey D. Stern, State Coordinator 

SUBJECT: 2015 Report on the Status of Emergency Response Plans

In accordance with § 44-146.18(B)(3) of the *Code of Virginia*, I am pleased to submit the annual report on the status of state and local emergency management plans and preparedness efforts in the Commonwealth. As of the end of 2015, almost all localities, executive branch agencies, and public institutions of higher education in Virginia have a current emergency operations plan. This past year also saw an increase in successful state and local joint planning efforts, which are only expected to increase in 2016.

Please contact me if you have questions or need additional information concerning this report.

JDS/mmp

Enclosures

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

2015 Report on the Status of Emergency Response Plans and Preparedness Efforts in the Commonwealth

§ 44-146.18(B)(3)

December 2015

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Preface

This report is provided in accordance with § 44-146.18(B)(3) of the *Code of Virginia*, which states:

The Department of Emergency Management shall in the administration of emergency services and disaster preparedness programs:

Submit to the Governor and to the General Assembly, no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly, an annual executive summary and report on the status of emergency management response plans throughout the Commonwealth and other measures taken or recommended to prevent, respond to and recover from disasters, including acts of terrorism. This report shall be made available to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports.

This report was developed in conjunction with state agency stakeholders, including the Virginia Department of Health, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and other state stakeholders.

Executive Summary

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) is pleased to report that almost all localities, executive branch agencies, and public institutions of higher education in Virginia have a current emergency operations plan.

- 135 of 138 jurisdictions (98 percent) have current local emergency operations plans
- 112 of 113 executive branch agencies and institutions of higher education submitted an updated continuity plan to VDEM.

VDEM will continue to work with these partners to ensure plans are flexible, scalable, and address the complex risk environment based on evolving threats and hazards.

Our current operating environment requires a shared and coordinated planning effort across state agencies and secretariats, and outside of government. This past year, state agencies collaborated with each other and with localities on numerous successful planning efforts.

- VDEM and other state agencies worked with the City of Richmond and counties of Henrico, Hanover, and Caroline to host the 2015 UCI World Championship.
- State agencies, including VDH, DEQ, VSP and VDEM, finalized an Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Response Plan, which outlines the coordinated healthcare actions required to prepare for and respond suspected cases of EVD within the Commonwealth.
- Northern Virginia localities, along with VDEM, VDOT, VSP, Maryland Emergency Management Agency and D.C. Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency collaborated to carry out the planning efforts for the 2015 World Police and Fire Games as well as the papal visit.

Given the dynamic environment we live in, these types of collaborative initiatives are only expected to increase in 2016.

VDEM is continuing to take measures to ensure the Commonwealth is prepared for and able to respond to and recover from the threats and hazards we face. Thanks to efforts across all state agencies, Virginia was accredited for the third time in a row by the Emergency Management Assessment Program (EMAP). In 2015, VDEM's reorganization consolidated planning across the agency into a single Planning Division, which conducts strategic planning and integrates operational planning and daily situation awareness.

The Commonwealth is engaged in a wide variety of activities to plan for both persistent and evolving threats and hazards. The recommendations proposed will enhance the Commonwealth's planning efforts and help ensure Virginia is prepared for all threats and hazards. These recommendations include:

- Implement disaster planning software across the Commonwealth to digitize all plans to increase efficiency and coordination between agencies and localities.
- Utilize common operating picture (COP) tools to provide situational awareness to state leaders as information develops in real-time.

I. PLANNING EFFORTS

Local Emergency Operation Planning

Within the Commonwealth, there are 138 jurisdictions with independent local emergency management programs that are responsible for developing and updating a local emergency operations plan. According to the *Code of Virginia*, § 44-146.19(E), a local emergency operations plan is deemed current if it is reviewed, revised and adopted by the local governing board every four years. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) assists local governments with plan development and revisions by offering the following services:

- Issuing update notification at both 1 year and 6 months
- Conducting a plan review, as requested
- Facilitating a plan review meetings
- Developing plan templates through collaboration with local partners

As of November 20, 2015, 135 of 138 jurisdictions (98 percent) have current local emergency operations plans. VDEM anticipates providing even more additional support in 2016 once all-hazard planners have been hired for each VDEM regional office.

Local Capability Assessment of Readiness (LCAR)

Pursuant to § 44-146.19(F) of the *Code of Virginia*, all political subdivisions must provide an emergency management assessment to VDEM each year. VDEM facilitates this process through the Local Capability Assessment for Readiness (LCAR) web based survey. The LCAR is a self-reported survey that addresses the following 10 emergency management program areas:

- Hazard Mitigation: Surveys actions taken towards a comprehensive hazard mitigation program, which includes approaches to reduce or eliminate hazards that constitute a significant threat to the jurisdiction.
- Resource Management and Logistics: Surveys the methods of identification, acquisition, distribution, accounting, and use of personnel and equipment for emergency functions.
- Planning: Surveys the development, promulgation, and maintenance of the jurisdiction's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan/EOP, action plans/procedures, and mitigation plans.
- Direction, Control and Coordination: Surveys the capability of the chief executive/administrative officers and key officials to direct, control, and coordinate response and recovery operations.
- Communications and Warning: Surveys the capability of reliable communications to alert public officials and emergency response personnel, warn the public, and to effectively manage the response to an emergency.
- Operations: Surveys the ability to coordinate and implement operational policies, plans,

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and procedures for emergency management.

- Training: Surveys the ability to assess, develop, and implement a training and education programs for public and private officials as well as emergency response personnel.
- Exercise, Evaluation and Corrective Action: Surveys a jurisdiction’s assessment and evaluation of emergency response plans and capabilities through a regularly scheduled program of drills and exercises.
- Crisis Communication, Public Education and Information: Evaluates a jurisdiction’s procedures for disseminating and responding to requests for information before, during, and after disaster events as well as the effectiveness of their public education program regarding hazards affecting the jurisdiction.
- Administration and Finance: Surveys a jurisdiction’s finance and administrative procedures to support emergency protective measures before, during, and after disaster events and procedures to preserve vital records.

Upon completion of the survey the jurisdiction receives a cumulative score. For each program area, when all questions are answered positively, the point values total 100. A score of 100 is considered perfect. This score provides the local emergency manager with a baseline measure. This helps emergency managers to understand the strengths and challenges of their emergency management program and helps determine where improvements could be made.

The Local Capability Assessment of Readiness (LCAR) process is an opportunity for each jurisdiction to assess its capabilities and identify strengths and challenges in its emergency management program. The results present a statewide view of local preparedness and illuminate opportunities to help improve local emergency management programs.

2015 LCAR Results

The table below summarizes the overall average scores since 2010 when the current reporting format and process was instituted. Note, however, that there have been additional questions added over the years, which has resulted in a change to the weight of some questions.

Category	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Hazard Mitigation	75	69	70	68	67	71
Resource Management and Logistics	73	70	73	71	69	66
Planning	88	90	87	85	82	81
Direction and Control	84	88	82	80	75	72
Communications and Warning	85	86	84	82	77	76
Operations	86	86	82	77	80	78
Training	77	76	70	67	66	66
Exercise, Evaluation, and Corrective Action	69	70	67	62	56	60
Crisis Communications, Public Education and Information	72	70	71	69	65	64
Administration and Finance	68	74	72	71	65	65
State Average:	77	78	77	73	68	71

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State Planning

2015 Planning Efforts:

Institutions of Higher Education Crisis and Emergency Management Plan Status

There are 40 state institutions of higher education (IHE) within the Commonwealth. Each must develop, adopt, and keep current a written crisis and emergency management plan.¹ Every public IHE is also required to conduct a comprehensive review and revision of its plan every four years in order to ensure it remains current. Annually, the president and vice-president of the institution must review the IHE's crisis and emergency plan, certify the review in writing to VDEM, and recommend any appropriate changes to the institution.² Public institutions of higher education must also conduct an annual functional exercise and certify to VDEM that it was done.³ An IHE must meet all of the requirements in § 23-9.2:9 of the *Code of Virginia* in order to be compliant.⁴ Currently there are 18 IHEs that are in compliance and 22 are not. Regional offices will soon have the ability, with the addition of an all-hazards planner and a Chief Regional Coordinator, to further relationships with the IHEs in each region and improve plan compliance as well as the quality of the plan.

The following chart provides an itemized list of requirements met or not met by the IHEs; X=Completed

Institution Name	Compliant as of 12/1/15	Executive Review	Exercise Done	EOP Adoption
Region 1				
J Sargeant Reynolds Community College	X	X	X	X
John Tyler Community College	X	X	X	X
Richard Bland College	X	X	X	X
Southside Va. Community College				X
Va. State University	X	X	X	X
Va. Commonwealth University	X	X	X	X
Region 2				
Germanna Community College				X
Lord Fairfax Community College				X
University of Mary Washington				X
Region 3				
Blue Ridge Community College				X
Central Va. Community College				X

¹ Va. Code Ann. § 23-9.2:9(A) (2012).

² Va. Code Ann. § 23-9.2:9(C) (2012).

³ Va. Code Ann. §23-9.2:9 (D) (2012).

⁴ A set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) is available on the VDEM website that explains the code requirements in more detail: <http://www.vaemergency.gov/em-community/plans/eop-templates-college>.

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James Madison University	X	X	X	X
Longwood University				X
Piedmont Va. Community College				X
University of Virginia	X	X	X	X
Region 4				
Mountain Empire Community College	X	X	X	X
New River Community College	X	X	X	X
Radford University	X	X	X	X
Southwest Va. Community College	X	X	X	X
UVA College at Wise				
Virginia Highlands Community College				X
Wytheville Community College				X
Region 5				
College of William and Mary				X
Christopher Newport University				X
Eastern Shore Community College		X		X
Eastern Va. Medical School				X
Norfolk State University				X
Old Dominion University	X	X	X	X
Paul D. Camp Community College				X
Rappahannock Community College	X	X	X	X
Thomas Nelson Community College	X	X	X	X
Tidewater Community College	X	X	X	X
Region 6				
Dabney Lancaster Community College	X	X	X	X
Danville Community College			X	X
Patrick Henry Community College			X	X
Virginia Military Institute				X
Virginia Tech	X	X	X	X
Virginia Western Community College				X
Region 7				
George Mason University				X
Northern Virginia Community College	X	X	X	X

State Agency and Institutions of Higher Education Continuity Plans

This year, 112 out of the 113 executive branch agencies and institutions of higher education submitted an updated continuity plan to VDEM, in accordance with Executive Order 41 (2011). VDEM updated the continuity plan template this year to meet the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) standards. Additionally, several webinars were held to provide further guidance to Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) agencies on updating their plans. The lead VEST agencies all submitted their updated plans four months in advance of the annual submission requirement in order to comply with the EMAP assessment schedule and all were found compliant by the EMAP assessment team.⁵

⁵ Lead VEST agencies include: the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Division of Capitol Police, the Department of Emergency Management, the Department of Environmental Quality, the Department of Fire Programs, the Department of Forestry, the Department of General Services, the Department of Health, the

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Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP)

The Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP) Basic Plan and several annexes were updated in 2015 to: (1) reflect changes in federal planning guidance and disaster declaration requirements by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); (2) clarify the responsibilities and authorities of local, state, and federal entities; and (3) comply with 40 elements of the EMAP standards.

Ebola Virus Disease Planning

State agencies finalized an Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Response Plan in April 2015. This plan, drafted in late 2014, outlines the coordinated healthcare actions required to prepare for and respond to one or more suspected cases of EVD within the Commonwealth. The plan assigns specific responsibilities to the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), VDEM, Virginia State Police (VSP), the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and local public health departments. This plan has been and will continue to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by stakeholder agencies and organizations.

Avian Influenza Planning

This year, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) emergency staff added an addendum to the Virginia Avian Influenza Plan based on the research and lessons learned from the 2015 outbreak in the Midwest. VDACS staff have worked with VDEM, VDH, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to build up the statewide response capability outlined in the plan.

Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee

In January 2015, VDEM initiated an effort to enhance disaster planning for individuals with access and functional needs by establishing the Access and Functional Needs Advisory Committee. This committee is designed to provide guidance and assistance to the State Coordinator of Emergency Management and others regarding state level preparedness, response, and recovery planning. A member of this committee is the State Sheltering Coordinator who was hired this year and tasked 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.

This committee is vital to ensuring that all portions of the COVEOP adequately support the needs of individuals with disabilities or access and functional needs. The committee established the Functional and Access Needs Network in order to distribute and share emergency preparedness related information prior to, during, and after a disaster. The network consists of Advisory Committee members and stakeholders who can provide feedback to the committee on the information distributed and continuing needs.

The Commonwealth of Virginia has been the lead in understanding the needs of people with disabilities and incorporating people with disabilities in the emergency management planning. This past year, VDEM was awarded The Mark Johnson Getting It Right award from Portlight Strategies for its work in emergency planning for people with disabilities.

Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Military Affairs, the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy, the Department of Social Services, the Department of Transportation, the Virginia Information Technologies Agency, and Virginia State Police.

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Planning Initiatives Continuing in 2016:

Cyber Incident Response Annex

Under the leadership of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, VDEM has assisted in the development of a Cyber Incident Response Annex. This annex outlines the organizational framework and operational concepts to prepare for, respond to, and recovery from a cybersecurity incident affecting the Commonwealth. The annex addresses the necessary coordination efforts between state, local, and private sector infrastructure owners and operators. This annex is due to be published in early 2016.

Continuity of Government Planning

On August 2, 2015, VDEM, in coordination with the Office of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, initiated an enhanced Continuity of Government (COG) planning project. A COG Workgroup was established to steer the planning efforts. This plan will fully define the processes needed to ensure constitutional functions—including the succession of leadership for all three branches of government—will continue under all conditions. The plan will also include communication protocols that will ensure coordination cross the three branches during a COG event. The workgroup anticipates producing a draft basic plan for review by the end of the first quarter of 2016.

Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP)

Beginning in January 2016, the COVEOP will undergo a comprehensive review and update. This review and update will incorporate the lessons learned from real-world disasters and from training and exercises. The year-long effort will involve coordination with 59 state and private sector partners, as well as localities and representatives from the access and functional needs community.

State and Local Joint Planning

2015 Planning Efforts:

World Police and Fire Games

From June 26-July 5, 2015, Fairfax County hosted the 2015 World Police and Fire Games. Six hundred medal events were held in 53 venues throughout the counties of Fairfax, Loudon, Prince William, and Prince George's County, Maryland as well as the cities of Fairfax and Washington D.C. Over 9,000 athletes from 70 countries and approximately 18,000 spectators attended these events. Northern Virginia localities, along with VDEM, VDOT, VSP, and other National Capital Region stakeholders coordinated the year-long planning effort for this event.

2015 UCI World Championship

The City of Richmond hosted the 2015 UCI Bike Race from September 18–27, 2015. This nine day series of international bicycle races drew around 645,000 spectators and athletes from over 70 countries and teams representing more than 30 countries. Events were held within the City of Richmond and two races were held in the counties of Henrico, Hanover, and Caroline. The

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planning for this event was a coordinated effort between these localities and DCP, VSP, VDH, VDOT, DEQ, and VDEM.

Pope Francis's Visit to the United States

Northern Virginia localities of Arlington and Fairfax, along with the VDEM, VDOT, VSP, Maryland Emergency Management Agency and the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency participated in a coordinated planning effort for the Pope's visit to the United States in September 2015. Although the Pope did not visit Virginia localities, he visited Washington D.C. and attended several events there between September 22 and September 24.

Planning Initiatives Continuing in 2016:

In-Season Review of Hurricane Preparedness for Hampton Roads

On May 12, 2014, Governor McAuliffe requested a review of the hurricane preparedness plan for the Hampton Roads region. The Governor tasked the secretaries and state agencies responsible for carrying out a hurricane evacuation to work with their local and federal partners to identify enhancements to existing plans. This review identified 46 recommendations in five key areas:

- Situational Awareness and State-Local Coordination
- Evacuation (to include lane reversal on I-64)
- Sheltering
- Citizens Needing Assistance
- Public Information

Implementation of the recommendations from this study will continue in 2016, to include:

- **The Hampton Roads Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Workgroup**
The workgroup, comprised of state and local stakeholders, is working through a series of small workgroups to address the 46 recommendations from the In-Season Review. To date, the workgroup is making good progress and will continue its efforts in 2016.
- **Hampton Roads Region Hurricane Evacuation Study**
Virginia has requested and received \$400,000 in technical assistance funding from FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security to update the Virginia Hurricane Evacuation Study which was last completed in 2009. The request was the result of findings from the In-Season Review and the new Storm Surge Basins developed by the National Hurricane Center for Norfolk and the Chesapeake Bay. The study will primarily focus on the development of new evacuation zones for the Hampton Roads localities and will be managed by the USACE Norfolk District. The new evacuation zones will be based on the most likely storm track and intensity. This will help better identify the most vulnerable populations, which will help to more precisely identify evacuation areas so that over-evacuation can be reduced. New evacuation clearance times will be developed using the Real Time Evacuation Model created by Old Dominion University's Virginia Modeling Analysis and Simulation Center and Johns Hopkins University's Applied Physics Lab. USACE, in coordination with VDEM, is finalizing the scope of work for this study and anticipates starting this work in January 2016. The Hurricane and Tropical

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Storm Response Annex of the COVEOP will be updated to reflect the new evacuation zones and clearance times.

National Capital Region Planning

VDEM, VDOT, along with other local, state, and federal partners participate in the National Capitol Region Planners Committee. This committee regularly reviews, updates, and develops regional disaster plans, including the Regional Emergency Evacuation Transportation Coordination Plan, as well as supporting standard operating procedures and guides.

2016 Vice-Presidential Debate at Longwood University

The Commission on Presidential Debates has named Longwood University in Farmville, VA to host the vice-presidential debate for the 2016 election. The debate will be held in Willett Hall on October 4, 2016. VDEM has been requested to assist with the planning for this event. This will be a coordinated planning effort between state Virginia Emergency Support Team partners, Longwood University, the Town of Farmville, Prince Edward County, and neighboring jurisdictions. The first planning meetings for this event will begin in the summer of 2016.

2017 Presidential Inauguration

Planning for this event will begin in February 2016 and will be led by the U.S. Secret Service. Planning for an event such as this requires extensive coordination and significant participation by VDEM staff.

II. MEASURES TAKEN TO PREVENT, RESPOND TO AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS

Re-accreditation of the Commonwealth's Emergency Management Program

On October 21, 2015 the Commonwealth of Virginia's Emergency Management Program was re-accredited for the third time by the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP). VDEM was the lead agency for this effort, for which the Commonwealth was compliant on all 64 standards.⁶ The Commonwealth's program has been accredited since 2005.

Commonwealth of Virginia Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

The 2015 Commonwealth Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (C-THIRA) Report identifies core capability targets consistent with the federal National Preparedness Goal and outlines supporting state preparedness initiatives. This report uses the same threats and hazards as the federally-mandated Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA).

Hazard Mitigation Projects

⁶ These standards include: administration and finance; laws and authorities; hazard identification, risk assessment and consequence analysis; hazard mitigation; prevention; operational planning; incident management; resource management and logistics; mutual aid; communications and warning; operations and procedures; facilities; training; exercises, evaluations, and corrective actions; and crisis communications, public education and information.

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In 2015, 43 properties in the Hampton Roads region were identified for mitigation projects. Of those properties, seven were acquired and demolished while the remaining 36 were elevated to reduce flood risk. Based on FEMA's cost benefit ratio analysis, it is anticipated that \$15 million was saved in avoided future damages as a result of these projects.

In addition, the following mitigation projects were completed in 2015: two regional hazard mitigation plan updates, four generator and generator quick connect projects, one storm water drainage project, the creation of mitigation outreach calendars, the purchase and distribution of NOAA weather radios, and the installation of five river gauges and a flood warning system.

Long Term Recovery Planning

The Recovery and Mitigation Standard Operating Guide was updated to incorporate elements of the National Disaster Recovery Framework. This includes the state recovery support functions of community planning and capacity building, economic, health and social services, housing, infrastructure systems, and natural and cultural resources.

FEMA has approved the 2015 Public Assistance Administrative Plan, which includes a new Debris Management Addendum. As a result, state agencies are eligible for a one-time 2 percent cost-share adjustment for debris removal work completed within 90 days.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Preparedness Efforts

VDACS invested resources to stockpile nonperishable supplies and develop specific resource requirement lists. VDACS also formed and trained an incident management team (IMT) that can be deployed within 24 hours of a positive HPAI diagnosis in Virginia. This IMT team was trained in Minnesota and Iowa during outbreaks in early 2015.

Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Preparedness Efforts

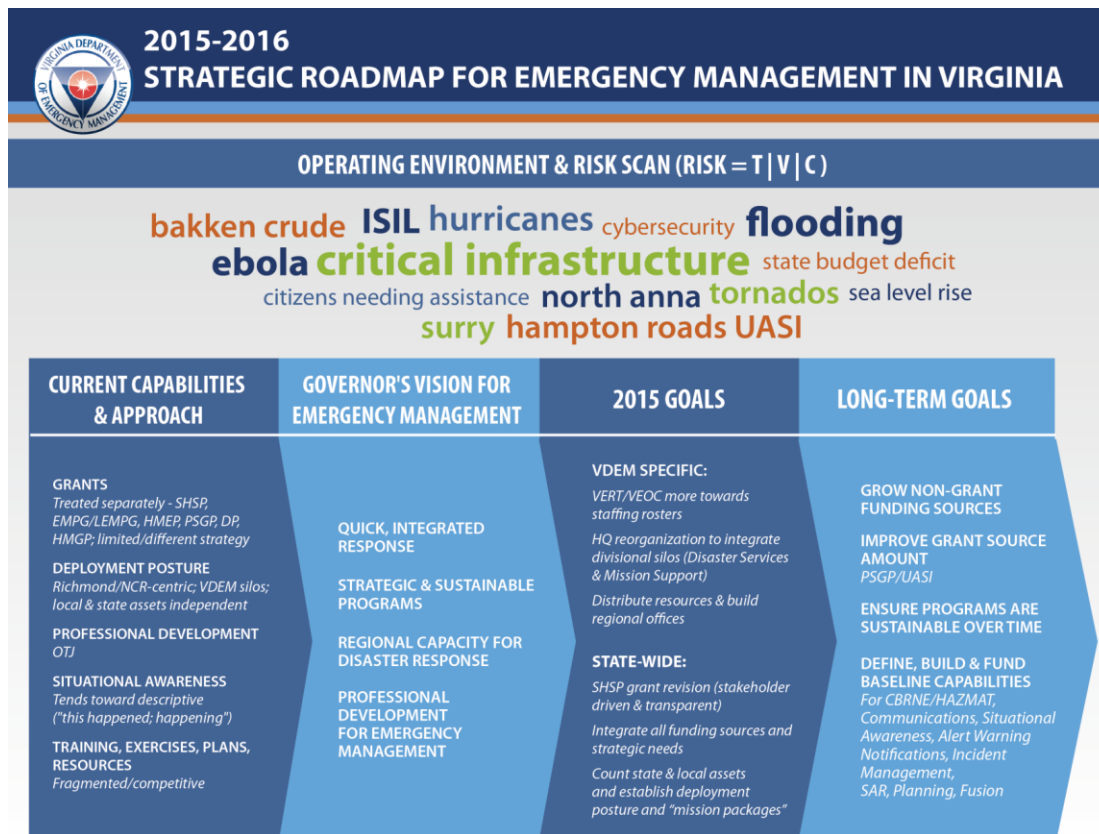
In 2014, Governor McAuliffe call for the creation of an Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Unified Command in response to the death of an EVD patient in Texas and the emerging threat originating from the West African countries of Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. The State Coordinator, Commissioner of Health, and State Police Superintendent shared Incident Command beginning October 17, 2014. A Joint Information Center (JIC) was established to coordinate risk communications as well as public health and safety messaging. Multiple state agencies were assigned roles and responsibilities in response to the threat. Liaison officials included representatives from the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority, Port of Virginia, Virginia National Guard, US Coast Guard, and Dulles International Airport.

This year, VDH and its local health departments commenced disease surveillance and active monitoring of all travelers from the identified West African countries into Dulles Airport and Virginia. VDH also coordinates the fatality management, hospital preparedness, treatment of, and response to EVD Persons Under Investigation (PUI). To date, approximately 2200 travelers have been monitored and 15 PUI cases have been managed. No EVD cases have emerged in Virginia.

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Strategic Approach to Preparedness

In order to create a more resilient Virginia, the Commonwealth has laid out a vision for emergency management that includes building regional capacity, enhancing professional development opportunities, providing quick, integrated response, and developing strategic and sustainable programs.



VDEM has taken the following initial steps to implement this vision:

- Building regional capacity for disaster response:** Under the new organization, a Deputy for Disaster Response now oversees two geographic divisions: Regional Support East (VDEM Regions 1, 5 and 7) and Regional Support West (VDEM Regions 2, 3, 4 and 6). Regional offices are being established across the Commonwealth based on the successful model instituted in Region 7 several years ago. Over the next year, VDEM will initiate the process to double the number of staff assigned to regional operations. Every region will have, at a minimum, a chief regional coordinator, a disaster response and recovery officer, a hazmat officer, and a regional all-hazards planner, all working as an integrated team.
- Quick and integrated response:** The Response Programs Division, under the Deputy of Disaster Response, now coordinates all special operations including hazardous materials, search and rescue, urban search and rescue, technical rescue, incident management teams,

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the radio cache system, and logistics. All planning across the agency has been integrated into a single Planning Division, which conducts strategic planning and integrates operational planning and daily situation awareness through the VDEM watch center and intelligence analysis from the Virginia Fusion Center.

- Implementation of strategic and sustainable programs: In order to cope with the continuing reduction of federal grants, the Commonwealth must maximize the use of the money it receives. To help do so, VDEM is consolidating its grant management activities within the new Finance and Grants Division, led by a newly-created Chief Financial Officer.
- Professional development program for emergency management: To expand and promote professional development, VDEM is working to instill a culture of continuous education, providing an ongoing learning track for our emergency management professionals. Individual division training and exercise activities are now consolidated within and supported by the Training, Education and Exercise Division.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING EFFORTS TO PREVENT, RESPOND TO AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS

The emergency management and homeland security environment remains dynamic. In facing this environment, the Commonwealth is engaged in a wide variety of activities to plan for both persistent and evolving threats and hazards. In 2015, we saw emergent global hazards from Ebola Virus Disease to avian flu, along with local hazards from severe winter storms and hurricanes. The terrorist threat continues to evolve, and Virginia remains an attractive target as it is home to the Pentagon and the CIA (both previous targets), along with many federal and military facilities and personnel. The emerging challenge of cybersecurity requires both government and private sector involvement, beyond any single agency or organization. Increasingly, planning for these events requires a shared and coordinated effort across state agencies and secretariats, and outside of government. The following recommendations are based on this evolving threat and hazard environment, and lessons from operations and activities over the past year.

Disaster Planning Platform to Improve Efficiency of Planners

Currently, all of the hundreds of emergency operations plans that exist at both at the state and local level are paper-based. This presents a challenge in today's modern world. Digitizing the process would improve efficiency and increase coordination between agencies and localities. By implementing universal disaster planning software, state agencies, colleges and universities, and localities will have a shared planning portal, which will ensure consistency in planning guidance and tools. The software program would be managed by VDEM and provide planning guidance and templates for local emergency operations and hazard mitigation plans, local and state agency continuity plans, and college/university crisis and emergency management plans.

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Situational Awareness Tools to Improve Real-Time Planning and Decision-Making

The Commonwealth currently relies on voice and email reporting to relay situational awareness. Given that information is available almost instantaneously in today's world, VDEM is investigating modern tools to be able to provide information to state leaders as it develops in real-time. This would enable rapid, effective decision making, as well as enhance staff and resource deployment and effective execution. Situational awareness tools, to include a common operating picture system, managed by VDEM, would greatly enhance disaster operational planning, response, and management, and likely reduce disaster related loss of life and property/environmental damage.

Disaster Assessment Tools to Speed Requests for Federal Aid

The agency currently does not employ a specific set of modern disaster assessment tools to determine how much damage has occurred after an emergency. In some cases, disaster assessments are written on pen and paper, and often the determination of damage after an emergency, especially one spread over a wide area, can take weeks or months, and require hundreds of staff hours to compile. This slows the Commonwealth's requests to federal government agencies such as FEMA and the Small Business Administration, and delays the flow of federal financial aid to citizens, businesses, the state, and local governments. Numerous commercial-off-the-shelf tools exist that would improve the efficiency at which VDEM could collect this data, and speed our requests for federal aid.

Virginia Emergency Operations and Watch Center Improvements to Coordinate Response

The Virginia Emergency Operations Center and Watch Center are approximately 12-years old and many of its operating systems, computers, and phones for conducting alert, warning, and notification, for tracking state resources on deployment, as well as computer systems have reached the end of their service lives. Modernizing and upgrading these technologies would maintain or improve the Commonwealth's preparedness.