

Commonwealth of Virginia



Report to the General Assembly

November 1, 2019

Commonwealth of Virginia

November 19, 2019

The Honorable Thomas K. Norment, Jr.
Co-Chairman, Finance Committee
Senate of Virginia
Pocahontas Building
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable S. Chris Jones
Chairman, Appropriations Committee
Virginia House of Delegates
Pocahontas Building
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

The Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.
Co-Chairman, Finance Committee
Senate of Virginia
Pocahontas Building
900 East Main Street
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Senators Norment and Hanger and Delegate Jones:

Item 255 C.1 of the 2019 Appropriation Act (Act) directed the Secretary of Finance to “develop a plan for the competitive procurement of services and supplies from third-parties during natural disasters” and to “convene a workgroup of representatives from appropriate agencies to review the feasibility of implementing a web-based repository of sheltering information.”

To address the requirements in the Act, the Secretary of Finance convened a workgroup comprised of the Department of Planning and Budget, the Virginia Department of Social Services, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, the Department of General Services, and the Virginia Information Technologies Agency. The workgroup also consulted with relevant representatives of state institutions of higher education.

The Act required the Secretary to submit a proposed plan and report to the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees. This report is submitted in satisfaction of the Act.

Executive Summary

On September 10, 2018, Governor Northam ordered a mandatory evacuation for approximately 245,000 people in Coastal Zone A in Hampton Roads in response to the potential impact of Hurricane Florence. That same day, VDEM entered into a contract for a total of \$31,151,250 with DRC (SLS) to provide services by Wednesday, September 12 at 9:00 a.m. for 5,777 residents for seven days. These services were to be provided at three state-managed shelters, located at The College of William and Mary (W&M), Christopher Newport University (CNU), and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).

On September 12, Virginia opened two of the state shelters at CNU and W&M. The third state-managed shelter, at VCU, was on standby but never opened. At the same time, twenty-four (24) localities were opening local shelters for their residents. By the evening of September 13, Florence had been downgraded to a Category 1 hurricane, and made landfall near Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, early on September 14. At peak occupancy, there were fifty-two residents in all state-managed shelters. That same day the Governor lifted the mandatory evacuation order for Coastal Virginia.

September 14 and 15, the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) closed and begin to demobilize the two state-managed shelters. Virginia reallocated its resources to North and South Carolina to assist with their emergency shelters. Because Hurricane Florence was a presidentially-declared disaster, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is expected to reimburse the Commonwealth for 75 percent of all eligible costs. As of this date, Virginia has received \$14,917,500 (forty-five percent of expected reimbursement of the sheltering costs) and \$900,761 for transportation costs, for a total of \$15,818,261.

State agency responsibilities for emergency preparedness and response are outlined in two executive orders, different statutes, and several plans developed by different agencies. The specific operational responsibilities of the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and other state agencies during an emergency are outlined in the *Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan* (COVEOP), which was adopted and implemented by Executive Order 42 (EO42).

The *Code of Virginia* assigns responsibility for sheltering planning to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security (§ 2.2-222.1). The Secretary and VDEM have addressed catastrophic state sheltering by participating in the development of the VDSS led *State Coordinated Regional Shelter Plan* (SCR Shelter Plan). If state shelters are activated, the COVEOP directs agencies to follow the SCR Shelter Plan. There are 13 identified state shelter sites, and each is located at an institution of higher education (IHE).

VDEM plays a primary role in advising the Governor whether to issue a disaster declaration and also whether to activate a state shelter. Once activated, VDSS has primary responsibility for state shelter operations. During an emergency, VDEM and DGS (among other agencies) who are charged with logistics responsibilities support VDSS.

State Plans Do Not Clearly Assign Roles and Responsibilities. The SCR Shelter Plan states that VDEM and VDSS will jointly coordinate regarding activation of state shelters. Per that plan, this coordination would occur after the Hurricane Evacuation Working Group has recommended evacuation and sheltering actions. However, EO42 delegates authority to activate

a state shelter solely to the State Coordinator. This inconsistency has led to disagreement about roles and responsibilities, and may have led to the unnecessary activation of state shelters. This process needs additional clarification of roles.

Responsibilities for Procurement and Contracting Should Be Clarified. Currently, the COVEOP assigns responsibility to acquire resources during an emergency to VDEM. In contrast, Executive Order 41 (2019) requires that state agencies have emergency procurement contracts. However, neither document, nor other state plans, fully address the capabilities of all agencies, which may mean that key public resources are not used in an emergency. The current framework could also lead to procurement inefficiencies or gaps, and further clarity of roles is needed.

Additional Steps Are Needed Regarding Warehousing and Maintaining Existing Stockpiles. Some state agencies own and store limited supplies and commodities for use in sheltering. VDSS, in coordination with IHEs, VDEM, and other state agencies, should create a list of supplies and then work with DGS to ensure sufficient contracts are in place and identify potential warehousing space.

Enhanced Training and Assessment Are Needed to Ensure Adequate Capacity and Capability. Both capacity and capability are needed to support evacuees. Capacity measures the number of beds, while capability indicates how many people can be supported in a shelter given each shelter's staffing, service availability, and other resources. IHEs that are designated as state shelter sites have varying capabilities. For example, some IHEs have contracts with private vendors for food, others use their own staff, and sites at community colleges have limited food options. Despite these differences, the COVEOP and SCR Shelter Plan generally address each IHE as if they are similar. Site specific annexes are used to address unique requirements and planning considerations of each site.

Improvements in Completeness and Timeliness of Shelter Data, Including a Web Portal, Would Enhance Responsiveness. Local and state shelter "boards" act as repositories of sheltering data, but the usefulness and reliability of local data are affected by the ability of local staff to keep these data up-to-date. Shelter data could be improved through use of a single statewide shelter management and registration system, which would allow localities to directly register shelter residents into a system, and enable VDEM's WebEOC system to automatically display real-time shelter data. Real-time shelter data from WebEOC could then be displayed on a public-facing website.

In 2018 Two State-Managed Shelters Were Opened for the First Time

On Saturday, September 8, 2018, Governor Northam declared a State of Emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia based on the need to prepare and coordinate a response to the potential impact from Hurricane Florence. According to the National Weather Service, Hurricane Florence was forecasted to produce damaging winds, periods of heavy rainfall, power outages, and flooding in the Commonwealth as a major hurricane (category 3 or 4). At that time, those conditions were believed to have the potential to impact life and safety, and to create significant transportation issues throughout Virginia.

Immediately thereafter, Virginia's Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Group began to meet. The Coordination Group was comprised of members of VDEM, Virginia State Police, Virginia National Guard, Virginia Department of Health, Department of Social Services, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Virginia Department of Transportation. The Group convened daily from Saturday, September 8 through Monday, September 10 to obtain the most up-to-date National Weather Service reports. Hurricane Florence re-attained hurricane status on September 9, then rapidly intensified, re-achieving Category 4 intensity on Monday, September 10.

Virginia has a tiered evacuation zone program (referred to as "Know Your Zone"). According to VDEM, it serves 1.25 million residents who live in Coastal Virginia. Twenty-three localities participate in the tiered evacuation zone system, which was developed in close coordination with local emergency managers throughout Hampton Roads, the Northern Neck, the Middle Peninsula, and the Eastern Shore. VDEM reports the system was implemented in 2017. On Sunday, September 9, VDEM released public messages that residents of Zones A and B (areas in Hampton Roads, the Eastern Shore, Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula) should be prepared to evacuate.

On Monday, September 10, the Governor signed Executive Order #17 (EO17)¹ that directed state and local agencies to render appropriate assistance to prepare for the impacts of Hurricane Florence; to alleviate any conditions resulting from the impact; and to implement recovery and mitigation operations and activities so as to return impacted areas to pre-event conditions as much as possible. In order to marshal all public resources and appropriate preparedness, response, and recovery measures, the Governor also authorized a maximum of \$27,221,140 in state sum sufficient funds for mission assignments (activities related to recovery response and preparedness) that were authorized by state and local government agencies, as coordinated by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM).

That same day, the Governor also ordered a mandatory evacuation for approximately 245,000 people in Coastal Zone A in Hampton Roads effective Tuesday, September 11 at 8:00 a.m. At that time, Hurricane Florence had winds of 140 miles per hour (mph).² The federal government issued a federal emergency declaration for the Commonwealth authorizing federal assistance for the mobilization of emergency response assets to pre-position resources for

¹ Executive Order Number Seventeen (2018), <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/EO-17-Declaration-Of-A-State-Of-Emergency-For-The-Commonwealth-Of-Virginia-Due-To-Potential-Impacts-From-Hurricane-Florence.pdf>

² National Weather Service, Historical Hurricane Florence, <https://www.weather.gov/mhx/Florence2018> (Retrieved October 2, 2019).

Hurricane Florence response. According to VDEM, this also would allow the Commonwealth to seek federal reimbursement for the cost of responding to and recovering from impacts caused by Hurricane Florence.

On Tuesday, September 11, 2018, Hurricane Florence achieved sustained winds of 150 mph,³ seven mph short of category 5 intensity. That same day, VDEM entered into a contract for a total of \$31,151,250⁴ with DRC (SLS) to provide services by Wednesday, September 12 at 9:00 a.m. for 5,777 residents for seven days. These services were to be provided at three state-managed shelters, located at The College of William and Mary, Christopher Newport University, and Virginia Commonwealth University. The services to be provided under this contract included:

- Sleeping services-Blankets, Cots, Pillows
- Feeding services-Meals (4 per day per person)
- Hygiene Services
- Infant/Toddler Kits
- Generators to service company-provided assets (not to power the facility)
- Mobilization
- Demobilization

On Wednesday, September 12, 2018, the Governor amended EO17.⁵ The amended executive order:

- authorized a maximum of \$60,000,000 in state sum sufficient funds for state and local government authorized mission assignments as coordinated by VDEM;
- directed the Director of the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), in coordination with VDEM, to activate the statewide sheltering plan and identify and make available such state shelters as necessary;
- expanded a provision related to temporarily lifting the weight restrictions of carriers transporting essential emergency relief support to any area of the Commonwealth including delivery of water, food, heating oil, motor fuels or propane, or agricultural products and supplies;
- provided that a license issued to a health care practitioner by another state, and in good standing, would be deemed an active license issued by the Commonwealth to provide health care or professional services as a health care practitioner during the response and recovery stage of Hurricane Florence; and,
- provided immunity from liability for individuals, corporations, and other entities that provided services, goods, real or personal property, or facilities at the request of VDEM during the emergency.

³ National Hurricane Center, Tropical Cyclone Report https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/data/tcr/AL062018_Florence.pdf (Retrieved October 2, 2019).

⁴ The price was not based on the actual number of people that used the shelter, rather the price is equated to the full capacity of the shelter.

⁵ Executive Order Number Seventeen (2018), as amended [https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/EO-17-Declaration-Of-A-State-Of-Emergency-For-The-Commonwealth-Of-Virginia-Due-To-Potential-Impacts-From-Hurricane-Florence-\(amended\).pdf](https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/EO-17-Declaration-Of-A-State-Of-Emergency-For-The-Commonwealth-Of-Virginia-Due-To-Potential-Impacts-From-Hurricane-Florence-(amended).pdf)

That same day, Wednesday, September 12, Virginia opened two of the state shelters at Christopher Newport University and The College of William and Mary. The third state-managed shelter, at Virginia Commonwealth University, was on standby. At the same time, twenty-four (24) localities were opening local shelters for their residents. The Governor urged citizens to seek higher ground and safe shelter in advance of Hurricane Florence, stating that citizens should, “seek shelters first with friends and family, to consider hotels outside of evacuation areas, and then look to local shelters, and lastly to state shelters.” The press release⁶ issued by VDEM indicated that, “if an event’s actual or projected demand for sheltering exceeds the local jurisdiction’s capabilities, mutual aid agreements are activated between other communities. When necessary, the Commonwealth provides assistance to local and regional sheltering operations and can operate state-coordinated regional shelters.”⁷ VDSS further provided shelter information via 2-1-1, and 3-1-1 for local information including locally-available social services.

By the evening of September 13, Florence had been downgraded to a Category 1 hurricane. Hurricane Florence made landfall near Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, early on Friday, September 14.⁸ At that point there were a total of twenty-eight occupants at the Christopher Newport shelter. At peak occupancy, there were fifty-two (52) residents in state-managed shelters. That same day the Governor lifted the mandatory evacuation order for Coastal Virginia.

At noon on Friday, September 14, and Saturday, September 15, VDSS closed and began to demobilize the state-managed shelters. Virginia reallocated its resources to North and South Carolina to assist with their emergency shelters due to Hurricane Florence. Specifically, Virginia shipped 4,000 box lunches, deployed twenty-five (25) high-wheeled vehicles, and 50 personnel to assist with the rescue operation in North Carolina. Virginia also warned its residents of flooding in certain areas. In addition, commodities sufficient to stock a 1,000-person shelter were stored for six months at Christopher Newport University. According to VDEM, these commodities were donated to Virginia because the contract was for services only.⁹

Because Hurricane Florence was a presidentially-declared disaster, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is expected to reimburse the Commonwealth for 75 percent of all eligible costs. As of this date, Virginia has received \$14,917,500 (forty-five percent of expected reimbursement of the sheltering costs and \$900,761 for transportation costs for a total of \$15,818,261.

⁶ Virginia Opens Two State-Managed Shelters for Hurricane Florence, <https://www.vaemergency.gov/virginia-opens-two-state-managed-shelters-for-hurricane-florence/> (retrieved October 2, 2019).

⁷ The Commonwealth’s State Shelter Plan was in effect at this time, not the Coordinated Regional Shelter Plan.

⁸ <https://www.weather.gov/mhx/Florence2018>

⁹ Other than food, all other commodities under the contract were considered rented.

State Responsibilities for Emergency Preparedness and Response Are Found in Several Different Authorities

State agency responsibilities for emergency preparedness and response are outlined in two executive orders, different statutes, and several plans developed by different agencies. This overall framework addresses the roles assigned to secretariats, state agencies, and other partners.

Two Executive Orders Delineate and Delegate Specific Responsibilities

On September 3, 2019, the Governor promulgated two executive orders that address state responsibilities for emergency preparedness and response.

Executive Order 41 (EO41), *Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities of State Agencies and Public Institutions of Higher Education*,¹⁰ describes the overarching strategic preparedness initiatives assigned to state agencies. EO41 includes a directive that every state agency address emergency preparedness as a core responsibility, and assigns general duties regarding readiness to all agencies.

The specific operational responsibilities of state agencies to respond to emergencies are outlined in the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP), which was adopted and implemented by Executive Order 42 (EO42), *Promulgation of the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan and Delegation of Authority*.¹¹ EO42 also assigns and delegates several responsibilities to secretariats and state agencies, including that, “The State Coordinator of Emergency Management is hereby authorized to activate the [Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations] Plan in order to coordinate state government emergency operations on my behalf.”

Each executive order refers to duties assigned in the other executive order. For example, EO41 states that, “Each member of the governor’s cabinet shall be responsible for conducting an annual review of the disaster preparedness, response, and recovery roles assigned to his or her office and State Agencies to ensure that they have adequate plans, federally-compliant emergency procurement contracts, staff, and resources to fulfill their responsibilities as assigned in the COVEOP.” Likewise, EO42 states that, “executive branch agencies and institutions of higher education (IHEs) are required to develop, maintain, and ensure their ability to implement an all-hazards continuity plan as required by Executive Order 41.”

Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan Describes Basic Tasks and Duties

The Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP) describes the specific operational responsibilities of state agencies to respond to emergencies in the

¹⁰ <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/EO-41-Emergency-Preparedness-Responsibilities-of-State-Agencies-and-Public-Institutions-of-Higher-Education.pdf>

¹¹ Executive Order Number Forty-Two (2019), Promulgation of the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan and Delegation of Authority
<https://www.governor.virginia.gov/media/governorvirginiagov/executive-actions/EO-42-Promulgation-of-the-Commonwealth-of-Virginia-Emergency-Operations-Plan-and-Delegation-of-Authority.pdf>

Commonwealth, and provides the foundation for the state’s emergency response and recovery operations. More specifically, the COVEOP:

- identifies the role of state government and coordinating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector partners before, during, and after a disaster, large-scale emergency, or event affecting the Commonwealth of Virginia;
- establishes the concepts and policies under which all elements of state government and coordinating NGOs and private sector partners will operate during emergencies, and provides the framework within which more detailed emergency plans or procedures can be developed and maintained;¹²
- assigns specific roles and responsibilities for emergency preparedness and response to executive branch secretariats, state agencies, and institutions of higher education (IHE);
- requires state agencies with assigned responsibilities to develop and maintain the necessary plans, standard operating procedures, mutual aid agreements, and model contracts to accomplish their tasks;
- provides the State Coordinator broad authority to enter into contracts and incur obligations necessary to prevent or alleviate damage, loss, hardship, or suffering caused by such emergency and to protect the health and safety of persons or property during an emergency that has not received a governor’s declaration after consultation with and approval of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security.¹³

Authority for Sheltering Planning Is Found in Statute and Budget Language

Statute assigns responsibility for sheltering planning to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security. The *Code of Virginia*, § 2.2-222.1 (E) provides that the Secretary,

“shall be responsible for the coordination and development of state and local shelter, evacuation, traffic, and refuge of last resort planning. The Secretary shall ensure that jurisdictions and subdivisions of the Commonwealth have adequate shelter, evacuation, traffic, and refuge of last resort plans to support emergency evacuation in the event of a man-made or natural disaster. To that end, the Secretary shall direct VDEM to monitor, review, and evaluate on a cyclical basis all shelter, evacuation, traffic, and refuge of last resort plans to ensure they are feasible and suitable and can be implemented with available resources.”

In the 2014 Appropriation Act (Item 393 (B) of Chapter 3, 2014 Acts of Assembly), a sheltering coordinator position was created within VDEM to 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.”

¹² Source: Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan, 2019.

¹³ COEVOP 7.1.2.

Item 393 (B) also created an annual reporting requirement whereby the sheltering coordinator, “shall provide a status report on the Commonwealth's emergency shelter capabilities and readiness.” This requirement has continued in subsequent budgets, and is presently found in Item 399 (C) of the Chapter 854, 2019 Acts of Assembly.

The Secretary and VDEM have addressed their statutory state shelter planning responsibility by participating in the development of state shelter plans led by VDSS. VDSS first developed its State Managed Shelter plan in 2008¹⁴, which was last revised in 2017. In addition, VDEM and VDSS, along with a multi-agency Mass Care Task Force, prepared the *Commonwealth of Virginia Statewide Sheltering Plan Strategic Framework (Strategic Framework)*. This 2016 document provides the overall framework for integrated sheltering planning for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The *Strategic Framework* delineates the relationship between the State Managed Shelter plan and the COVEOP, noting that although, “the current plan for state-level sheltering is contained and outlined” in an Annex to the COVEOP, the State Managed Shelter plan is the “operational plan for how state-level shelters will be operated.” Citing the COVEOP, the *Strategic Framework* also notes that, “Sheltering is ultimately a local responsibility, but localities may need support and assistance to meet the demands for sheltering and to ensure disaster survivors are able to safely shelter as close to home as possible.”

State Coordinated Regional Shelter Plan Is Expected to be Used Along with COVEOP

In 2019, the State Managed Shelter (SMS) plan was revised and renamed the *State Coordinated Regional Shelter Plan (SCR Shelter Plan)* by VDSS. If the Governor mandates an evacuation, then the SCR Shelter Plan is used in addition to the COVEOP. The SCR Shelter Plan establishes a single, comprehensive framework for the management of state coordinated regional shelter (state shelter) operations. EO42 specifically authorizes the State Coordinator of Emergency Management to, “determine as necessary that the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) will activate the SCR Shelter Plan and identify and make available such shelters as necessary.”

State Shelters Are Intended to Be Activated When Local Capacity Is or Could Be Exceeded

There are 13 identified state shelter sites, and each is located at an institution of higher education (IHE) (Table 1). State shelters are accessible, do not limit entry, and are designed to house families together in their entirety comprising general population, medical needs population, service animals, and pets. Service animals are included within the human population. At this time, not all state shelters can support pet sheltering due to limited identified space for this purpose. Some state shelters also have limited capacity to assist those with significant medical needs. For pets, capacity is the estimated number of pets/crates that could actually fit in the available space and the capability is the number the site would actually house either based on capacity or necessity (the planning assumption of one pet per every two registrants).

The *Strategic Framework* defines a three-tiered system of sheltering with variations by tier in operations, funding, and staffing. State shelters are defined in that document as the highest

¹⁴ VDSS led the development of this plan in collaboration with IHEs, VDH, VDEM, VDACS, VSP, VITA and DBHDS.

tier and the last to be opened. In theory, state shelters are specifically designated for events that are or could overwhelm local shelters. More specifically, the tiers are:

- Local shelter. Most sheltering events are short-duration, small-scale and within the capacity and capabilities of the impacted locality or localities. Shelters that are opened, operated, and funded by a locality are local shelters.
- Locally-coordinated regional shelter. Some events might require or benefit from multiple localities within a region cooperatively sheltering instead of each operating a separate local shelter. A regional shelter may be opened, operated, and funded by impacted localities with little to no assistance from the Commonwealth.
- State-coordinated regional shelter. A state shelter, “is operated and funded by the Commonwealth either by initiating and opening the shelter or by assuming responsibility for the operation of a locally-coordinated regional shelter. Some events might immediately exceed the capacity of multiple impacted localities and require the Commonwealth open a large-scale, regional shelter.”

SCR Shelter Plan Development and Structure

The SCR Shelter Plan was developed in partnership with the supporting agencies and IHEs through meetings and opportunities for plan review, input, and revision. Each assigned agency and IHE is a planning partner in the development of, and a signatory to, the SCR Shelter Plan. It serves as a “Memorandum of Agreement” (MOA) among the signatories and describes the protocols, management structure, coordination mechanisms, and support requirements necessary for the conduct of shelter operations at any identified state shelter site.

The SCR Shelter Plan was completed in August 2019, and all participating state agencies have signed it. The IHEs that host state shelter sites have not been requested to sign the SCR Shelter Plan at this time as each site will be undergoing a reassessment and annex update by June 1, 2020. Upon completion of the site annex, the associated IHE will become a signatory to the SCR Shelter Plan. Presently, 12 of the 13 IHEs have current MOAs for state sheltering.¹⁵ A predetermined list of supplies and staffing requirement for each site is also part of the Plan.¹⁶

¹⁵ The SCR Shelter Plan MOA does not have an end date.

¹⁶ Source: Virginia Department of Social Services

Table 1- State Coordinated Regional Shelter Sites and Capacities

Site	Building	Maximum Potential Capacity				
		General	Med Needs	People Total	Pet Capacity	Pet Capability
VCU (Richmond)	Siegel Center	1,958	0	1,958	0	0
	Sports Medicine Building	53	53	106	0	0
	Bowe Street Parking Deck	0	0	0	1,104	1,026
UVA (Charlottesville)	Memorial Gymnasium	594	0	594	0	0
	Slaughter Rec. Ctr.	822	0	822	0	0
	North Grounds Rec. Ctr.	416	54	470	0	0
	Aquatics and Fitness Center	624	0	624	0	0
W&M (Williamsburg)	McCormack-Nagelsen Tennis Ctr.	1,454	7	1,461	0	0
CNU (Newport News)	Freeman Ctr.	2,173	70	2,243	0	0
GMU (Fairfax Co.)	Recreation and Athletic Ctr.	1,228	120	1,348	0	0
	Fieldhouse	2,245	0	2,245	0	0
	Innovation Hall (command)	0	0	0	0	0
	Mason Pond Parking Deck	0	0	0	680	680
	The HUB	0	0	0	364	364
JMU (Harrisonburg)	Convocation Ctr.	1,027	12	1,039	0	
	Rockingham Co Fairgrounds	0	0	0	5,057	516
Virginia Tech (Blacksburg)	War Memorial Gym <i>(unavailable until Fall 2021)</i>	1,126	102	1,228	0	0
	McComas	609	0	609	0	0
	Alphin-Stuart Livestock Arena	0	0	0	4,504	1,295
	Cassell Coliseum	767	0	767	0	0
VMI (Lexington)	Cameron Hall and Crozet Hall (food services)	454	6	460	0	0
	Virginia Horse Ctr. - Barns	0	0	0	884	232
VSU (Chesterfield)	Daniel Gymnasium	450	14	464	0	0
	Farm - Greenhouse	0	0	0	56	57
RBC (Dinwiddie)	Statesman Hall	264	12	276	0	0
PHCC (Martinsville)	Stone Hall	246	6	252	0	0
Longwood (Farmville)	Willet Hall	601	22	623	0	0
PDCCC – Franklin (Franklin)	Workforce Development Ctr	337	0	337	0	0
	Main Building	12	12	24	0	0
TOTAL		17,460	490	17,950	12,649	3,806

The SCR Shelter Plan provides the structure and mechanisms for coordinating, exercising, and directing State agencies' authorities and responsibilities. The plan assigns leadership of state shelter operations to VDSS, and support roles to the primary state shelter stakeholder agencies:

- VDEM – logistics.
- Virginia State Police (VSP) – security and traffic management.
- Virginia Department of Health (VDH) – public and environmental health.
- Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS) – disaster behavioral health.
- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) – pet sheltering.
- Virginia Information Technologies Agency (VITA) – communications.
- The individual state shelter sites at IHE.

The current SCR Shelter Plan was updated to address lessons learned through Hurricane Florence's activation of three state-managed shelters, including incorporating the best practices of shelter service progression (described below). These lessons learned are documented in the *State Managed Shelter Operations for Hurricane Florence Virginia Department of Social Services After Action Report* and the *State of Virginia Hurricane Florence Brief* (Louisiana Report) produced by the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (Team Louisiana) in 2018.

Substantial Changes in 2019 COVEOP and Limited Review May Hinder Its Effectiveness

The COVEOP was extensively revised in 2019. These changes, in combination with concerns about an abbreviated review, may hinder the effectiveness of the COVEOP as a planning tool.

The COVEOP No Longer Includes Key Documents Although They May Be Added Later

The 2019 update of the COVEOP eliminated all ESF annexes, incorporating the information about ESF functions, roles and responsibilities throughout the COVEOP. This change makes locating and understanding the information about ESF roles, responsibilities, and authority more difficult for those agencies tasked with lead and support roles. Prior to the 2019 changes, the COVEOP document included five individual support annexes specific to certain functions. The 2019 COVEOP incorporates the information from the Finance and Administration Annex into the COVEOP. The annexes are expected to be replaced by a stand-alone recovery plan that will be more comprehensive in nature than the Support Annex. Although the COVEOP no longer includes or refers to the remaining support annexes and they are not posted with the COVEOP on VDEM's website,¹⁷ the support annexes for Continuity of Government, Mass Care and Sheltering, and Evacuation and Re-Entry remain a part of the COVEOP. VDEM reports that all remaining support annexes will be updated in the future

In contrast, the 2012 COVEOP (March 2015 update) incorporated each support annex, stating that support annexes "...describe the framework through which state agencies, NGOs, and private sector partners coordinate and execute the common functional processes and

¹⁷ <https://www.vaemergency.gov/planning/> (Retrieved October 2, 2019).

administrative requirements necessary to ensure efficient and effective incident management.” The 2012 COVEOP also noted that while, “The Basic Plan, forming the foundation, is always activated,” the support annexes “may then be implemented to supplement actions carried out under the Basic Plan....”

One of the incorporated annexes was “Support Annex 4: Mass Care and Sheltering.”¹⁸ The annex explicitly stated its purpose on the first page: “this annex exists to establish the legal and organizational basis for operations.” The annex then addressed the state’s responsibility and procedures for state managed shelter operations, and designated VDSS as the lead agency. (This document also was incorporated in the 2008-2011 COVEOP as the Mass Sheltering Plan.¹⁹)

It appears that Support Annex 4 will be significantly revised to incorporate changes in the strategic approach to state sheltering. However, its effectiveness may be limited because it will not be incorporated into the COVEOP. VDSS is presently drafting a *Commonwealth of Virginia Sheltering Program* for reference within the COVEOP. The new document will apparently replace Support Annex 4 and define sheltering supports that are available to localities from the Commonwealth. VDEM describes it as being a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional coordination plan. However, VDSS notes that the new document may not have the “force of law” because it will not be directly incorporated into the COVEOP. The document is anticipated to be completed by December 31, 2019.

The state’s overall framework for sheltering strategy, planning, and operations also may be hindered by the number of different plans. Although the 2019 COVEOP includes a one-page overview of sheltering and other types of mass care in § 1.6.4.1, this overview does not define sheltering, the state’s responsibility, or procedures. According to VDEM, these elements will be addressed in part by the new document, which focuses on local shelters. VDEM also states that the new document will be in addition to the State Coordinated Regional (SCR) Shelter Plan and the Statewide Sheltering Strategy, which both address state shelters.

Limited Time to Review the COVEOP May Hinder Buy-In and Effectiveness

Executive branch secretariats, State agencies, and institutions of higher education were given an opportunity to review the COVEOP and provide comment, but were not signatories. This outcome may have resulted in part because the 2019 COVEOP, unlike previous editions, was included in EO42 instead of being a stand-alone document. VDEM notes that the 2019 COVEOP revision requires an annual revision rather than the four-year revision cycle required in previous versions. This may also necessitate a change to EO 42 (2019) yearly.

In addition, VDSS states that agencies had limited time to review the changes to EO41 and EO42. According to VDSS, although the original EO41 was coordinated with stakeholders, the final signed version was not coordinated. The signed version is substantially and materially different than the original version and has created confusion and led to disagreement between these agencies related to procurement of contracts. VDSS also states that agencies had a limited amount of time to review the 113-page COVEOP, which limited opportunities for input.

¹⁸ This was referred to as Support Annex 6, *Mass Sheltering Plan*, in the 2008-2011 COVEOP.

¹⁹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20111207221602/http://www.vaemergency.gov/em-community/plans/coveop> (Retrieved October 2, 2019).

To the extent this abbreviated review occurred, it appears counter to the recommendations in the Louisiana Report, which called for broad sign-off by lead agencies.²⁰ It also appears to diverge from the procedure outlined in the COVEOP, in which both interim changes and full updates of the COVEOP should be addressed through a COVEOP Management Standard Operating Procedure. This includes “obtaining the official approval for the change from the appropriate officials of the affected agencies.”²¹ It appears this that this process was not followed.

Recommendations

- The decision to exclude Support Annexes should be revisited and consideration should be given to restoring them unless doing so is determined to be detrimental to the COVEOP.
- VDEM should ensure that all future changes to the COVEOP and any incorporated documents follow the established protocol, including adequate review time and agreement from stakeholder agencies, who also should be signatories.

Under COVEOP, State Agencies Are Assigned Different Roles for Shelter Activation and Support

VDEM plays a primary role in advising the Governor whether to issue a disaster declaration and also whether to activate a state shelter. Once activated, VDSS has primarily responsibility for state shelter operations. During an emergency, VDEM and DGS (among other agencies) are charged with logistics responsibilities to support VDSS.

VDEM Manages the Process for Declaring a Disaster

VDEM works with the Governor’s Office and the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to determine whether a state declaration for a disaster is imminent, and has developed a one-page executive order template for that purpose. The template is designed to:

- implement the COVEOP;
- activate the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) and the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) as directed by the State Coordinator;
- waive any state requirement or regulation, and permit agencies to enter into contracts without regard to normal procedures or formalities. (All waivers issued by agencies are to be posted on their websites);
- activate the provisions of §59.1-525, *Code of Virginia*, relating to price gouging.
- activate the Virginia National Guard to State Active Duty; and

²⁰ Best practice recommendation per the *State of Virginia Hurricane Florence Brief* produced by Team Louisiana – “Have the Governor and ESF primary agency heads sign off on the State EOP/executive order.”

²¹ 2012 COVEOP (March 2015 update) <https://www.vaemergency.gov/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2012COVEOPPlan2015March.pdf> (Retrieved October 2, 2019). P.19

- provide authorization of a maximum amount in state sum sufficient funds for state and local mission assignments and state response and recovery operations. Such appropriation may include a specific sum sufficient authorization for the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).

Once the determination has been made that a disaster declaration is needed, VDEM is required²² to calculate the amount for disaster assistance in consultation with the Secretary of Finance and, as deemed appropriate by the Secretary, the Department of Planning and Budget (DPB). The estimated amount of sum sufficient funding authorized by the Governor under §44-146.28, *Code of Virginia*, is then incorporated into the executive order issued by the Governor.²³

COVEOP, VEOC, and Virginia Emergency Support Team Are Activated by Executive Order

Upon the declaration and issuance of an executive order, the COVEOP is activated. When the COVEOP is activated, both the VEOC and the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) are activated. These actions are under the direction of the State Coordinator, who also appoints the VEST Director to manage the VEST and coordinate the Commonwealth’s response activities. The VEST consists of 40 state agencies represented in the VEOC, and it provides the structure for coordinating state emergency operations and supporting affected local governments and businesses.

The VEST is supported by 17 Emergency Support Functions (ESF) comprised of appropriate agencies that are assigned to specific roles. Of these 17 ESFs, nine have defined roles for state shelters:

- ESF-6: Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing Referral, and Human Services - primary responsibility for overall coordination and operation of state shelters (lead - VDSS);
- ESF-1: Transportation – primary responsibility for transportation systems and services (lead – Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT));
- ESF-2: Communications – primary responsibility for communications and IT equipment and services (lead – VITA);
- ESF-7: Logistics – primary responsibility for resources for sheltering (lead – VDEM);
- ESF-8: Public Health – primary responsibility for coordinating medical and environmental health support (lead – VDH);
- ESF-11: Agriculture & Natural Resources – primary responsibility for pet sheltering (lead – VDACS);
- ESF-13: Public Safety and Security – primary responsibility for shelter security and traffic management (lead – VSP);
- ESF-15: External Affairs – primary responsibility for public messaging related to sheltering and evacuation (lead – VDEM); and
- ESF-17: Volunteers and Donations – primary responsibility for coordinating Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster (VOAD) and other non-governmental organization support (lead – VDEM).

²² Item 51.A.3 of Chapter 854, 2019 Acts of Assembly.

²³ The Governor can verbally declare a disaster and later sign the executive order.

Hurricane Evacuation Working Group Makes Evacuation and Sheltering Recommendations

VDEM initiates conference calls before the Governor’s declaration of a State of Emergency and continues calls as the event progresses. This includes calls with a variety of stakeholders including the Governor’s Office, the Cabinet Secretaries, state agencies, ESF Leads, and localities.²⁴

The first call is with the Hurricane Evacuation Working Group (HEWG)²⁵, comprised of representatives from the National Weather Service and the following state agencies: VDEM, VDSS, VDACS, VDH, DMA, VSP, VDOT, and the Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). The HEWG does not include a representative from IHEs. To familiarize the group with the situation and solicit information required to make informed evacuation and sheltering decisions, VDEM also conducts regional conference calls with local emergency managers to receive and collate the necessary information.

Using the regional conference call information, the HEWG discusses and evaluates the situation in accordance with the planning timelines. The SCR Plan notes that the HEWG, “will develop a recommendation of evacuation and sheltering actions for consideration by VEST leadership and the Governor.” After the HEWG advises the State Coordinator, current practice is that the Coordinator then briefs the Governor. Cabinet members and appropriate agency directors would then provide the Governor with additional information and recommendations.

State Shelters Are Activated Only if Local Capacity Is Exceeded

The SCR Shelter plan states that a state shelter may be opened “as determined necessary by the State Coordinator of Emergency Management and the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services,” and receipt of a “mission assignment” from the VEST.

Upon the decision to activate the SCR Shelter Plan, VDSS is expected to collaborate with pre-identified points of contact provided by each IHE to determine which state shelter(s) will be opened. VDSS reviews site availability, type of emergency event, the direction of evacuation, the proximity of the shelter to the impacted areas, projected storm tracks or contamination plumes, shelter capacity, as well as other considerations when determining which sites to open.

State Shelters Are Only Opened in Certain Conditions, and Under a Progressive Approach

The SCR Shelter Plan outlines specific conditions that must be met before state shelters are activated:

²⁴ Best practice recommendations per the *State of Virginia Hurricane Florence Brief* produced by Team Louisiana – “Daily Unified Command Group (UCG) meetings leading up to and during the event until the transition to the recovery phase. The meeting is led by the Governor and VDEM Director. Establish an operational rhythm.” and “Utilize a daily conference call led by VDEM to provide situational update to key stakeholders and to gather critical information from local EM directors on their respective jurisdictions.”

²⁵ This group was referred to in previous COVEOPs as the Virginia Evacuation Coordination Team for Operational Response (VECTOR).

- the emergency/disaster will require evacuating residents across jurisdictional boundaries and the required sheltering need will exceed the capability of the evacuating and host jurisdictions;
- state shelters will not open until local shelters are nearing capacity and/or have shown through data submission that they will be unable to meet the sheltering need on their own; and,²⁶
- state shelters will open outside of the known or anticipated impact area.

The SCR Shelter Plan also outlines a progressive delivery of shelter services, giving the ability to order and supply shelters progressively instead of all at once. The progression is outlined below, and the commodities lists for each site is expected to be modified in the next six months to delineate those items needed within each level of progression.

Life-Saving (0-48 Hours)

- Security
- Registration (including communication accessibility)
- Shelter (protection from harm and physical safety)
- Space and limited materials for sleep
- Basic health, mental health support, and accessibility for all residents²⁷
- Food and Water

Life- Sustaining (48-96 Hours)

- Materials for sleep (cots, blankets)
- Hygiene kits
- Establishment of structured routines
- Opportunities for children and families to participate in their own recovery

Informational Needs/Stabilizing the Shelter Environment (96+ Hours)

- Resident transition
- Status of disaster and relief efforts
- Types of available assistance
- Process of obtaining assistance

VDSS Leads Delivery of Shelters and Other Mass Care

The VEST Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Human Services, and Housing Referral (ESF-6) section is led by VDSS, to whom the COVEOP assigns these duties:

- coordinating delivery of state services;
- implementing the Commonwealth's mass care, sheltering, and related plans; and

²⁶ The State Coordinator has noted that the doctrine of "waiting for the locals to exceed capacity" was changed nationally after Hurricane Katrina towards a doctrine of leaning forward and moving resources into place before the disaster. However, the state's sheltering plan does not reflect the new doctrine and has not been updated to reflect the doctrine.

²⁷ Basic health, mental health support function is managed by VDH under ESF 8, Public Health and Medical. While VDH has a list of the supplies needed, no specific contract exists. According to VDH, the agency is able to acquire these supplies on short notice.

- coordinating support to local government and NGO mass care and emergency assistance operations.

ESF 6 services include non-medical mass care, emergency assistance, recovery housing referral, and human services.

The MOAs between VDSS and some IHEs specifically state that sites will not be used under certain conditions (coastal hurricanes and Hampton Roads impact areas). For example, VDSS and some IHEs have agreed to short-term workarounds when revenue-producing events are scheduled. In addition, the ability of an IHE to activate a state shelter may depend on whether staff and students are or will be evacuated, as well as other factors. For example, a power outage or localized flooding may prevent state shelter from activating or subsequently operating.

Upon activation of one or more state shelters, VDSS coordinates state shelter activities with partnering agencies through their associated ESF by establishing a timeline for staff arrival, resource arrival, and shelter opening. VDSS and all partner agencies initiate staff mobilization in accordance with their agency-specific shelter staffing procedures. Each state agency maintains a matrix of staffing requirements to fulfill their roles and responsibilities at each SCRS. For example, VDSS provides 15 staff per 12-hour shift for a site that holds 250 evacuees or 70 staff per 12-hour shift for a site that holds 2,500 evacuees. Additionally, VDSS enters pre-defined resource requests for commodities, services, and supplies for the selected shelter sites into WebEOC.²⁸ These resources are separated by agency and IHE, and each agency and IHE is financially responsible for its portion and for submitting any subsequent reimbursement request from the state sum sufficient or FEMA funding.

At present, if a state shelter could not open or remain open after it was activated, VDSS would work with the VEST and federal partners to access the resources needed to address the problem. (Additional discussion of state shelter failure is provided in the next section.) If the problem cannot be resolved and the shelter situation unsafe, VDSS would recommend that another state shelter be opened and would work with the VEST to move staff and residents. Were this to occur, it could create an unsafe environment for staff and residents. It also would be more difficult to properly track and monitor residents and resources, and it could increase costs. This scenario is not presently addressed in state plans or procedures, and it underscores the need for effective communication and collaboration between VDSS and VDEM. To avoid this kind of scenario, VDSS recommends activation of state shelter sites that are appropriate for the event and located in an area where the risk of this scenario would be minimal or non-existent.

Additional Planning for Post-Emergency De-Activation of State Shelters Is Needed

After an emergency, state-managed shelters that have been activated and operational begin the process of moving residents out of the state shelter and either back to their communities or to a local shelter when conditions permit. Presently, there is no state process for re-locating residents when a state shelter is de-activated. Although the SCR Shelter Plan addresses the transition of state shelter residents in § 12.7, the process itself (which would be in Appendix 13 to the plan) has not yet been developed. Florida and North Carolina have both

²⁸ The Commonwealth's system of record for emergency management operations.

created shelter transition processes and enacted these operations at least once. Plans and lessons learned by these states will be used to help develop the process for Virginia.

Recommendation

- VDSS should continue developing the state shelter deactivation process, in concert with other stakeholder agencies and local jurisdictions.

Unclear Language in Plans Regarding State Shelters Hinders Operational Effectiveness and Contributed to Disagreement on State Shelter Activation

The processes and responsibilities outlined in EO42 and the SCR Shelter Plan appear to differ, which has created a substantial degree of disagreement about roles and responsibilities between VDEM and VDSS. Moreover, according to VDSS, both the HEWG and VDSS initially recommended that state shelters should not be opened, but VDEM disregarded this advice and pressed for a different recommendation.

EO42 and SCR Shelter Plan Differ Regarding VDSS' Role in State Shelter Activation

The 2019 SCR Shelter Plan, which the agency heads for VDEM and VDSS signed in September, does not align with the update of the COVEOP promulgated in EO42. Both documents agree that the HEWG is responsible for recommending evacuation and sheltering actions to VDEM. After that briefing occurs, a decision regarding shelter activation must be made. As noted above, after being advised by the HEWG the State Coordinator briefs the Governor. Cabinet members and select agency directors then provide the Governor with additional information and recommendations.

After this advice has been received and considered, the plans differ regarding the respective roles of VDEM and VDSS. According to the SCR Shelter Plan, a state shelter “may be opened as determined necessary by the State Coordinator of Emergency Management and the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services” (p.1, emphasis added). Per that plan, this coordination would occur after the HEWG has developed a recommendation regarding evacuation and sheltering actions. However, EO42 delegates to the State Coordinator the authority to determine, “as necessary that the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Social Services will activate the SCR Shelter Plan and identify and make available such shelters as necessary.”

The text of EO42 suggests that the Coordinator can direct the VDSS Commissioner to activate a shelter regardless of the outcome of the briefing to the Governor. Moreover, the SCR Shelter Plan’s description of a joint decision differs from the singular authority delegated to the Coordinator by EO42.

The sheltering process would benefit from additional clarification of roles, as indicated by the differing opinions of each agency regarding the meaning of the language noted above. VDEM asserts that EO42 and the SCR Shelter Plan are in alignment. In contrast, VDSS reports that these differences are problematic, as evidenced by the reported unilateral decision by the State Coordinator to activate different state shelters during Hurricane Florence than had been recommended by VDSS (discussed below). Clarification also would ensure that VDSS and IHEs

are actively involved in the recommendation to activate a shelter, and that the VDSS Commissioner is able to address the use of IHEs under certain circumstances.

VDDEM's Activation of State Shelters Differed from VDSS' Recommendation

According to VDSS, during the first two HEWG conference calls pertaining to Hurricane Florence, VDSS recommended, and the HEWG agreed, that state shelters should not be opened. This decision was based upon the protocol in existing state plans, wherein state shelters are only opened when localities request support or are projected to be unable to shelter evacuees. Neither condition existed.

When asked by VDEM to reconsider, VDSS recommended opening one state shelter at George Mason University (GMU). This site was recommended by VDSS because: (1) it was outside of the potential impact zone; (2) the university was willing to open a shelter and already had an existing inventory of supplies and commodities on campus; and (3) VDSS staff that are geographically assigned to its Northern Virginia offices were already on stand-by for deployment to GMU. Although data analysis indicated localities would be able to shelter evacuees within the Hampton Roads Region, VDSS recommended to open one state shelter out of an abundance of caution.

Instead, VDEM decided to activate state shelters at Christopher Newport University (CNU), the College of William and Mary (W&M), and Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) without discussing this decision with VDSS. This decision appears to run counter to the intent of the state's sheltering process. Although the agencies disagree on the criteria for selecting state shelter sites—VDEM prefers to shelter evacuees as close as possible to the potential impact area, while VDSS believes that moving the evacuees away from the potential impact area is better—the existing state framework under the COVEOP assigns VDSS as the lead agency for state sheltering.

In the lead role assigned to it by the COVEOP and SCR Shelter Plan, VDSS has developed relationships with the colleges and universities designated as state shelter sites, including executing MOAs. As a result, VDSS is aware of the limitations on shelter activation at each site. For example, W&M and CNU will not open before impact for coastal hurricanes, in part because both sites would be in the potential area of impact. And had the hurricane hit either site, damage could have potentially required the movement of evacuees elsewhere or could have exposed staff and evacuees to harm, physically and mentally. A further concern is that as the hurricane approached, the institutions of higher education (IHEs) that could serve as state shelters were not routinely informed about whether they would need to be opened. However, based upon existing MOAs, W&M and CNU did not anticipate they would be activated.

After activation, the CNU and W&M state shelters were opened before local shelters in the evacuation zone were filled to capacity. Subsequently, a small number of people entered the W&M shelter. After the CNU shelter opened, a local shelter closed, which it was not supposed to do, and sent all of its residents to CNU's state shelter. In addition, individuals receiving medical treatment were brought from the regional hospital to the CNU shelter, and a not-for-profit entity in Hampton brought homeless residents to CNU instead of the still open Hampton shelters.

Recommendations

In recognition of the unique expertise and responsibilities of each stakeholder agency, a more clear delineation of roles would reflect the following assignments.

- The authority to activate a state shelter should not be broadly delegated to the State Coordinator. As noted above, state shelters are only considered in events requiring the evacuation of residents across jurisdictional boundaries and when local shelters are at or near capacity and unable to meet sheltering needs on their own. Under current practice, the State Coordinator directs the Commissioner of VDSS to open state shelters; however, the State Coordinator is not specifically required to consult with the HEWG, the VDSS Commissioner, or other official to determine if state shelters should be opened. A recommendation regarding a clarification of this process is included in the main report.
- All IHEs that are being considered for activation as state shelters should be included in HEWG discussions leading to the decision to open state shelters. Final decisions on which shelters to open might have been more effective if the IHEs had been included in sheltering discussions. Both CNU and W&M were in the potential path of the storm, and each IHE had sent its students home or to safer locations.
- In keeping with its long-standing role, the HEWG should continue to be responsible for advising the VEST and the VDSS Commissioner on the need for an evacuation. The group also should recommend whether state shelters or other responses are needed, taking into account the present and projected capacity and capability of local and state shelters. As discussed below, this process would be aided by improvements in the availability of sheltering data that is currently collected by VDEM to HEWG and other decision makers.
- After taking into account the HEWG's recommendation, the VDSS Commissioner should be responsible for determining whether state shelters are available or needed, and recommending to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and the State Coordinator which shelters should be activated based upon current conditions and capabilities.
- If the State Coordinator determines that the activation of available state shelters is required, the Coordinator should act upon the Commissioner's recommendation unless other information is available that indicates an alternate course of action is required. In that case, the Coordinator should inform the Commissioner of that information when activation is directed.
- To ensure that recommendations involving state shelter activation account for circumstances in which an IHE may not be able to open, the determination to use state shelters should be considered by a larger group that advises both the State Coordinator and the VDSS Commissioner.
- When state shelters are to be activated the Commissioner and the State Coordinator should brief the Governor about the conditions, capabilities, and capacities of the state-managed shelters needed for that specific disaster.

- VDSS and VDEM, in conjunction with IHE representatives, should formally include in state plans and procedures the process to use if a state shelter cannot be activated or remain open after activation.

VDSS Needs to Ensure More Frequent Staff Training and Readiness Exercises

Two of the IHEs that were activated as state shelters reported that the VDSS employees were professional and handled the duties of running the shelters, but several shortcomings need to be addressed. The VDSS employee responsible for managing the shelter was not familiar with the shelter disaster plans and needed to be fully briefed on them. In addition, the VDSS employees tasked with running the state shelters for this disaster had not previously interacted with any of the companion staff at the impacted IHEs. Although exercises conducted to test the emergency operation plan are conducted every two years, this cycle may not address the frequency of staff turnover.

Recommendations

- DSS employees who might be assigned to state shelters should have annual meetings with the emergency operations staff at each IHE, ideally just prior to the hurricane season since those disasters have a more predictable cycle than other potentially less predictable disasters that might require sheltering.
- Supplemental training related to shelter readiness should be conducted to bolster the present biennial exercise.

Inconsistent or Contradictory Language on Logistics and Contracting Hinders Readiness

Currently, the State Coordinator is authorized to acquire resources during an emergency. In contrast, VDSS is not assigned any contracting responsibility by the COVEOP and instead depends upon the logistics section for the provision of supplies, commodities, and resources. However, EO41 requires that state agencies with responsibilities to assist in disaster operations must have federally-compliant emergency procurement contracts. The current framework could lead to procurement inefficiencies or gaps. Additional clarity of roles would be beneficial.

VDEM Leads Logistics and Procurements

Currently, the authorization to procure resources during an emergency resides with the State Coordinator or his/her designees working in the VEOC. Decisions are based on pre-event plans as described in the COVEOP, the SCR Shelter Plan, and crisis action planning processes for resource allocation in the National Incident Management System. Within this system, logistics responsibilities are carried out by the logistics section of the VEST, which is staffed by VDEM Disaster Logistics Branch personnel and purchasing experts from DGS. DGS supports the logistic branch by: (1) providing personnel to assist the resources and logistics section (ESF7) in sourcing needed goods and services during operations of the EOC, and (2) providing a list of vendors who may be available to provide goods and services during an emergency. This list currently consists of 250 contracted vendors as well as vendors who have not been awarded

contracts, but are available to provide goods or services through an emergency procurement method per the *Virginia Public Procurement Act*.

The VDEM Disaster Logistics Branch plans and negotiates contracts for commodities, supplies, and services before activation. The COVEOP defines the logistics for which VDEM and DGS are responsible, including emergency relief supplies, contracting services, and other services.²⁹ According to the COVEOP (p.52), the role of the logistics section is to:

- assist local governments and state agencies with provision of essential resources when requested;
- manage disaster services contracts for goods and services; and
- assist in the development of and provide support for resource and logistical requirements to support recovery efforts.

The SCR Shelter Plan also assigns logistics functions to VDEM, including the responsibility to, “negotiate, secure, and fund emergency contracts or vendor agreements for shelter resource requirements and provisions.” The COVEOP (ESF-7) assigns DGS similar logistics responsibilities, namely to, “manage contracts for good and services” and “provide resource support for warehouse operations” (p.23).

After the decision is made to activate a state shelter, the logistics section receives and fulfills related resource requests. Concurrently with the submission of the resource request, shelter support agencies begin the activation of shelter staff. Each agency provides its required level of staffing to meet its specific shelter roles and responsibilities. Staffing comes from the seven primary state shelter stakeholder agencies,³⁰ and is supplemented by contract, volunteer, federal, or mutual aid personnel. The logistics section coordinates the contracts for any contractual staff. Shelter staff and contractors set up the shelter. Sufficient time must be available to request and receive supplies and commodities, and to allow activated staff to safely mobilize. The goal is for shelters to open within or before the timeline delineated in the Strategic Framework.

Each state shelter stakeholder agency is responsible for preparing a generic list of necessary supplies, commodities, and services, and then site-specific needs lists for each pre-identified site are developed. Upon activation, VDSS submits, via WebEOC, a consolidated request to fulfill the supplies, commodities, and services needed by the activated site. The VEST logistics section, which includes DGS, then receives and fulfills the request.

VDEM Has Undertaken Several Procurement Activities for Use by Other Public Bodies

VDEM has undertaken several procurement activities in recent years. In April 2014, VDEM, in coordination with VDSS and other state agency and IHE partners, issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) #127-04-23-001-JLM, a commodities and services RFP for “turn-key” operations to support State Managed Shelters. According to the RFP:

“The Commonwealth of Virginia, as represented by VDEM, is in need of an Emergency Response Company(s) (Offerors) that can provide personnel, equipment, goods, and services, including additional manpower, to provide

²⁹ COVEOP 7.1.4.2.1, ESF 7 (DGS); COVEOP 7.1.4.9.4, ESF 7 (VDEM); COVEOP 1.4.1 ESF 7 (VDEM).

³⁰ VDSS, VDEM, VSP, VDH, DBHDS, VDACS, and VITA.

assistance in the mobilization, operations of, and demobilization of its State-Managed Shelters.”

The RFP stated that the resulting contract could be used by a variety of public bodies, including all members of the VEST. At the closure of the RFP process, no bids were received. VDEM then contacted three large international response and military support companies to see if these firms would be interested in providing these types of goods and services. Upon completion of that inquiry, VDEM made a second attempt, and on April 23, 2014, issued RFP #127-04-23-001-JLM. However, no bids were received and the solicitation was closed on June 24, 2014.

Later that year, however, VDEM successfully awarded a contract to TMS Logistics (Emergency Evacuation Bus services) which could be used by state agencies and other public bodies. The contract, which was effective from December 2014 through November 2017, had up to three one-year renewal periods. It does not appear that the contract was renewed.

In August 2017, VDEM advertised an “Invitation for Qualified Contractors” IFQC (VDEM 127:18-001-2) with the goal of creating an emergency services contractor pool to provide a multitude of services, including the set-up, operation, and break-down of “base camps” to support emergency operations. The IFQC notes that the invitation is intended to seek suppliers who can, “provide goods and/or services as may be needed by the Commonwealth of Virginia or any of its political subdivisions during an emergency.” Through this solicitation, VDEM was able to pre-qualify 17 suppliers to provide services in 17 categories, including base camps, shelter supplies, meal provisions, and emergency power. Two of these contractors, DRC Emergency Services and SLS, provided logistics, commodities, and services during Hurricane Florence.

Although the Commonwealth does not currently have emergency contracts that are specifically intended to support state shelters, several statewide operational contracts may be used in the event of an emergency.³¹ Several such contracts are currently in place (i.e., Maintenance, Repair, and Operations; Debris Monitoring and Removal; Bulk Fuel; Heating Oil; and Emergency Generator Maintenance).

Procurement Authority and Responsibility Should Be Clarified

Pursuant to the COVEOP, VDEM and DGS have specific responsibilities related to contracting for goods and services, and warehouse operations. Moreover, as a signatory of the SCR Shelter Plan, VDEM accepted the responsibility to “negotiate, secure, and fund emergency contracts or vendor agreements for shelter resource requirements and provisions (such as cots, blankets, hygiene supplies, food services, back-up generators, communications equipment, staff lodging and transportation) at the time of shelter activation notification or pre-positioned as applicable.”

Although VDSS is responsible for state shelter operations, VDSS has no assigned responsibility for contracting or procurement in the COVEOP. VDSS has primary responsibility for coordination of state-managed sheltering and mass care operations (ESF-6). It is also responsible for the commodity and staffing list for each state-managed shelter; however, VDSS is not assigned to ESF-7 (logistics) and is not assigned any contracting responsibility by the

³¹ See <https://dgs.virginia.gov/procurement/resources/eva-emergency-vendor-list/> and <https://www.vaemergency.gov/finance-purchasing/disaster-purchasing/>

COVEOP. Instead, once a decision is made to activate a state shelter, VDSS depends upon the VEST logistics section for the provision of supplies, commodities, and resources to meet the operational needs to support activated state shelters.

While the COVEOP does not assign contracting and procurement responsibilities to VDSS, VDEM has previously stated that VDSS is responsible for procuring, contracting, and warehousing goods and services. VDEM bases this upon their interpretation of EO41, which VDEM states overrides both EO42 and the COVEOP. According to VDEM, because EO41 states that agencies must have, “adequate plans, federally-compliant emergency procurement contracts, staff, and resources to fulfill their responsibilities as assigned in the COVEOP” [emphasis added], VDSS is therefore responsible for procuring contracts. However, because the COVEOP assigns the responsibility to contract for goods and services to VDEM and DGS, VDSS does not believe it has any responsibility in this regard. This difference in interpretation has created a conflict between VDEM and VDSS.

This multiple contract approach was recommended by the Louisiana Report, wherein “each agency assigned a primary or support role in an ESF should retain their own pre-event contracts to support their mission.” This included a recommendation to “break up the resource sheltering contracts” and assign VDSS to manage and execute them. This appears to recommend that VDSS and other state agencies maintain their own contracts in addition to any statewide contracts developed by VDEM or DGS. A multiple contract approach may be required to a certain extent, because emergency-response contractors typically hold contracts with multiple states and localities, and are hesitant to enter into large scale contracts.

The approach recommended by the Louisiana Report raises several concerns, including the potential to add logistical strain to already challenged sites, and would require more personnel and coordination both on-site and at the VEOC during an event. This could result in duplication of effort, decreased coordination, and lower buying power for the Commonwealth. Additionally, state agencies responsible to assist in disaster operations may not have the expertise and resources to prepare contracts. DGS is currently working with VDEM and VDSS to identify needed contracts in support of EO41. This workgroup is expected to identify the contracts that currently may be available, and to develop a list of goods and services to be placed under contract. It is anticipated that some of these contracts may be used to support local and state shelters.

It appears that although EO41 directs state agencies to have an emergency procurement plan and related contracts, EO42 provides that state agencies must follow the COVEOP during disasters and assigns the responsibility of contracting for purposes of sheltering to VDEM and DGS. While these two plans could be read harmoniously, VDEM, VDSS, and DGS observes that, a significant challenge for shelter sourcing and contracting is disagreement among agencies regarding contracting and storage/distribution responsibilities.

During the review of the procedures and processes in preparation of this report, it was determined that the lack of clear delineation of roles and responsibilities between VDEM and VDSS has in the past caused conflict and miscommunications. In October, 2019, DPB received information from VDSS and VDEM that they have taken immediate steps to specifically outline their responsibilities related to state shelter planning and procurement. Prior to an emergency, VDSS will determine the overall strategy, scope, and requirements. VDEM will offer subject matter expertise and ensure all federal language is included for reimbursement, and DGS will

conduct the solicitation and execute a statewide contract (as appropriate) for use by all public bodies. During an emergency, DSS will submit procurement orders, and VDEM will track and monitor the orders. Specifically, they have agreed to the following:

- “DSS, with assistance and input from DGS and VDEM, will develop strategy and scope documents to outline what goods and services will be needed under contract in the event of an emergency. While DSS will lead the requirements portion, VDEM offers expertise as well as ensuring all federal language is included for reimbursement, and DGS provides experience in ensuring the proper procurement language is in place to properly manage resulting contracts.”
- “Upon completion of the specifications by DSS and VDEM, DGS will conduct procurements to contract for the specified needs. Contracts will be executed to allow for purchases by all public bodies.”
- “In the event of an emergency, DSS will submit orders utilizing the established contract based on the situation, needs, and state shelters that are opened.”
- “VDEM will track and monitor all orders through WebEOC, eVA, and Cardinal to ensure proper payment and reimbursement where appropriate.”
- “The Disaster Procurement Working Group (DPWG) will revise its charter to include procurement needs for state sheltering. This work group includes members from VDEM, DGS, DSS and several other agencies.”

While it is commendable that these agencies have found improvements to the state shelter planning and procurement processes, given the unique expertise and responsibilities of each stakeholder agency, the delineation of roles should be formally adopted to ensure that there is a seamless process in the Commonwealth both now and into the future. This would ensure gaps do not exist and that a smooth transition from local to state shelter activation is not hampered by a lack of needed commodities or services.

Recommendations

- The delineation of procurement responsibilities outlined above should be formally adopted and implemented prior to the start of the 2020 hurricane season. Given the requirement in EO41 that each agency maintain separate emergency contracts, in the absence of formal adoption this informal agreement by VDEM and VDSS could be overridden by the agencies during a disaster and thereby create additional challenges.
- VDEM should lead the review of all affected statewide plans, including the COVEOP and the SCR Shelter Plan, to ensure alignment with this new agreement. VDSS should also ensure the individual agreements with IHEs reflect this process.
- As the primary point of contact with IHEs, and as the agency responsible for ensuring the readiness of state shelters, VDSS has identified the goods and

services required by each IHE. However, this identification should account for differences among IHEs, including the extent to which they presently have existing contracts (such as food service), supplies, or warehousing space that might be better suited to their site specific needs.

- State agencies should work closely with DGS, the state's procurement agency for non-IT goods and services, to address their procurement needs. DGS has both the authority and responsibility to ensure sufficient contractual vehicles exist, including statewide contracts, and to thereby limit procurement inefficiencies and leverage the Commonwealth's buying power. DGS also has the ability to ensure appropriate contract management during a disaster in the event of supplier non-performance. To the extent that IT services may be needed, such as telecommunications, VITA may need to play a role.
- VDSS should work with IHEs that might serve as state shelters to see what supplies and equipment might be more appropriate for them to procure.
- For those IHEs that have the capability to provide food, VDSS should explore whether their contracts with present vendors could provide for the needs of shelter residents. For IHEs with their own food operations, VDSS should explore whether those operations can be expanded to cover the needs of shelters.
- To better align responsibility and authority, VDSS should be given more explicitly delineated responsibility in the COVEOP for logistics involving state shelters.
- VDEM and VDSS should work together in consultation with other agencies to develop a list of goods and services used during an emergency and to include pre- and post-disaster supplies and services. However, if the decision is to allow each agency to prepare separate contracts as required by EO41, then this could potentially be fulfilled by having VDSS and other state agencies work directly with DGS to ensure that contracts sufficient to meet their needs are identified. VDEM should play a key role in this process, in keeping with its existing responsibilities for coordination and logistics.

Statutory Changes Should Be Considered to Ensure Coordination and Continuity Across Administrations

Once the appropriate delineation of procurement-related assignments is determined, consideration may need to be given to clarifying this delineation in statute to ensure adequate coordination during planning while retaining needed authority during an emergency.

Planning activities occur prior to an emergency. As discussed above, statute assigns responsibility for sheltering planning to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, and procurement activities are a key aspect of planning. Statute also assigns oversight of procurement activity to DGS and VITA, for non-IT and IT goods and services respectively. In addition to their subject matter expertise, both DGS and VITA are charged with ensuring the

competitive procurement of services and supplies through compliance with the *Virginia Public Procurement Act* (§ 2.2-4300 et seq.). Accordingly, DGS, VITA, and all other agencies have a responsibility to ensure that “all qualified vendors have access to public business, ...[and] that procurement procedures involve openness and administrative efficiency....”

During an emergency, however, clear lines of authority and responsibility are essential. Both the COVEOP and the SCR Shelter Plan assign primary responsibility for logistics during an emergency to VDEM and DGS. Moreover, during an emergency (both declared and undeclared) the State Coordinator has the authority to enter into contracts “without regard to normal procedures” (§ 44-146.18:2 and § 44-146.28). The need to act swiftly and decisively in an emergency, however, should be distinguished from the need to ensure adequate coordination and adherence to normal procedures when planning for an emergency.

A statutory framework provides for more continuity across administrations and improved coordination across secretariats. In this regard, plans such as the COVEOP and SCR Shelter Plan should be used to implement the roles and responsibilities that are first established in law. Accordingly, consideration should be given to statutory language that ensures the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security’s responsibility for state sheltering planning is coordinated with the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, and the Secretary of Administration. This would not only allow for improved coordination regarding overall planning for state shelters, but also ensure clear roles and responsibilities are maintained for procurement activities during planning and in an emergency.

Recommendations

- Statutory language could delineate clearly the responsibilities for contracting, procurement, and warehousing operations among State agencies and to balance these responsibilities with other statutory provisions. Statutory language would also ensure continuity across administrations.
- VDSS should have the authority to work directly with DGS to identify the goods and services needed for state shelters. This would allow VDEM to focus on the logistical functions required to support response and recovery rather than contract negotiations during a disaster.
- The potential for developing a model state shelter at one IHE should be assessed. The model IHE site should have most of the relevant goods and services are provided by the IHE through their existing vendors and contractors, including mobilization and demobilization. The IHE would be reimbursed by the Commonwealth.³²
- DGS should negotiate and execute several statewide contracts that could be used by VDSS and other relevant public bodies. These contracts could then be executed upon the activation of state shelters to facilitate their fulfillment of the roles assigned to them

³² For example, George Mason University, as part of its effort to provide service to the community at-large, has purchased, using its own funds and grant funds, certain supplies to support emergency plans, including over 1,000 cots. Furthermore, it has the ability to use its current food service contractor to provide meals for up to 250 people.

under the COVEOP and SCR Shelter Plan. This would eliminate the need for each agency to negotiate and manage separate and distinct small contracts; the Commonwealth's buying power also may allow a reduction in cost. Additionally, clear information about what is available under the state contracts should be made available to VDEM and each state agency for activation in coordination with DGS.

- Other contracts and agreements also should be considered, including:
 - The State Coordinator should regularly assess the available assets and resources of each state agency that could be deployed during a disaster. For instance, DOC maintains a significant mobile kitchen capability designed to deploy to a DOC prison to provide food in the event a kitchen at a prison is not available. The mobile kitchen units and team can provide over 9,000 meals a day if they are not needed by DOC.³³ Additionally, DMA has a number of units, including the Virginia Defense Force that could carry out large missions, including units that have specialized logistics capabilities. This includes food service managers and cooks who could operate a dining facility, or manage contracts.
 - Interagency Agreements with DOC, VDOT, DMA and other agencies to transport commodities and goods from storage centers to state shelters.
 - State contracts should be established with local/private hotels, if available, at negotiated rates to be activated for families during state-mandated evacuations.
 - An agreement with local school divisions to utilize school buses during state mandated evacuations rather than private transportation.
 - Expansion of the current DGS Emergency contract vendor list.

Agency Capabilities Were Not Used During Hurricane Florence and Plans Were Not Adequately Developed or Followed

The Departments of Corrections (DOC) and Military Affairs (DMA) have food service capabilities that were not used during Hurricane Florence and are not addressed in state plans. Moreover, VDEM's pre-positioned resources were not deployed to support state shelters, despite the apparently clear intent for this use in state plans.

Food Service Capabilities at the Departments of Corrections and Military Affairs Were Not Used and Are Not Addressed in State Plans

DOC and DMA have food service capabilities that were not used during Hurricane Florence and are not addressed in state plans.

- DOC has two mobile kitchen units and a team that can deploy and provide 9,000 or more meals per day. DOC reports they were on standby during Florence but were not activated. DOC uses these capabilities at correctional centers or other facilities when major repairs in kitchens are needed due to maintenance or a fire.

³³ The Department of Corrections recently used it for several months at Greenville Correctional Center during renovations.

- DMA has State Managed Shelter support teams already designated to provide support to 15 different locations. They are tasked with assisting the Virginia State Police with security, as well as logistics and overall management of the shelters. They also have other units that are more specialized and thus could support logistics. For example, the Air Guard has a small unit that is trained in “services,” which includes lodging and food service.

The use of DOC and DMA capabilities are not addressed in state plans, including the COVEOP, the SCR Shelter Plan, or the COV Statewide Sheltering Plan Strategic Framework.

- Although both DOC and DMA are listed in the COVEOP, this appears to be a cursory reference which is not fully implemented. In the Mass Care section (ESF 6), the assignment for both agencies is, "Coordinate agency responsibilities assigned in the COV SCR Shelter Plan."³⁴
- In the COV SCR Shelter Plan (September 2019), DOC does not appear to be assigned any responsibilities of any kind, including food service. DMA is listed only once, as a support agency to VSP for, “site Security and Traffic Management Plans for each SCR Shelter” (8.3.7).
- Neither DOC nor DMA is listed in the COV Statewide Sheltering Plan Strategic Framework.

Warehousing and Maintaining Existing Stockpiles

Some state agencies own and store limited supplies and commodities for use in sheltering:

- VDSS maintains barcode scanners for state shelter registration, a limited number of vests used to identify the staff in the shelter, and shelter signage. These items are housed at the VDSS home office in downtown Richmond and IHE sites.
- VDEM owns and maintains seven Conex metal shipping containers stocked with shelter commodities, and two pet support units that can be used for local shelters. These containers are stored on the Eastern Shore (2) and the DGS warehouse in Sandston (5). Each container holds commodities for 200 people and 50 pets. This inventory could serve a total of approximately 1,750 residents by providing full sleeping arrangements, blankets, personal hygiene kits, and other material.³⁵ The inventory includes food but does not include kitchen instruments or food preparation equipment such as heating which could be supplied by DOC. Deployment time depends on the type, location, and severity of the event. But if transportation is available and roads are navigable, a conservative estimate is within 24 hours of the need.

³⁴ DMA is also tasked to, “Provide security for state shelters as available” under Public Health and Medical (ESF 8).

³⁵ VDEM reports they were held to support requests from localities. However, the 2016 VDEM Annual Report on the Commonwealth’s Emergency Shelter Capabilities and Readiness (Pg.9) reflected that VDEM had five Conexes of shelter supplies located in Richmond and that VDEM would reorganize the Conexes into deployable packages for easier and quicker deployment of supplies to local and regional shelters. These resources were not deployed during Hurricane Florence to support state shelters. <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2016/RD423/PDF>

- During Hurricane Florence, donated supplies from SLS (one of the two contractors used to support state shelters) were stored at Christopher Newport University.³⁶ Although VDEM reports that the supplies are still there, this was meant as a temporary measure in order to secure space and was never intended as a permanent storage solution. In the future, arrangements with state-owned space and/or universities could be made to provide similar storage. VDEM is responsible for these commodities.

If the Commonwealth chooses to stockpile shelter supplies, certain steps must be undertaken: some supplies will need climate-controlled conditions; stocks must be kept clean and dry; and certain items (foodstuffs, hygiene kits, etc.) with expiration dates will require rotation. Additionally, the Commonwealth must plan for loading, transportation, and unloading of the supplies when necessary. VDSS currently does not have the personnel, equipment, warehouse, or expertise to support warehousing and associated logistical operations for state shelters.

VDEM's Use of Supplies Only for Local Shelters Runs Counter to Intent of State Plans

As noted above, VDEM owns and maintains seven Conex metal shipping containers stocked with shelter commodities, and two pet support units that can be used for local shelters. These pre-positioned containers are stored on the Eastern Shore (2) and the DGS warehouse in Sandston (5). This inventory could serve a total of approximately 1,750 residents by providing full sleeping arrangements, blankets, personal hygiene kits, and other material. The inventory includes food but does not include kitchen instruments or food preparation equipment such as heating. As previously stated, these needs potentially could be met by DOC.

These resources were not deployed during Hurricane Florence to support state shelters, despite the apparently clear intent for this use in state plans. Instead, VDEM held these commodities to support requests from localities. However, this limitation is not contemplated or supported by state plans:

- *The COVEOP does not limit VDEM's duties to just localities.* In fact, VDEM is given the responsibility to, “Assist local governments and state agencies with the provision of essential resources when requested” (p.52, emphasis added).
- *The COV SCR Shelter Plan makes VDEM responsible for state shelter provisions, including pre-positioning.* Specifically, the state shelter plan tasks VDEM with the duty to, “Negotiate, secure, and fund emergency contracts or vendor agreements for shelter resource requirements and provisions (such as cots, blankets, hygiene supplies, food services, back-up generators, communications equipment, staff lodging and transportation) at the time of shelter activation notification or pre-position as applicable” (Section 8.1.4).
- *VDEM's responsibilities for state shelter supplies is clearly recognized in the COV Statewide Sheltering Plan Strategic Framework.* Section 3c addressed the need for, “deployable and/or pre-positioned kits or trailers of functional needs support equipment

³⁶ As of October 10, 2019, these commodities were stored at Christopher Newport University. To date, CNU has not received direction on the eventual final storage location for these commodities. The facility is a temporary and the building is scheduled for demolition in the future.

and supplies [FNSS].” And the Framework noted that, “VDEM and VDSS will coordinate acquiring kits or trailers...” Afterwards, “VDEM Logistics will work with regional VDEM staff to determine whether each type of kit or trailer should be pre-positioned or should be deployed from the VDEM warehouse. These FNSS kits and trailers will be available to the localities for use for local shelters, locally coordinated and state-coordinated regional shelters” (emphasis added).

There is no recognition in the plans of the conditions or criteria under which the pre-positioned Conex supplies would be used. Because they can be used for both state and local shelters, the plans should address a hierarchy of needs. For example, the plans should address whether state shelters take precedence over local shelters, or whether supplies are provided on a first-come first-served basis.

Recommendations

- VDSS, in coordination with IHEs, VDEM, and other state agencies, should create a staggered list of supplies, based on the progression of shelter activation. After working with DGS to ensure sufficient contractual vehicles are in place, VDSS should stockpile a minimal level of supplies to be deployed to state shelters as the initial start-up. Having these basic supplies in place would allow for more flexibility and less immediacy in supplying the full commodity and service needs of a state shelter. If additional supplies are needed for local shelters, VDEM should ensure those supplies are procured and maintained. However, funding is needed to allow the agencies to procure and stockpile these goods and commodities.
- DGS operates three warehouses in the Commonwealth. Two warehouses are used for DGS’s state and federal surplus operations, one in Henrico County the other in Wytheville. The third warehouse is the Virginia Distribution Center located in Sandston. The surplus property warehouses store primarily surplus office equipment. The Virginia Distribution Center houses staple foods, frozen foods, janitorial supplies, paper and plastic products, safety supplies and other items purchased in volume. DGS staff include procurement professionals who provide procurement support to agencies, as needed, for the purchase of goods and services. DGS warehouses do not have the capacity to store materials other than what is stored for their business operations. Additional resources would be needed to allow DGS to lease additional warehouse space to accommodate inventory and storage of emergency supplies to support state shelters.
- DGS should identify existing state facilities that could be used for warehousing, including IHEs, the Public Safety Training Center in Hanover, and potentially facilities within various Virginia Department of Corrections camps. If additional facilities are required, DGS should identify the potential locations and associated costs.
- VDSS should provide VDEM, the agency in charge of overall coordination and logistics, a list of all existing supplies of goods and commodities that are available for state shelters and the location of the supplies. VDEM should then develop a plan for deploying those supplies, if possible, from one location to another when needed.

VDEM Should Address Gaps in Coordination and Planning

As the agency charged with ensuring the Commonwealth is prepared for emergencies, VDEM should take the lead to ensure state plans are adequately developed and then followed when implemented.

Regarding state shelters in particular, VDEM, VDSS, and other key agencies need to review—and if necessary, revise—the responsibilities they have accepted in EO41, EO42, the COVEOP, the SCR Shelter Plan, and the COV Strategic Framework. VDEM should be tasked with ensuring this is completed, and in a manner that reflects the capability and concurrence of all involved agencies. Ultimately, VDEM and the affected agencies will need to more closely adhere to the plans and their specific duties and responsibilities during an emergency.

Statutory changes also may be needed to address span of control, delegation of powers, and continuity. As noted in the main report, statutory authority and responsibility provide for continuity and broad acceptance across administrations and branches of government – legislative and executive. Current statutes assign responsibility for state and local sheltering to the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security. In addition, EO41 and EO42 assign certain responsibilities to several state agencies. Operationally, however, this has resulted in a process whereby VDEM has directed responsibility for state shelters to VDSS, which is in another secretariat. In the end, agencies from across multiple secretariats must coordinate in order to properly function and respond during a disaster that requires activation of a state shelter. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities that are not ambiguous or subject to interpretation by individual agencies would improve the process.

Consideration should therefore be given to a revision of the statutes addressing responsibility for state sheltering, to more clearly delineate the responsibility assigned to each agency and include their cognizant secretaries as needed to ensure the effective and efficient operation of government. This framework would improve the ability of the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security to fulfill his duties to effectively, “resolve administrative, jurisdictional, operational, program, or policy conflicts between agencies or officials” as contemplated in § 2.2-200.

Enhanced Training and Assessment Are Needed to Ensure Adequate Capacity and Capability

Both capacity and capability are needed to support evacuees. Capacity measures the number of beds, while capability indicates how many people can be supported in a shelter given each shelter’s staffing and resources. Both capacity and capability can be enhanced and sustained through more regular training and assessment of shelter facilities. Improvements in the completeness and timeliness of related data also would enhance responsiveness, including development of a Web portal.

State Shelter Operational Exercises and Facility Assessment

Under the SCR Shelter Plan, VDSS is responsible for ensuring basic shelter training and exercises are made available to all potential state shelter staff, no matter the agency or

organization from which they may be deployed. In turn, each agency must ensure they provide their staff with the emergency, role-specific training necessary to fulfill their agreed-upon roles and responsibilities in the SCR Shelter Plan. Basic state shelter plan and preparedness training materials are created, maintained, and made available online by VDSS through the COV Learning Center.

Operational Exercises Are Intended to Occur Every Two Years

The SCR Shelter Plan states that operational exercises will occur at least once every two years. The last full-scale shelter exercise was held on August 2014 at George Mason University, and the last functional exercise was held on April 2016 at Longwood University. Hurricane Florence in September 2018 provided an unexpected opportunity for training and improvement. Additionally, a training seminar for all state shelter assigned staff was delivered in multiple sessions in 2016. The next exercise is anticipated to occur in 2020.

The process for developing an exercise requires 9-12 months, an exercise planning team consisting of approximately 15 members from state shelter support agencies and organizations, and funding, at a minimum, for printing/copying of materials, supplies, participant travel, and meals. VDSS works with state shelter sites to identify an exercise location and then establishes and leads the exercise planning team consistent with Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program guidance for the development of the event scenario and plan elements to be exercised. Stakeholder agencies are required to provide emergency assigned staff as participants, exercise control and evaluation staff, and actors or simulators. In total, an exercise can include the participation of 150-200 individuals.

Recommendations

- Funding could be provided to VDSS to establish a robust shelter training program, consisting of blended learning via online media and traditional in-person training. The training should be for state agency personnel across the Commonwealth, and designed to (a) increase the number of qualified shelter-trained state personnel who are deployable during disasters and (b) sustain a trained state workforce for comprehensive support of local and state sheltering.
- Funding could be provided to VDSS to develop a State Trained Workforce for Shelter Operations to increase the number of state personnel qualified to staff local or state shelters during disasters. This effort would include developing and then delivering role-specific shelter courses. The training could be provided via classroom and eLearning specifically. The identified cost is estimated at \$83,700 in FY 2021 and \$20,000 in FY 2022 and thereafter.

State Shelter Facility Assessment

Stakeholder agencies have undertaken several steps to verify the suitability of state shelter facilities and reduce the likelihood of shelter failure. Some state shelter sites have quick connections to accept portable tractor-trailer size generators to bring the shelter building to full capacity. These quick connect projects were addressed through federal grant funds provided via the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP). Although testing was done at the completion of each project, the projects and testing ended once SHSP grants were no longer available to VDSS.

With the loss of those funds, VDSS also was no longer able to conduct regular site and facility assessments and update the Auto-Computer-Aided Design (CAD) site layouts, which are critical to verifying shelter capacity within the facility space designated for state shelter. To address this, VDSS requested funding (\$325,720 in Fiscal Year 2021 and thereafter) for a State Shelter Site Review and Update Cycle. These funds would be used for physical site assessments to identify use and safety, AutoCAD layouts to ensure maximum capacity for authorized use of space, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) assessments, engineering assessments to ensure federal and state compliance, and the annual DGS fee for Temporary Occupancy Permits at shelter sites.

Recommendation

- Funding could be provided to VDSS to develop a State Shelter Site Review and Update Cycle. Periodic reviews of state shelter sites are needed to maintain up-to-date emergency shelter site plans, including compliance with the ADA, and thereby minimize exposure to potential liabilities and loss of public trust. The identified cost is estimated at \$325,720 in FY 2021 and each year thereafter. This review cycle would provide for state shelters to be reassessed every 3 to 5 years; verify the continued use and availability of identified shelter sites; ensure the readiness of designated buildings and facilities as a general public shelter during declared emergencies; and provide for additional sites to increase state shelter capacity across the Commonwealth.

Differences in Capabilities Between State Shelters Should Be Distinguished

IHEs that are designated as state shelter sites have varying capabilities. For example, some IHEs have contracts with private vendors for food, others use their own staff, and sites at community colleges have limited food options. Some IHEs can house pets in separate enclosed parking areas (to keep the pets from contaminating housing areas), while others cannot. Likewise, some IHEs can provide substantial medical services, while others cannot.

In general, IHEs vary in terms of the staff and other resources they can provide to support a shelter. Despite these differences, the COVEOP and SCR Shelter Plan generally address each IHE as if they are all similar. The plans only note the capacity and location of each shelter, and whether or not pets and individuals with medical needs can be held there. Site specific annexes are needed to address unique requirements and planning considerations of each site.

As noted below in regard to local shelters, an IHE may have “capacity” (identified physical shelter space to accommodate a specific number of evacuees), but may lack the “capability” (sufficient staff, materials, and services) to fully support, manage, and/or operate the shelter(s). Although current planning information is sufficient for general capacity awareness, more nuanced and delineated information regarding the capabilities of each institution are needed for planning and decision making purposes.

A key aspect of capability involves the presence of students on campus. Although the Virginia State Police and National Guard provided security at the state shelters during Hurricane Florence, if the shelters had been kept open for any length of time then security at the IHE could be placed at risk when students either return to or remain on campus. Given that most hurricane events occur during the school year, it is quite possible that students could still be in residence when a state shelter is opened.

Recommendations

- VDSS needs to ensure the different capabilities of each IHE are fully reflected in the COVEOP or SCR Shelter Plan to allow better planning, training exercises, and information for decision makers. This may require amending the MOAs to specifically incorporate the site's capacity, capability, and available services.
- VDSS should incorporate scenarios of extended stays at shelters during training exercises, including identifying ways to keep shelter residents occupied either within the shelter confines or off campus.
- Consideration should be given to how and when additional Virginia State Police and National Guard support is required to supplement the law enforcement capabilities of an IHE when shelters are kept open after the disaster event.
- VDSS should provide clear guidelines to state shelters on how to address individuals who enter a state shelter and are either on the sex offender registry, are carrying weapons, or who were being held for treatment at a medical facility.

Local Shelter Planning, Assessment, and Capacity³⁷

Similar to state shelters, local emergency planning involves regular assessments, but the capacity data can present an incomplete picture of readiness if capability is not also considered.

Development and Review of Local or Inter-Jurisdictional Emergency Operations Plans

Local emergency planning and operations are under the purview of VDEM. The *Code of Virginia*, § 44-146.19 (E), requires each political subdivision (cities, counties, and five towns with independent emergency management programs) and inter-jurisdictional agencies to prepare and keep current a local or inter-jurisdictional emergency operations plan (LEOP) for its area. Local shelters are activated in accordance with the LEOP and are operated based on the local shelter plan(s). As shown in Figure 1, responsibility for mass care and sheltering varies among localities throughout the Commonwealth. Although most of the responsibility for staffing local shelters falls upon a local department of social services, it also is assigned to other types of agencies.

Each local or inter-jurisdictional agency is required to conduct a comprehensive review and revision of its LEOP. The revised LEOP should be adopted every four years to ensure that the plan remains relevant. VDEM tracks plan currency on the four-year cycle and contacts the local governments when the LEOPs are within a year of the due date for revision to offer assistance with the plan revision process. To verify the plan adoption by the local governing board, VDEM requests local jurisdictions to submit documentation to their region's Regional Planner. Of the 138 jurisdictions, 136 have a current LEOP. Of the two remaining, one is waiting on final adoption of the update by leadership and the other has requested and been granted an extension through VDEM.

³⁷ Information related to local shelters and capabilities is based on information received from VDEM and VDSS.

Lead Agency for Staffing

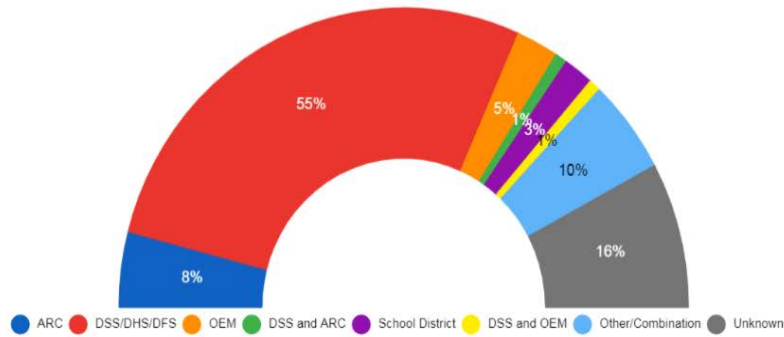


Figure 1 - Lead Agency for Staffing

Local Capabilities Assessment for Readiness

According to VDEM, emergency managers follow the principle of all-hazards planning. Accordingly, shelters are not classified by type of event, but a notation is made for those sites that are in known hazard zones such as radiological Emergency Planning Zones and flood or surge zones. Shelters also may be distinguished by their potential to be isolated by flooding, and their wind rating (to evaluate potential for use during a high wind event). Only those shelters that are along the coast are identified for use as pre- and/or post-landfall shelters.

In addition to the LEOP process, localities are required to submit broader data on their planning and preparedness to VDEM through the annual Local Capabilities Assessment for Readiness (LCAR) survey. The 2019 submission of the LCAR was the first year a shelter data set was included by each jurisdiction; data requested for each site included:

- VDEM region,
- Wind rating,
- Wind speed rating,
- Address and city/county,
- Availability of pet sheltering area,
- ADA compliance,
- General population capacity,
- Medical needs capacity, if any,
- Backup power availability,
- Generator availability,
- Lead agency for staffing, and
- Hurricane evacuation zone, if applicable.

Highlights

210,871
Total Reported Capacity

4,001
Total Reported Medical Capacity

614
Total # of Local Shelters

137
of Localities Reporting Data to LCAR

Figure 2 - Combined Shelter Data Highlights

Additionally, hurricane-vulnerable localities identified refuges-of-last-resort (ROLR) as part of the ongoing development of the *Hurricane Evacuation Study* (HES).³⁸ Refuges are locations that are not ideal for tropical storm and hurricane events but could be used as short-term refuges if necessary. The VDEM Strategic Planning Branch combined, validated, and summarized the data provided by localities in the 2019 LCAR survey, 2019 HES survey, 2016 Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Update, 2013 Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant report, and 2009 HES. This single document with data on local capabilities will be uploaded into WebEOC, the Commonwealth’s system of record for emergency management operations, through the Local Shelter Board.

Local Capability and Capacity Are Both Required

As previously noted for the IHEs that host state shelters, according to VDEM, localities may have “capacity” (identified physical shelter space to accommodate a specific number of evacuees), but may lack the “capability” (sufficient staff, materials, and services) to fully support, manage, and/or operate the shelter(s). Localities (particularly the larger ones) may have limited shelter supplies on-hand to support shelter operations and instead use contracts to support additional needs. For many jurisdictions, staffing is the most difficult resource need to meet and shortages significantly limit sheltering capability.

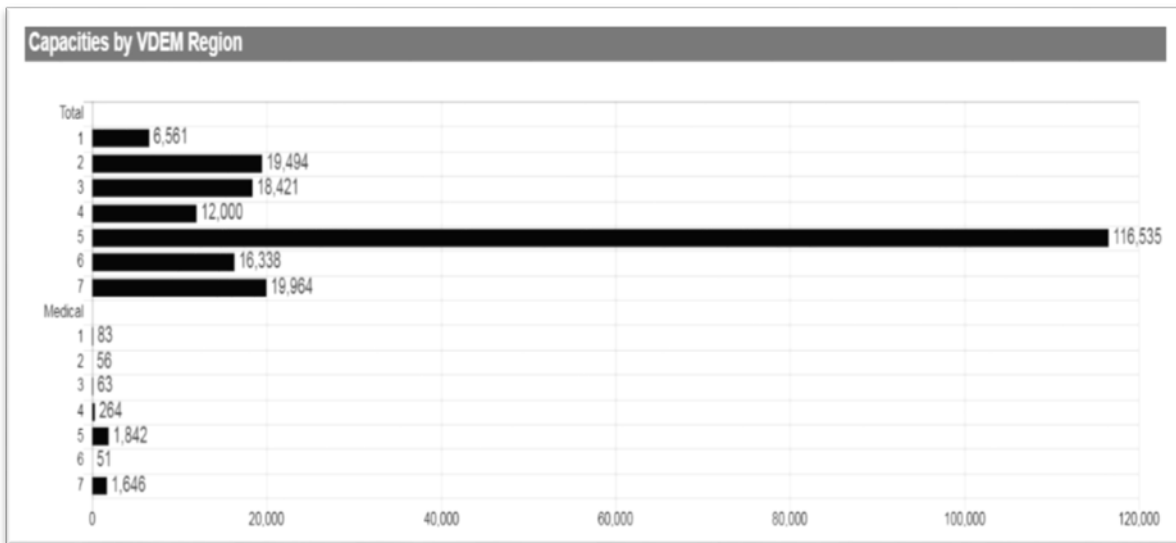


Figure 3 - Combined Shelter Data Capacity Summary by VDEM Region³⁹

³⁸ An HES is a FEMA-funded study, led by US Army Corps of Engineers and conducted by a contractor, CDM Smith, in collaboration with VDEM. The 2019 HES evaluated evacuation timelines for different hurricane scenarios. The State Coordinator believes the “capacity” reflected in Figure 2 is less than what was reported through the 2019 LCAR survey. However, the data reported by the localities was fully validated by VDEM staff.

³⁹ <https://www.vaemergency.gov/regions/>

Hurricane Risk Jurisdiction Gap Analysis Table					
Evacuation Zone	Zone Shelter Capacity	Available Shelter Capacity	Cumulative Shelter Demand	Remaining Shelter Capacity	Shelter Capability
Details	All shelters within the zone	All shelters w/in region but outside evacuating zones	10% of evacuating population	Does not include SCRS	Capability is the number of evacuees a jurisdiction can support given their staffing and resources.
A	5,201	275,397	22,969	252,428	29,267
B	22,004	253,393	49,636	203,757	28,108
C	49,488	203,905	84,310	119,595	26,293
D	87,370	116,535	105,791	10,744	18,021
Region 5 Inland	116,535				

Table 2 – Hurricane Risk Jurisdiction Gap Analysis

The gap analysis represented in Table 2 (above) and Figure 4 (below) indicates that even for an evacuation of zones A-D, the hurricane risk region has the capacity (space) to shelter their residents (column 5) but is limited by the capability (column 6) for all events requiring an evacuation of anything more than Zone A. For example, if zone A were evacuated the total local capacity to shelter those evacuees is 275,397 but the shelter capability is only 29,267. The data in Table 2 and Figure 4 (below) is based only upon shelters reported within zones A-D and Region 5 inland areas, and does not include shelters available statewide.

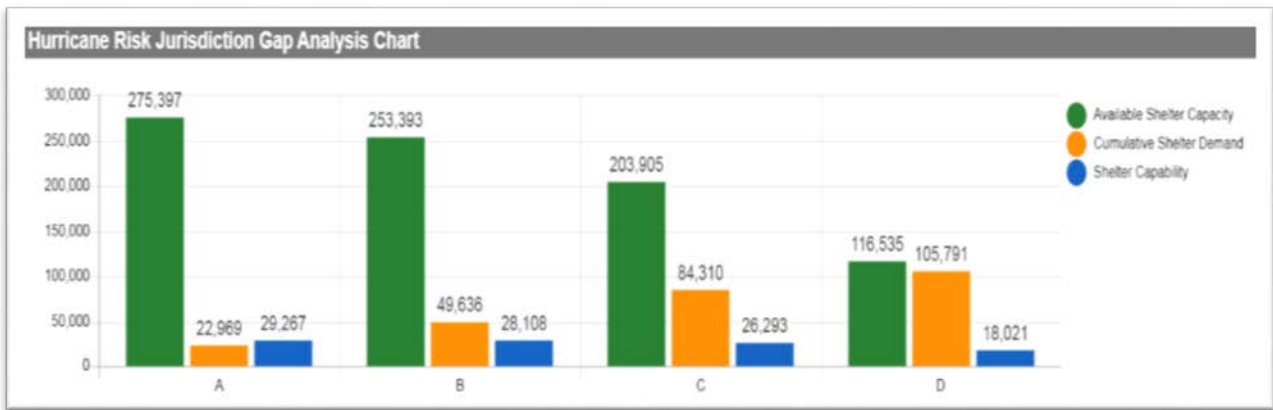


Figure 4 – Hurricane Risk Jurisdiction Gap Analysis

If staffing resources are not in place, localities can sometimes meet these deficiencies through resource requests to the VEST, the use of Statewide Mutual Aid (jurisdiction-to-jurisdiction sharing of resources), and/or the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (state-to-state sharing of resources). VDSS is assigned to staff state shelters and does not have the capacity also to staff local shelters. VDSS, in coordination with the Department of Human Resource Management, is reinitiating the Adjunct Emergency Workforce (the temporary reassignment of non-essential state staff to support emergency response and recovery activities) and this mechanism also could be used to support local shelter staffing needs in the future.

Current Shelter Data Repository Information

Local and state shelter boards act as repositories of sheltering data, but the usefulness and reliability of local data are affected by the ability of local staff to keep these data up-to-date. Refinements similar to those at the state level would help to address this situation.

Current Local Shelter Board

The existing WebEOC Local Shelter Board (Figure 5) acts as a web-based repository maintained by VDEM for local shelter data for a single event in the Commonwealth. These data are manually entered for the duration of the event by the jurisdiction, and can include all the information below if entered into the system by local authorities:

- Shelter Name, Address, and Jurisdiction
- Capacity and Occupancy
- Status
- Capabilities (Red Cross approved, medical capability, pet friendly)
- Type (evacuation assembly center, inland host shelter, cooling/warming center)
- Shelter Contact Information

Jurisdiction	Shelter Name	Capacity	Occupancy	Availability	Status	Facility Type	On Generator Power?	SMN	Pets	Last Update	Details	Update
Hampton City	Phenix Pre K-8	737	0	737	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/07/2019 10:21:56	Details	Update
Hampton City	Bethel High	388	0	388	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/07/2019 10:21:17	Details	Update
Norfolk City	Norview High School	230	0	230	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/07/2019 09:38:31	Details	Update
Virginia Beach City	Brickell Academy	600	15	585	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/07/2019 08:21:23	Details	Update
Virginia Beach City	Kellam High School	1200	9	1191	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/07/2019 08:21:01	Details	Update
Newport News City	Four Oaks Day Service Center	300	0	300	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/07/2019 07:47:28	Details	Update
Newport News City	Warwick High School	947	0	947	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/07/2019 07:46:48	Details	Update
Portsmouth City	I.C. Norcom High School	1200	0	1200	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 18:55:10	Details	Update
Chesapeake City	Western Branch Middle	1064	0	1064	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 18:47:16	Details	Update
Chesapeake City	Oscar Smith High	720	0	720	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 18:46:29	Details	Update
Norfolk City	Bayview Rec Center	130	0	130	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 17:38:04	Details	Update
Norfolk City	Campostella Stern Academy	250	0	250	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 17:35:57	Details	Update
Chesapeake City	Indian River Middle	1034	0	1034	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 17:27:58	Details	Update
Chesapeake City	Greenbrier Middle	312	0	312	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 17:27:13	Details	Update
Suffolk City	King's Fork High School	1000	0	1000	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/06/2019 15:58:54	Details	Update
Portsmouth City	Norcom High School	0	0	0	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/05/2019 14:19:17	Details	Update
Portsmouth City	Norcum High School	0	0	0	CLOSED	Shelter	No			09/05/2019 12:50:18	Details	Update

Figure 5 - WebEOC Local Shelter Board (current)

New Local Shelter Board Has Been Developed

VDEM, in coordination with the localities and VDSS, has developed and tested a revised local shelter board for WebEOC (Figure 5). VDEM inputs and maintains the combined, validated, and summarized shelter data provided by localities.⁴⁰ These data remain in the new

⁴⁰ The data was collected via the 2019 LCAR Survey, and HES survey, 2016 Hurricane Evacuation Coordination Update, the 2013 Regional Catastrophic Planning Grant Report and the 2009 HES survey.

board from event to event and will only require localities to manually update status and occupancy (or other necessary changes) for the specific event and time, thus reducing the effort required of localities. It is unknown, however, when the revised board will be made operational.

Local Shelter Data Are Not Real-Time and Updates Receive Lesser Priority

The accuracy and timeliness of the local shelter board data depend upon the availability of the local representative assigned to input these data. During response operations, local emergency operations centers (EOC) are focused on life safety, protecting critical infrastructure, and operating shelters. As a result, keeping the state WebEOC system up-to-date is a secondary responsibility. Although most localities make a genuine effort to update this information, they are not always able to keep it current as they focus on other important tasks. Local EOCs could, and many do, assign responsibility for updating this information to their local ESF-6.

Local shelter board data are not real-time; the VEST only expects status to be near real-time so that openings and closings can be accurately portrayed. Although occupancy is sometimes updated more than once daily, it is only reported by the VEST based on the American Red Cross standard of a “once daily midnight (heads in beds)” count. VEST ESF-6 reviews these data in relation to submitted local situation reports, conference call notes, media (including social), and other sources of information to identify any discrepancies and to request the locality update the board if necessary.

As discussed above, the SCR Shelter Plan states that state shelters should only be activated when, “local shelters are nearing capacity and/or have shown through data submission that they will be unable to meet the sheltering need on their own. (emphasis added).” The present lack of real-time data hinders this assessment.

State Shelter Board

A similar board exists for state shelters and is only visible to the VEST (Figure 6). This board is manually updated by VEST ESF-6 through direct contact with state shelter managers. Unlike the local shelter board, the data in this board are maintained from one event to another, and only the status and occupancy (or any other data that may have changed for the site) is updated. State shelter information is disseminated through the Joint Information Center (JIC) via news briefings, VDEM’s event-specific web page, and social media.

Name	Jurisdiction	College/University	Status	Gen Pop Availability	SMN Availability	Pet Availability	Pet Outside Availability	RoLR Availability	View/Edit
Map CNU - Freeman Center	Newport News City	Christopher Newport University	Closed	2178	72	0	0	0	Select
Map W&M - McCormack-Nagelsen Tennis Center	Williamsburg City	College of William and Mary	Closed	1454	70	0	0	0	Select
Map UNAVAILABLE - VSDB - Lewellyn Gym	Staunton City		Closed	254	18	0	0	0	Select
Map LU - Willet Hall	Farmville Town	Longwood University	Closed	601	22	0	0	0	Select
Map NVCC, Annandale Campus, CE Building	Fairfax County	Northern Virginia Community College	Closed	544	14	0	0	0	Select
Map UVA - North Grounds Recreation Center	Charlottesville City	University of Virginia	Closed	416	54	0	0	0	Select
Map UVA - Aquatics and Fitness Center	Charlottesville City	University of Virginia	Closed	624	0	0	0	0	Select
Map UVA - Slaughter Recreation Center	Charlottesville City	University of Virginia	Closed	822	0	0	0	0	Select
Map UVA - Memorial Gymnasium	Charlottesville City	University of Virginia	Closed	594	0	0	0	0	Select
Map VCU - Smeal Center	Richmond City	Virginia Commonwealth University	Closed	1658	0	0	0	0	Select

Figure 6 - WebEOC State Shelter Board

Public Facing Information Could Be Enhanced Through a Web-Based Application

Publically-available sheltering information is currently limited, but could be improved through use of single, statewide integrated system. The information could then be provided to the public through a mobile app.

Publically-Available Information Regarding Shelters Is Limited

The JIC delivers broad, not detailed, messaging regarding local sheltering and directs the public to local media outlets for further information. State shelter information is disseminated through the JIC via news briefings, VDEM’s event-specific web page, and social media. VDEM has requested \$250,000 in this budget cycle for public information and messaging, to provide the ability to educate the public on the tiered evacuation zone, and on preparing for hurricane risk.

2-1-1 Virginia is a service of VDSS, and is provided in partnership with the Council of Community Services. Through an MOA between VDSS and VDEM, *2-1-1 Virginia* serves as the Commonwealth’s public call center for disasters. Summary data on shelters (local and state) are provided via WebEOC to *2-1-1 Virginia* for dissemination to the public. The American Red Cross also disseminates information about shelters it operates through channels similar to the JIC and through the National Shelter System.

Currently, there is no single Virginia public-facing website or app that provides emergency information such as available shelters. Previously, VDEM maintained the ReadyVA app, which provided emergency preparedness, response, and information but did not provide shelter information. The application was taken offline due to cost and a lack of users. As a result, WebEOC is the only statewide repository of sheltering information, but it is only available to state and local emergency managers. As noted above, the quality of the sheltering information depends upon the ability of local emergency managers to update the data, therefore, the data within it is limited in its real-time usability.

Both the JIC and *2-1-1 Virginia* use these data to provide public information; however, the JIC shelter information is limited to broad summary information for the state and *2-1-1 Virginia* does not have the details needed to assist in specific, individual disaster responses. Although the VEST ESF-6 works diligently to reconcile the local shelter board data on WebEOC, the data at times are insufficient to meet the full information needs of the caller and are not timely in accounting for space availability.

Sheltering Information Could Be Improved by Adopting a Single Statewide System with a Web-Based Repository

The shelter data in WebEOC could be improved through use of a single statewide shelter management and registration system. Currently, the Commonwealth does not have such a system. A single system would allow localities to directly register shelter residents into a system, and enable WebEOC to automatically pull and display real-time shelter data. This would eliminate the need for localities to manually report and update that data, and allow WebEOC to become a more reliable statewide repository of information. Real-time shelter data from WebEOC could then be displayed on a public-facing website. Other benefits of a single, integrated system include increased ability to maintain accountability for evacuees on government transport, better management of shelter supplies through improved alignment of headcount, inventories, and site allocation.

VDSS has identified a registration system used by Texas that integrates with WebEOC and can be customized to meet the Commonwealth's needs. The State of Texas offered Virginia free access to its internally-developed Emergency Tracking Network (ETN), and VDSS, VDEM, and Texas are partnering in this project. VDEM has officially requested the code and Texas is accommodating this request.

The integration of ETN into Virginia's WebEOC would allow the system to automatically access shelter registration data instead of relying on local emergency managers to manually enter and update data. If local emergency managers use the system appropriately, shelter data in WebEOC will be complete, accurate, and real-time. That same real-time data would be available to *2-1-1 Virginia* for dissemination to the public via phone and to the JIC to provide to the public via media outlets.

Establishing this system in Virginia requires funding support for integration of shelter registration into WebEOC and enhancements to develop other shelter management features needed that are not developed by Texas. The requested funding amounts are:

- Emergency shelter management and registration software: \$370,000 in FY 2021 and \$150,000 in FY 2022 and each year thereafter. These funds would support IT technical requirements for integrating the software into WebEOC, modifications to remove Texas data and insert Virginia-specific counties and cities, testing the software, and developing and delivering training statewide on the new software.
- Public-facing mobile app to display shelter data: \$750,000 in FY 2021 and \$200,000 in FY 2022 and each year thereafter.

In a separate budget request, VDSS is seeking funding to enhance and expand *2-1-1 Virginia* and to support the implementation of new initiatives that will further enhance these

services. During Hurricane Florence, citizens were directed to contact *2-1-1 Virginia*. This incident caused a spike in call volume from potential evacuees for “Know Your Zone” information and made it evident that without enhancements the system may not have sufficient capacity to handle the current level of demand. The identified funding amount is \$1,341,365 in FY 2021 and \$1,971,089 in FY 2022. Additionally, VDEM has budget request in the amount of \$250,000 in FY 2021 and \$250,000 in FY 2022 for public information and messaging related to “Know Your Zone.”

Another potential solution, the *Gov2Go* app, appears to be a direct alert/notification system that pushes information to registered users. However, local governments already have alert and notification systems that are being used to push information. Moreover, unless the *Gov2Go* app can integrate into WebEOC, it does not appear to be a viable solution at this time.

Recommendations

- Funding could be provided to implement a single, statewide shelter registration system that integrates with WebEOC.
- Sheltering data could be improved by mandating local use of a designated local shelter registration system, which could be integrated within WebEOC. Although a new integrated system may eliminate the need for local users to manually enter shelter data, localities could choose not to use this new registration system. These localities would still need to manually enter and update shelter data when they are in the midst of managing an emergency.
- VDEM has reviewed the capabilities of other states, particularly North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida and other states that frequently utilize shelters during emergencies. VDEM should identify resources and statutory authority for tracking and report real-time (or near real-time) shelter availability.
- Funding could be provided to reactivate and improve ReadyVA or to develop a new emergency app for the general public that includes shelter information both at the state and local level.