



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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January 18, 2017

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable L. Scott Lingamfelter, Chair, House Militia, Police and Public Safety Committee
The Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr., Chair, Senate Committee on General Laws and Technology

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

FROM: Jeffrey D. Stern, Ph.D.

SUBJECT: Virginia Department of Emergency Management 2016 Virginia Emergency Support Team Exercise Report

In accordance with § 44-146.17:2 of the *Code of Virginia*, I am pleased to submit the Virginia Department of Emergency Management 2016 Virginia Emergency Support Team Exercise Report on behalf of Governor McAuliffe. Please contact me if you have questions or need additional information concerning this report.

JDS/swm

Enclosure

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

2016 Virginia Emergency Support Team Exercise Report

§ 44-146.17:2

December 2016

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Preface

An Act to amend the Code of Virginia by adding a section numbered 44-146.17:2, relating to the Emergency Services and Disaster Law; annual statewide drill, was approved April 12, 2004 (Title 44 - Military and Emergency Laws). It reads as follows,

The Governor shall conduct an annual statewide drill on response to a large-scale disaster including, but not limited to, electrical power outages. Such drill shall include the participation of local governments, affected state agencies, public utilities, law-enforcement agencies, and other entities as determined by the Governor. The Governor shall submit a report to the General Assembly on the results of the drill by November 30 of each year. The report shall be delivered to the chairs of the House Committee on Militia, Police, and Public Safety and the Senate Committee on General Laws.

This report describes the objectives of the drill, conducted in March 2016, and provides information on how the exercise was designed. In addition, it provides the outcomes of the drill, including opportunities for improvement.

Executive Summary

The annual VESTEX is intended to prepare the Commonwealth of Virginia for potential threats by measuring current capabilities, policies, and procedures against the requirements to properly mitigate, respond to, and recover from man-made and natural disasters impacting the Commonwealth. The overarching purpose of the 2016 VESTEX was to conduct a blended approach to training and exercises that engaged the “Whole Community” with the Commonwealth; and built on the scenario posed in the 2015 VERTEX series, thus setting the basis for transitioning to the phases of recovery from a hurricane.

The 2016 Virginia Emergency Support Team Exercise (VESTEX) was conducted March 22–24, 2016 with 126 participants from various state agencies, FEMA Region III, Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, private sector and the localities of Chesapeake, Richmond, and Newport News. Adjunct instructors from the FEMA Emergency Management Institute and subject matter experts from within Virginia designed and supervised this exercise. The exercise, tailored for Virginia-specific hazards, policies, and issues, placed emphasis on short-term to intermediate recovery issues, framed within the context of a Category 3 hurricane having impacted Virginia. It was a continuation of the scenario played out during the 2015 Virginia Emergency Response Team Exercise. Through a combination of classroom instruction, planning sessions, and exercises, participants developed an understanding of their respective roles during recovery, as well as the resources available at the state and federal level to assist localities during recovery.

The course methodologies of classroom instruction, planning sessions, and exercises allowed for a structured decision-making in learning, yet realistic, environment. A key outcome of this Integrated Emergency Management Course was to provide participants with the ability to carry out their respective functions related to disaster recovery and assist with making the transition recovery. These actions allow the Commonwealth to position itself better for long-term recovery.

The following key themes for improvement emerged from the course discussions and exercise outputs:

- Identify and determine when provisions and waivers in the emergency declaration stop and determine provisions for long-term issues such as waivers for the Certificate of Public Need process for hospital and health care infrastructure rebuilding.
- Establish a long-term housing concept and identify all partners; conduct follow-up on planning meetings; and conduct a tabletop exercise focusing on the housing aspects of a catastrophic event.
- Develop and conduct training across the state to educate localities on recovery; how organization occurs at the state level; and how interdependencies such as water/wastewater and other critical infrastructure function.

2016 VIRGINIA EMERGENCY SUPPORT TEAM EXERCISE REPORT

SECTION 1: TRAINING/EXERCISE OVERVIEW

Exercise Name	Commonwealth of Virginia National Disaster Recovery Framework Integrated Emergency Management Course and Recovery Tabletop Exercise (TTX) – Virginia Emergency Support Team Exercise (VESTEX) 2016.
Exercise Date	March 22–24, 2016
Scope	The Integrated Emergency Management Courses (IEMCs) are a multi-day exercise-based training activity that places emergency operations center (EOC) personnel under realistic crisis situations within a structured learning environment. IEMCs build awareness and skills needed to develop and implement policies, plans, and procedures in an EOC to protect life and property through applications of sound emergency management principles in all phases of emergency management.
Mission Area(s)	Recovery
Core Capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning• Operational Coordination• Housing• Community Resilience• Economic Recovery• Long-Term Vulnerability Reduction• Infrastructure Systems
Threat or Hazard	Category 3 Hurricane
Sponsor	U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), FEMA Region III, Emergency Management Institute, and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)

OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Describe the roles and responsibilities of VDEM, partners, and stakeholders during the establishment, support, and maintenance of a Joint Field Office (JFO) for recovery and restoration to include organizational, communication, and decision-making lines of authority, based on the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP), Code of Virginia, and the Stafford Act. (**Core Capabilities: *Planning, Operational Coordination***)

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Objective 2: Examine the ability of the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST) to coordinate and align recovery planning efforts with local, state, federal, and private sector partners in the restoration of critical infrastructure, including the mobilization, deployment, sustainment, and prioritization of resources in accordance with the COVEOP. (Core Capabilities: *Planning Operational Coordination, Community Resilience*)

Objective 3: Examine the roles, responsibilities, legal authorities, and constraints of the VEST as it relates to recovery and restoration prioritization, decision-making, and access to financial resources in partnership with local jurisdictions, private sector entities, and federal/Department of Defense stakeholders. (Core Capabilities: *Operational Coordination, Long-Term Vulnerability Reduction*)

Objective 4: Evaluate the role and responsibilities, resource requirements, key decisions, and legal authorities VDEM and other state agencies will be faced with, in partnership with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters and local jurisdictions, regarding the transition from sheltering to short-term housing strategies and the impacts of decision-making on local economic recovery. (Core Capabilities: *Operational Coordination, Housing, Economic Recovery*)

Objective 5: Validate the roles and responsibilities of local, state, federal, and private sector partners related to debris management including financial responsibility, subcontract limitations and management, public and responder health and safety, and long-term environmental health impacts. (Core Capabilities: *Planning, Operational Coordination, Economic Recovery, Infrastructure Systems*)

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NUMBER OF ATTENDEES

126 exercise participants

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The following federal, state, and local agencies attended the 2016 VESTEX Integrated Emergency Management Course and Tabletop Exercise:

Federal Agencies/Private Non-Profits	State Agencies	Localities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FEMA Region III • FEMA Emergency Management Institute • Department of Homeland Security • United States Air Force • United States Army • United States Navy • Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virginia Department of Aviation • Virginia Department of Social Services • Virginia Department of Transportation • Virginia Information Technology Agency • Virginia State Police • Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services • Virginia Department of Emergency Management • Virginia Department of Environmental Quality • Virginia Department of Fire Programs • Virginia Department of Forestry • Virginia Department of General Services • Virginia Department of Health • Virginia Department of Health-Office of Emergency Medical Services • Virginia Department of Health-Office of Drinking Water • Virginia Department of Military Affairs • Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation • Virginia Department of Aviation • Office of the Attorney General • Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy • Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services • State Corporation Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Chesapeake • City of Newport News • City of Richmond

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SECTION 2: SCENARIO

Module 1: Initial Recovery- 10 days Post Landfall

June 28, 2015

Hurricane Grace, a Category 3 hurricane, made landfall causing catastrophic damage to North Carolina, Virginia, and coastal areas of Maryland and Delaware before turning back into the Atlantic Ocean. In Virginia, the Hampton Roads area was hit the hardest with maximum sustained winds of approximately 120 mph and heavy storm surge causing severe flooding. Debris amounts are still being calculated, but are expected to be historical. Utilities have been severely affected and are expected to take weeks to months to repair. The need for safety inspections of roads, bridges, and buildings seem insurmountable.

KEY ISSUES

- A Category 3 hurricane has made landfall in the Hampton Roads region causing widespread damage with the most intense damage occurring in the Southside Hampton Roads geographic area.
- Impacting, approximately 250,000 residents and thousands of homes damaged or destroyed. State-Managed Shelters have been running at or near capacity.
- Critical infrastructure throughout the region has been damaged including utilities, water lines/treatment facilities, communication infrastructure, rail lines, aviation, and the port.
- Demand on public safety resources is substantial and complicated due to healthcare infrastructure closures.
- Public information dissemination has been challenging and debris management remains a significant issue.
- A Joint Preliminary Damage Assessment has been completed, a Presidential Declaration has been granted, which includes federal assistance programs, and a Joint Field Office is in the process of being stood up.

Module 2: Short-Term Recovery- 21 days Post Landfall

July 19, 2015

It has been approximately 21 days since Hurricane Grace made landfall and all major lifesaving response operations have concluded. The State Coordinating Officer has directed Emergency Support Function (ESF) 14 to integrate into the Joint Field Office (JFO), which has been operational for 10 days. Applicant briefings for Public Assistance (PA) are slated to begin today. The Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) remains operational and continues to focus on response needs.

2016 VIRGINIA EMERGENCY SUPPORT TEAM EXERCISE REPORT

The latest weather report from the National Weather Service is promising, with light winds around 10 mph, sunny skies, and temperatures in the mid-to-upper 80s for the next seven days, which should greatly benefit recovery operations.

KEY ISSUES

- A permanent JFO has been established and ESF 14 staff has transitioned from the VEOC to the JFO.
- Debris continues to impede key roadways slowing critical infrastructure repairs.
- Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel and Port remain closed.
- The population at State-Managed Shelters is slowly declining; however, the remaining population is growing restless and is demanding temporary housing.
- Accesses to some residential properties and commercial businesses have been granted outside the most heavily impacted areas.

Module 3: Intermediate Recovery- 45 Post Landfall

August 12, 2015

Due to the severity of the disaster, all six Federal Recovery Support Functions have been staffed at the JFO and both state and local representatives have integrated into the JFO operational structure. State-Managed Shelter populations have continued to decline, and some shelters have merged operations. It is estimated that 200,000 customers still do not have electricity. Fire and law enforcement officials have also found evidence of homeowners and businesses burning their debris piles, which has been causing additional, environmental and safety issues for the already overwhelmed public safety units.

Major regional employers, local schools, and railroad operations are still not operational and Public Assistance applications from local governments have been overwhelming JFO staff. Two Disaster Recovery Centers have been open for roughly two weeks and are helping thousands of survivors. Small businesses have also been demanding support and have felt overlooked given the priorities to get major economic hubs up and operational. Port recovery and cleanup have progressed; however, due to the damage to supporting infrastructure, port operations are not expected to return to pre-hurricane levels for another 90–120 days.

Fraudulent insurance representatives and make-shift home repair companies are knocking on doors to offer services. Price gouging is also evident across the region. In many cases, prices for plywood and general home building supplies have tripled. People are desperate, particularly the elderly, to have their homes repaired and are willing to pay someone up front to do the job.

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Riverside Regional Medical Center is now operational; however, both the Hampton VA Medical Center and Chesapeake Regional Medical Center are still closed. People have been without work for over a month now as their employers have not been able to reopen (or do not plan to rebuild). Even though their homes may not have been impacted, many have thus been hit hard financially. Unemployment is expected to spike. The Governor is asking for ways to provide employment to those who have permanently or temporarily lost their jobs or need emergency funds for living expenses.

Soil samples along rivers in the region (in some cases 1–2 miles from the banks of the river) are showing high levels of heavy metals. Some experts are recommending that consumers should avoid agriculture and seafood products from the region. There are conflicting reports with some saying the food products are safe. The media attention on this topic suggests that commercial facilities in the region are the cause of the soil contamination.

In a few rare cases, elected officials have contradicted recovery priorities by making promises to support their constituents, as they visit the impacted flood areas. Key regional employers, Stihl, Wells Fargo, and GEICO are in conversations with their state legislative representatives as their corporate offices are considering relocation and merging services with other branches in the Midwest.

KEY ISSUES:

- All six Recovery Support Functions are staffed at the JFO with federal, state and local representatives.
- Major regional employers are still not operational; however, some critical infrastructure is slowly coming back online.
- Fraudulent home repair scams are being reported. Two Disaster Recovery Centers have opened.
- Soil samples indicate high levels of heavy metals and concerns regarding the food supply are being picked up by the media.

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SECTION 3: EXERCISE DESIGN

For the 2016 State Level Exercise, VDEM chose to embark on the path of further discussions related to recovery. This decision was made in part as a follow up to the 2015 VERTEX Tabletop where we stopped our exercise play at 10 days after the impacts of a catastrophic hurricane on the Commonwealth. Additionally, through discussions at the Hampton Roads Housing Recovery Workshop and discussions with localities throughout the Commonwealth, recovery became a top capability chosen for further training and exercises in Virginia. Therefore, to best accomplish this, VDEM chose to conduct a FEMA Integrated Emergency Management Course related to the broader aspects of recovery.

For 2016, VDEM decided the limited knowledge base of the wider audience in areas of recovery was better served if we conducted the 2016 VESTEX (which replaced VERTEX) more in the style of a training course with embedded exercises and activities as opposed to a functional or tabletop exercise as in years past. This allowed for the playing field to be leveled and the knowledge base to be expanded to the best extent possible as a team, or as the VEST. Recovery is a broad and challenging subject for us to delve into as a group; this course was designed in order to teach and adapt plans, policies, staffing, and procedures in a group setting. The 2016 VESTEX provided a collaborative learning environment that will set the stage for other necessary changes and processes adaptations.

The 2016 VESTEX/IEMC course and exercise design was as follows:

DATE	TOPIC
Tuesday, March 22, 2016	• Course Welcome and Introductions
	• National Disaster Recovery Framework Overview
	• FEMA Region III-Regional, All-Hazards Recovery Plan Overview
	• Overview of Recovery Support Functions (RSF) and Transition from Emergency Support Functions (ESF)
Wednesday, March 23, 2016	• Activity-Transitioning from Response to Recovery
	• Joint Field Office Overview
	• Individual and Public Assistance in Recovery
	• Legal Issues in Recovery
	• Tabletop Exercise-Module I: Initial Recovery (E+10 days Post Landfall)
Thursday, March 24, 2016	• Tabletop Exercise-Module II- Short-Term Recovery (E+21 days Post Landfall)
	• Debris Management Considerations in Recovery
	• Housing in Recovery
	• Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOAD)
	• Tabletop Exercise-Module III- Intermediate Recovery (E+45 Post Landfall)
	• Locality Planning for Recovery
	• Role of Mitigation in Recovery
• Group Discussion Case Study: Long-Term Recovery Planning and Next Steps	

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

Protecting the population is a primary responsibility of government, and fulfilling this responsibility depends on the abilities of emergency personnel to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond, and recover from disasters. It means developing and maintaining a high standard of readiness and ability to function effectively under crisis conditions. Emergency personnel can attain readiness either through managing emergencies or through participating in exercises. The Integrated Emergency Management Courses, offered by the FEMA Emergency Management Institute, place public officials and emergency personnel in a realistic crisis within a structured learning environment. Early in the course, an emergency scenario begins to unfold in sequence with classroom-style lectures, discussions, and small-group workshops. As the course progresses, scenario-related events of increasing complexity, threat, and pressure occur. Participants develop emergency policies, plans, and procedures to ensure an effective response. The course culminates in an emergency exercise designed to test participant knowledge, awareness, flexibility, leadership, decision-making, and interpersonal skills under rigorous pressure in the EOC environment.

Participants are challenged to use the new ideas, skills, and abilities in addition to their own knowledge and experience. In this way, the Integrated Emergency Management Course allows individuals to rehearse their real-life roles in a realistic emergency situation, while at the same time identifying additional planning needs. The exercise successfully captured many strengths and areas of improvement that will be used to improve state, local, non-governmental, and commercial emergency plans and develop future training and exercise efforts.