



Virginia Department of
Emergency Management



ANNUAL REPORT

2023

VDEM

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FROM THE STATE COORDINATOR



Shawn Talmadge
*State Coordinator of
Emergency Management*

It is with immense pride and a profound sense of accomplishment that I address you today as the State Coordinator of Emergency Management.

Over the past year, our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of the residents of the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is my privilege to provide you with an overview of our accomplishments and the impactful services we have rendered to our great state in this year's Annual Report.

VDEM has continued to strengthen our commitment to emergency preparedness and response through the implementation of a new agency strategic plan focused on people and culture, internal operations, policy and mandates, and customer impact. Our vision is to provide consistent excellence in delivery of innovative and effective emergency management support and coordination through industry leading practices, professionalism, and collaborative engagement for all stakeholders.

Our dedication to public safety and service is reflected in our unwavering commitment to training and education. The VDEM team has organized over 250 training sessions and workshops aimed at enhancing the preparedness of our local emergency managers, first responders, and volunteers. These efforts have culminated in the certification of emergency management professionals across the state, ensuring that Virginia is well-equipped with a skilled and competent workforce.

The achievements of VDEM extend to our support for disaster-impacted communities. Throughout the past year, we have been at the forefront of providing critical aid and resources to Virginians and our sister states affected by natural disasters and other emergencies. From severe flooding to the arrival of political prisoners and everything in between, we are ready to respond at a moment's notice.

We should take pride in our ability to facilitate a swift and effective response, mitigating the impact of these disasters on the lives and livelihoods of our fellow Virginians. In FY 23 VDEM processed over \$200M in disaster and non-disaster grants to localities and state agencies.

In my second year as State Coordinator, the VDEM team has played key roles in the following events, some of which were record-breaking and historic.

- Nicaraguan political prisoner release
- Tornados
- Severe flooding
- Emergency Management Assistance Compact requests across the country including Kentucky, Hawaii, and Texas.
- Tropical Storm Ophelia
- Avian influenza outbreak
- Numerous large-scale festivals and events in support of localities
- State of the Union support
- Daily hazardous materials and search and rescue missions

Collaborative efforts have improved coordination and communication during emergencies, enabling a more efficient response and recovery process. Our engagement with local and tribal governments has been instrumental in building a resilient Virginia, capable of withstanding a multitude of challenges.

I would also like to highlight our extensive public outreach and education initiatives. The VDEM has been relentless in its efforts to educate the public on the importance of disaster preparedness, resilience, and the significance of being a ready and resilient Virginia. Through our preparedness campaigns, and the work of our Partners in Preparedness program, we have reached thousands of Virginians, empowering them to take an active role in their own safety and that of their communities.

Our team works tirelessly to protect the Commonwealth from current and emerging threats. **VDEM is diligently carrying out planning, preparedness, and mitigation efforts to protect against increasing threats by nation state actors attempting to destabilize our way of life by attacking our cybernetworks.** As nation state actors become more sophisticated, tactics will become more complex. **VDEM is planning for the future now because we know it's not a matter of *if*, it's a matter of *when*.**

I am immensely proud of VDEM's accomplishments over the past year. Our tireless efforts in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery have undoubtedly made the Commonwealth a best-in-class community to live, work, and thrive. As we look toward the future, we remain committed to further improving our services, expanding our partnerships, and ensuring the resilience of Virginia.



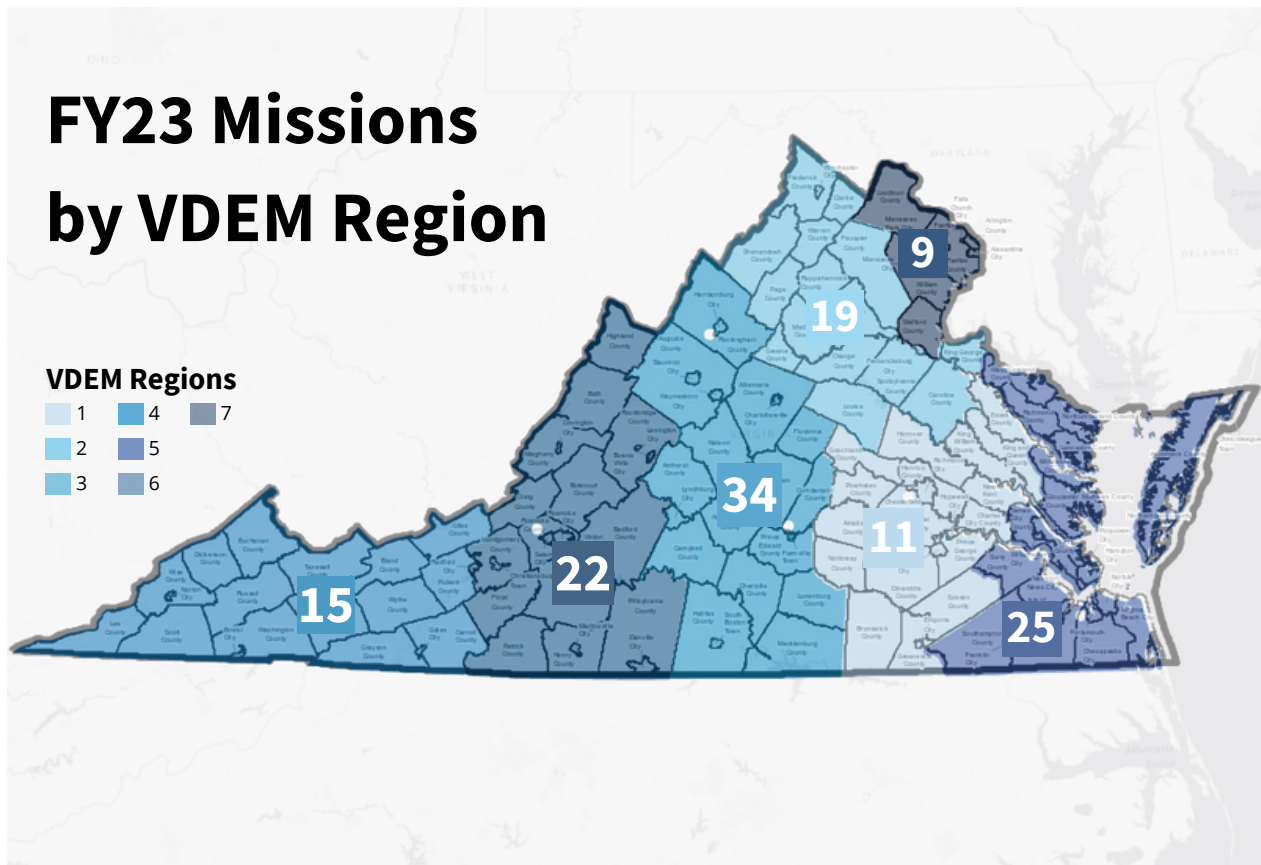
SEARCH AND RESCUE

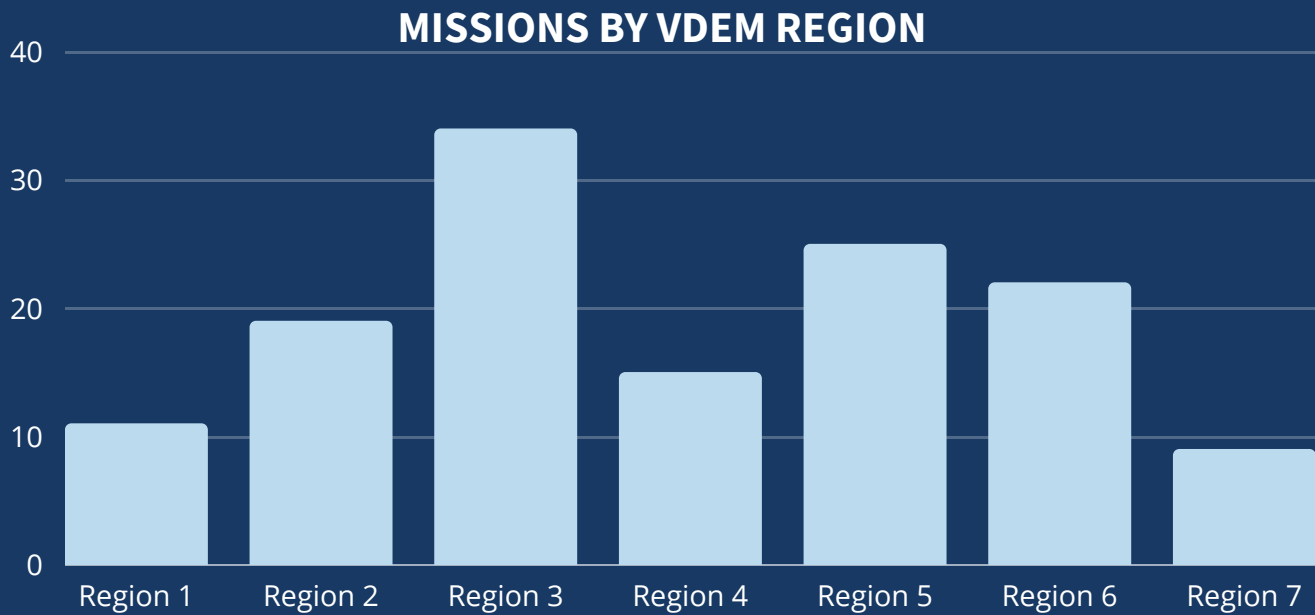
The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.1:

1. The current readiness of Virginia's search and rescue efforts.

VDEM has coordinated with the Virginia Search and Rescue Council (VASARCO) to provide wilderness and lost person search and rescue (SAR) since 1985. The program by VASARCO includes 20 recognized volunteer search and rescue teams with 500 members across the Commonwealth. VDEM supports the program with three professional SAR officers. SAR personnel also assist law enforcement with the search for evidence and missing homicide victims.

In FY23, the program executed 135 missions at the request of localities, who asked for specialized SAR resources coordinated through VDEM. VDEM's ability to utilize volunteer resources is critical to the success of the SAR program and missions across the Commonwealth. Virginia's SAR Program is highly regarded throughout the nation and is considered best-in-class in the training and coordination of search and rescue efforts.





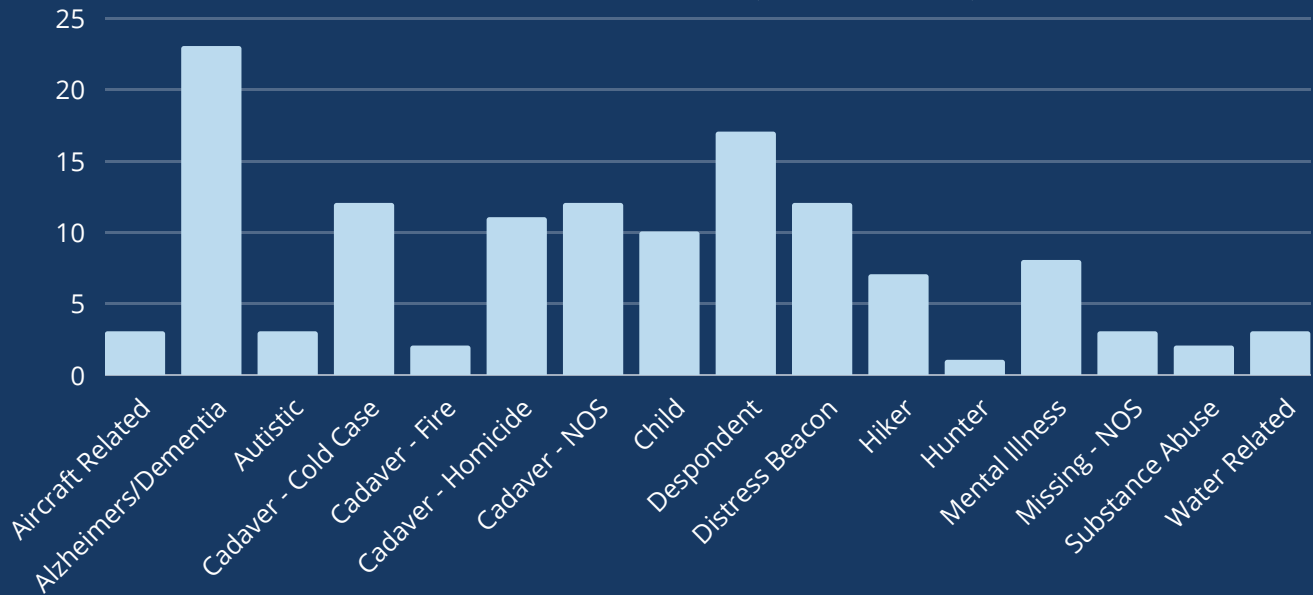
The SAR Program provides training, administrative support, and operational coordination for search and rescue efforts statewide.

The SAR program provides specialized expertise in search theory, search management, and specialized resources such as search canines and operations in wilderness and austere environments throughout the Commonwealth. Training is provided to stakeholders by highly experienced SAR practitioners. Administrative support and training content are based on consensus standards aligned with best practices and national standards and are developed in coordination with the Virginia Search and Rescue Council before being adopted by VDEM. Operational coordination is provided through SAR coordinators and volunteer search mission coordinators on search incidents upon request of the locality.

Search and rescue operations are divided into four mission specialties, according to the conditions and environment of where or how the incident has occurred:

- **Aeronautical missions** – include downed or missing/overdue civil aviation aircraft missions, and emergency calls for help broadcast through an emergency distress beacon (EDB). An EDB might originate from aircraft, marine craft, or a personal locator beacon.
- **Inland/wilderness missions** – comprise the bulk of the agency's response in support of local jurisdictions to help locate a lost or missing person. On average, the agency will support 80 to 90 missions per year throughout the Commonwealth. Missing children and wandering Alzheimer's/dementia subjects comprise the top two demographics of missing person missions.
- **Marine/waterborne missions** – include distressed/sinking vessels, boating incidents, flooding, and swiftwater rescue incidents, which often result in a drowning.
- **Urban search and rescue/technical rescue** – include major events with significant impact to multiple citizens, which may result in victims being stranded or trapped in collapsed structures or fallen debris. These events may include wide-area searches such as in the aftermath of a hurricane.

FY 22 MISSION TYPES (135 CASES)



SAR PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

VDEM's SAR program consists of a Chief of Search and Rescue who serves as the program manager, along with two regionally based search and rescue officers in the eastern and western parts of the Commonwealth. Additionally, the agency employs 25 highly skilled adjunct instructors who assist in the delivery of training classes statewide.

The SAR Program is organized into 11 program areas:

- **Program Management** – VDEM ensures that the normal operations of the program, including response to missions, are timely and appropriate to the needs of the localities.
- **Training (supported by the VDEM Training, Education, and Exercise Department)** – VDEM provides specialized training to police, fire-rescue, EMS, emergency managers, volunteer search and rescue responders, and others who might have a duty to respond to a search and rescue emergency.
- **Virginia Emergency Support Team (Team (Emergency Support Function #9 Search and Rescue) –** VDEM coordinates with local, state, and federal agencies to form a response to both man-made and natural disasters.
- **Search and Rescue** – The search and rescue program provides a coordinated response to lost or missing persons throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia, utilizing approximately 500 trained volunteers.
- **Search Management** – VDEM and its member search and rescue groups provide mission management to search and rescue events as requested.
- **Search and Rescue Canine** – The search and rescue program provides canine teams for every mission, including live find and human remains detection missions.
- **Search and Rescue Equine** – The equine search and rescue teams provide a means to search large areas quickly and efficiently and can be used to evacuate a subject if they are able to sit in a saddle.

- **Search and Rescue Tracking** – Trackers, or human-trackers, are used throughout SAR missions to follow a path made by the subject, or to simply age a clue for its appropriateness to the mission.
- **Wilderness Rescue** – Several teams within the search and rescue program provide expertise in technical rescue operations involving rock climbers or an evacuation over technical terrain.
- **Cave Search and Rescue** – The program’s cave rescue teams respond to those requests for assistance when subjects are lost underground, or need to be extricated from a cave.
- **Vehicle Based Search** - Vehicle based searches are comprised of UTVs and ATVs to be used during the search for lost or missing persons, and the evacuation of those persons.

MISSION RESOLUTIONS



VASARCO, VOLUNTEER GROUPS AND OTHER AGENCIES

The Virginia SAR Program has an active relationship with Virginia Search and Rescue Council (VASARCO). The Virginia Search and Rescue Council is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that represents the collective voice of the Virginia SAR community. VASARCO fosters communication between its volunteer organizations and VDEM. VASARCO also helps develop and coordinate the SAR system in Virginia by interpreting guidance from VDEM and ensuring compliance within volunteer teams. Membership within VASARCO is mandatory for teams who seek and maintain a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with VDEM. Quarterly VASARCO meetings, regular committee meetings, and monthly VASARCO Board/VDEM SAR Program conference calls promote a cooperative environment and provide an avenue for teams to share information and work collaboratively to address and resolve issues that affect the teams. VASARCO membership is diverse and encompasses teams seeking a new MOU, SAR groups that have a long history of service to the Commonwealth, as well as authorities that have jurisdiction over SAR and other response partners.

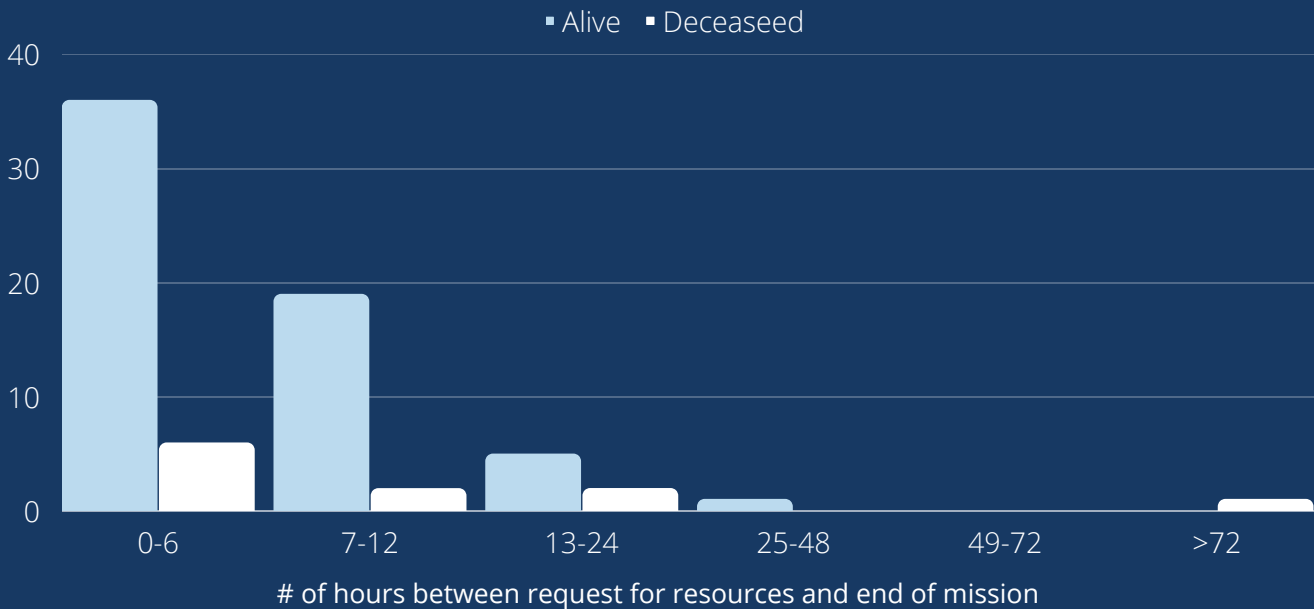
STATE SAR STANDARDS

The Virginia SAR standards outline the process and procedures for achieving and maintaining necessary certifications. As outlined in Code of Virginia § 44-146.18 (G) (4)(7), trained SAR assets must have obtained a minimum level of training in order to respond for a certain function, whether it be ground searcher or a management asset. The standards also detail what is required for teams seeking a new MOU.

A major reorganization and revision of the current standards continued in FY23 in order to ensure all standards are current and align with industry standards such as American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and the standards of response partners within the Commonwealth and national partners such as National Park Service and the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR).

The Commonwealth’s SAR standards are based on core capabilities addressing functions that each team is expected to perform. Certifications and courses are based on competencies, behaviors, and tasks for individual practitioners.

OUTCOME BASED ON QUICK ARRIVAL OF TRAINED RESOURCES



TRAINING PROGRAM

Training programs continued across the Commonwealth in FY23 due to sustained funding for the SAR Training Program. Due to its success, the SAR program often receives requests for Virginia’s training materials and practices from other states, localities, other organizations throughout the United States and some international locations. The SAR program employs capable instructors who are respected, highly skilled leaders and practitioners within the Virginia SAR community. The training program provides a tiered system of classes and certifications for first responders and SAR practitioners, as well as other courses and workshops that support certification. Best practices and lessons learned are implemented into training with recent and relevant training content for all levels. A list of the classes offered, including the number of classes and students can be found in Section 7.



LOCAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.2:

2. The jurisdictions that received financial assistance during the prior fiscal year because they were located in an area declared to be in a state of emergency, but not declared to be a major disaster area for which federal assistance was provided, and the amount each such jurisdiction received.

SUMMARY

In FY23, 61 localities received financial assistance due to support recovery and mitigation from a disaster resulting in a state of emergency.

LOCALITY	DISASTER	PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PAYMENT	HAZARD MITIGATION PAYMENT	TOTAL
Accomack County	Hurricane Matthew 2016	\$0	\$105,978	\$105,978
Accomack-Northampton PDC	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$10,287	\$10,287
Albemarle County	Winter Storm January 2022	\$7,866	\$0	\$7,866
Altavista, Town of	Hurricane Florence 2018	\$0	\$93,586	\$93,586
Bedford County	Whitewood Flood 2022	\$11,114	\$0	\$11,114
Bristol, City of	Whitewood Flood 2022	\$9,125	\$0	\$9,125
Brunswick County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$6,581	\$0	\$6,581
Buchanan County	Hurley Flood 2021	\$24,305	\$0	\$46,263
	Whitewood Flood 2022	\$21,658	\$0	
Burkeville, Town of	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$2,446	\$0	\$2,446
Central Virginia Planning District Commission	Winter Storm Jan 2016	\$0	\$6,266	\$6,266

LOCALITY	DISASTER	PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PAYMENT	HAZARD MITIGATION PAYMENT	TOTAL
Charlotte County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$4,391	\$0	\$4,391
Chatham, Town of	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$1,204	\$0	\$1,204
Chesapeake, City of	Civil Unrest Jan 2021	\$7,920	\$0	\$14,587
	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$6,667	\$0	
Chesterfield County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$8,229	\$0	\$8,229
Colonial Beach, Town of	Hurricane Irene 2011	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,500
Crewe, Town of	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$5,665	\$0	\$5,665
Danville, City of	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$180,000	\$0	\$181,014
	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$1,014	\$0	
Drakes Branch, Town of	Hurricane Florence 2018	\$0	\$9,286	\$9,286
Fredericksburg, City of	Winer Storm Jan 2022	\$17,375	\$0	\$17,375
Gloucester County	Hurricane Matthew 2016	\$0	\$2,594	\$2,594
Greene County	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$1,940	\$1,940
Hampton, City of	Winter Storm Jan 2016	\$0	\$19,622	\$61,269
	Hurricane Florence 2018	\$38,980	\$2,667	
Henry County	Hurricane Florence 2018	\$22,129	\$0	\$22,129
King George County	Winter Storm Jan 2022	\$24,865	\$0	\$24,865

LOCALITY	DISASTER	PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PAYMENT	HAZARD MITIGATION PAYMENT	TOTAL
Lawrenceville, Town of	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$49,245	\$0	\$49,245
Louisa County	Winter Storm Jan 2022	\$28,472	\$0	\$28,472
Louisa, Town of	Winter Storm Jan 2022	\$1,912	\$0	\$1,912
Lunenburg County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$2,154	\$0	\$2,154
Madison County	Winter Storm Jan 2022	\$1,141	\$0	\$1,141
Martinsville, City of	Whitewood Flood 2022	\$10,787	\$0	\$22,936
	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$7,874	\$4,275	
McKenney, Town of	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$2,642	\$0	\$2,642
Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission	Hurricane Florence 2018	\$0	\$282	\$282
Nottoway County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$6,418	\$0	\$6,418
Orange County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$1,455	\$0	\$1,455
Pittsylvania County	Hurricane Michael 2018		\$30,256	\$31,970
	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$1,714	\$0	
Prince Edward County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$4,121	\$0	\$4,121
Pulaski County	Hurricane Florence 2018	\$0	\$19,720	\$19,720
Pulaski, Town of	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$11,000	\$11,000

LOCALITY	DISASTER	PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PAYMENT	HAZARD MITIGATION PAYMENT	TOTAL
Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$2,424	\$2,424
Richmond Regional Planning District Commission	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$11,561	\$11,561
Roanoke, City of	Whitewood Flood 2022	\$6,529	\$0	\$6,529
Rockingham County	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$140,662	\$140,662
Russell County	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$2,100	\$2,100
South Boston, Town of	Hurricane Florence 2018	\$0	\$201,354	\$204,099
	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$2,745	\$0	
Spotsylvania County	Winter Storm Jan 2022	\$24,726	\$0	\$24,726
Stafford County	Winter Storm Jan 2022	\$201,691	\$0	\$201,691
Sussex County	Winter Storm Feb 2021	\$0	\$3,197	\$3,197
Tazewell County	Whitewood Flood 2022	\$6,265	\$0	\$6,265
Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission	Hurricane Michael 2018	\$0	\$7,123	\$7,123
Wakefield, Town of	Hurricane Irene 2011	\$0	\$511	\$511
Wise County	Whitewood Flood 2022	\$24,580	\$0	\$28,409
	SW Virginia Flood Jul 2022	\$3,829	\$0	
TOTALS		\$792,634	\$686,691	\$1,479,406



EMERGENCY SHELTERS

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.3:

3. The status of the Commonwealth's emergency shelter capabilities and readiness;

RECENT CHANGES IN RESPONSIBILITY AND REPORTING

The Shelter Coordinating position, funding and responsibilities for state-level shelters were transferred from VDEM to VDSS during the 2019/2020 fiscal year. The following VDSS reports replace this tab, since the budget language was adopted after the comprehensive report was originally codified.

2023 Appropriation Act Item 349 A. - Due October 1, 2023

Description: By October 1 of each year, the Sheltering Coordinator shall provide a status report on the Commonwealth's emergency shelter capabilities and readiness to the Governor, the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security, the Director of the Department of Planning and Budget, and the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees.

2023 Appropriation Act Item 349 B.1.

Description: Report on the recommendations and challenges of implementing a model state shelter plan, include but not limited to the process of mobilization and demobilization of the shelter; relocation of residents when a state shelter is de-activated; warehousing of pre-positioned supplies; potential use of existing resources and vendors already under contract with institutions of higher education; and cost estimates for resources that would be reimbursed by the Commonwealth.

Link to plan: <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2022/RD681>

BACKGROUND

Emergency sheltering capabilities and readiness is a shared responsibility across state agencies and localities in the Commonwealth. By code, localities are required to provide emergency sheltering capabilities for their residents. State sheltering capabilities may become necessary if sheltering needs exceed the capacity at the local level.

The Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) is the lead agency responsible for planning, executing, and managing state level sheltering in the Commonwealth. Other state agencies supporting VDSS include state universities, the Virginia Department of Health, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services, the Virginia State Police, the Virginia Information and Technology Agency, and VDEM. The Department of General Services (DGS) supports both VDEM and VDSS with statewide contracts for site-specific goods and services necessary to operate state shelters. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) is responsible for engaging with and supporting localities in their emergency shelter planning and preparedness efforts.

STATUS OF LOCAL SHELTER CAPABILITIES

All localities are required to provide an annually-updated emergency management assessment and data related to emergency sheltering capabilities to VDEM. Localities are required to update their shelter information, to include location, capacity, capability, and presence of backup power to VDEM.

VDEM and VDSS continue to partner to develop a Commonwealth Sheltering Strategy. It is intended to provide a framework that identifies minimum requirements and targets for sheltering capability and capacity throughout Commonwealth at all levels of government. During the past year, informal, discussion style listening sessions were conducted across the commonwealth and included as many local emergency managers as possible. When sessions concluded, it was clear that sheltering capabilities are not consistent across the Commonwealth. As a result of the findings from the listening sessions, a Statewide Sheltering Workgroup was stood up in April 2023. The Workgroup is a collaborative effort between VDEM, VDSS, non-governmental organizations, local government, and tribal partners. A priority of this collaboration is to gather consensus on how state agencies can best support local shelter capabilities during catastrophic events. The Workgroup's efforts will culminate in a Commonwealth Shelter Strategy Framework that will provide stakeholder defined terms basic shelter terms to standardize planning and operations across the Commonwealth.

Local Sheltering By-the-Numbers

The annual Local Capabilities Assessment of Readiness assessment captures the below data on local sheltering capabilities. Additional information can be found on page 41.



92%

127 of 138 localities report having a sheltering plan

- **124** include access and functional needs provisions
- **99** include pet provisions
- **77** include non-congregate options
- **83** include COVID-19 or similar provisions



137 of 138

reported shelter sites (the 1 with a "no" response is a town that has an MOU with a nearby county)

59 report having access to "Shelter teams" as a response asset



75 localities requested assistance with Sheltering

91 of 138

localities reported confidence in Sheltering



ASSETS FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.4:

4. All assets received during the prior fiscal year as a result of a law-enforcement seizure and subsequent forfeiture by either a state or federal court and their estimated net worth.

SUMMARY

In FY23, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) did not receive any assets as a result of a law-enforcement seizure or subsequent forfeiture by either a state or federal court.



FEDERAL GRANT FORFEITURE BY AGENCIES

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.5:

5. The forfeiture of federal grant funding by any state agency that is required to return such funding as a result of not fulfilling the specifications of a grant.

SUMMARY

In FY23, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) did not collect any grant funding that was forfeited by a state agency due to not fulfilling the specifications of a grant.



ANNUAL STATEWIDE EXERCISE

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.6:

6. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.6 regarding the results of the annual statewide large-scale disaster drill that is required by § 44-146.17:2.

INTRODUCTION

VDEM's Training, Education, and Exercise Division (TEED) in coordination with the VEST Training and Exercise Coordinator planned and executed VESTEX 23, Virginia's annual statewide exercise. This exercise challenged state agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private industry to protect against, respond to, recover from, and implement continuity plans related to a Category 3 hurricane striking the Hampton Roads region. The exercise reflected strong working relationships at all levels while validating VEST procedures and operations. The exercise tested the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP) and Hurricane Playbook. Participants included the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST), which consists of more than 40 state agencies, seven VDEM Regions, and numerous localities, as well as federal, non-profit and private sector partners.

VESTEX '23

On May 9, 2023, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST), and regional and local partners conducted the Virginia Emergency Support Team Exercise 2023 (VESTEX 23). The six-hour Functional Exercise included 205 participants representing 10 localities, three Regional Coordination Centers (RCCs) all Emergency Support Functions (ESFs), and the VEST Command and General Staff. Throughout the exercise, participants received and processed approximately 600 exercise injects simulating a statewide, multi-agency response to the effects of a Category 3 hurricane. The purpose of VESTEX 23 was to test the VEST's ability to coordinate and manage the post-landfall impacts of a Category 3 hurricane impacting portions of Virginia in accordance with the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan, the VEST Hurricane Playbook, and local Emergency Operations Plans.

VESTEX 2023 was an interactive exercise designed to challenge the entire emergency management system in a realistic and stressful environment. The exercise included on-scene actions and decisions, EOC operations, and resource and personnel allocation decision making. All decisions and actions by players occurred in real-time and generated responses and consequences from other players.

Functional exercises are complex events requiring detailed planning. To ensure an effective exercise, subject matter experts (SMEs) and representatives from numerous local, state, and federal agencies took part in the planning process and in the exercise conduct and evaluation.

The following exercise-specific objectives were successfully completed and evaluated:

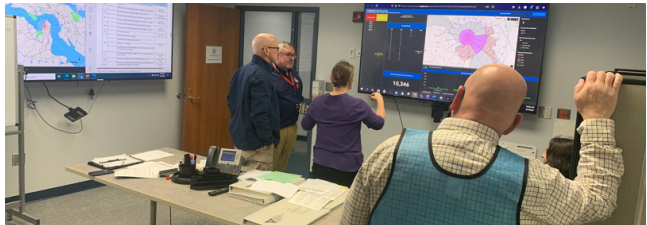
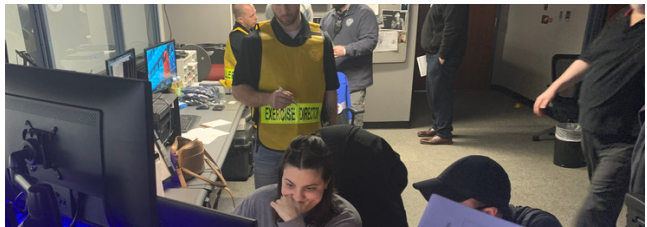
- Assess the ability of the VEST to engage with and leverage Emergency Support Function (ESF) partners and Regional Coordination Centers (RCCs) to develop executable strategic and operational level decisions in response to a post landfall impacts from a catastrophic Category 3 hurricane impacting parts of the Commonwealth in accordance with the 2021 Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP) and relevant ESF plans and procedures. (Aligned with Planning).
- Evaluate the ability of the VEST to establish and maintain a unified and coordinated operational structure based off of current capacities and capabilities of ESF partners and RCCs in response to post land fall impacts from a catastrophic Category 3 hurricane impacting parts of the Commonwealth in accordance with the 2021 COVEOP and relevant ESF plans and procedures (Aligned with Operational Coordination).
- Demonstrate the ability of the VEST to deliver coordinated, prompt, reliable, and actionable information to stabilize the incident and verify incoming and outgoing information in response to post land fall impacts from a catastrophic Category 3 hurricane impacting parts of the commonwealth in accordance with 2021 COVEOP and relevant ESF plans and procedures (Aligned with Public Information and Warning).
- Assess the ability of the VEST to provide all ESF partners and regional coordination centers decision-relevant information and generate it into intelligence regarding the status of the response to post land fall impacts from a catastrophic Category 3 hurricane impacting parts of the commonwealth in accordance with the 2021 COVEOP and relevant ESF plans and procedures (Aligned with Situational Assessment).



STRENGTHS

The major strengths identified during this exercise included:

- The VEST Planning Section effectively provided accurate, up-to-date information to decision-making personnel and VEST partners.
- The Department of Social Services created a Feeding Taskforce to address multiple injects/requests. This allowed for all of the feeding requests to be organized under one umbrella / mission. Likewise, the Operations Chief and the Regional Support Branch created a Debris Taskforce to allow for greater collaboration between those involved.
- Public Information requests were handled proactively throughout the exercise. These requests included simulated media inquiries, rumor control and social media inputs.



AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Several opportunities for improvement were identified, including the following:

- VESTEX 23 demonstrated the need for a multi-day functional exercise to allow for the effective evaluation of a full operational period and shift handoffs. Several exercise artificialities were noted regarding products and staffing limitations that would not have occurred if the exercise spanned a full operational period. A multi-day exercise was recommended for a future VESTEX to reduce artificialities and to conduct a more accurate assessment of plans, policies, and procedures.
- In the VEOC, it was noted that Regional Support became bottlenecked which slowed the process to effectively receive and assign Requests for Assistance (RFAs) from Regional Coordination Centers (RCCs). Evaluators noted that the current process to handle RFAs from RCCs is not sustainable, particularly in a real-world event where the number of RFAs from localities across all VDEM regions would be exponentially greater.
- In some regions, evaluators noted a lack of equipment to efficiently run an RCC. Additionally, some RCCs noted limited space for staff, breakout rooms, canteen, etc. Regional evaluators also documented an overall lack of Information Technology (IT) capability in some RCCs and noted that the IT resources that were available were not working properly. It was also noted that some RCCs are not on generator power. Evaluators suggested that Regional Support establish a working group to standardize RCC equipment and develop budget requests to match.

EXERCISE OUTCOME

The VESTEX 23 Emergency Operations Center hurricane response functional exercise successfully captured strengths and areas for improvement that will be used to improve plans, policies, and procedures, and develop future training and exercise efforts. Participant feedback indicated that the exercise scenario was plausible and realistic, and that the complexity of the scenario was challenging. Participating localities noted the benefit of real-life communication with state agencies and working with multiple agencies with different missions. The exercise also demonstrated a need for future training and exercises with a focus on notifications drills and the continuation of statewide efforts. The VESTEX 23 Functional Exercise successfully captured strengths and areas for improvement to improve plans, policies, and procedures, and develop future training and exercise efforts. Participant feedback also indicated that the exercise successfully engaged ESFs, RCCs, localities, and other participants, and created an effective opportunity to practice plans and procedures and establish new relationships.

A multi-day exercise is recommended for a future VESTEX to reduce artificialities and to conduct a more thorough evaluation of key plans, policies, and procedures over a full operational period. Planning is currently underway for a 2-day exercise in May 2024 that will allow the teams to practice a shift change and other key activities.

Participants in the 2023 Virginia Emergency Support Team Exercise (VESTEX) Hurricane Response Functional Exercise

Participating Organizations

Federal	Local
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)	City of Colonial Heights
National Weather Service (NWS)	Goochland County
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE)	Prince George County
State	City of Norfolk
Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST)	Lancaster County
Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM)	James City County
Region 1 Regional Coordination Center	City of Suffolk
Region 5 Regional Coordination Center	Richmond County
Region 7 Regional Coordination Center	Gloucester County
Non-Governmental Organizations/ Private Sector	Fairfax County
American Red Cross (ARC)	Stafford County
	Loudoun County



TRAINING & EXERCISES

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.7:

7. The number and types of training and exercises related to man-made and natural disaster preparedness that were conducted by the Department, the costs associated with such training and exercises, and the challenges and barriers to ensuring that state and local agencies are able and ready to respond to emergencies and natural disasters.

TRAINING

The request for VDEM-provided emergency management training, education, and exercises has exponentially increased in 2023. **Using adjunct instructors and agency staff, TEED delivered 119 courses to 1,925 students totaling 34,732 hours of course work on highly technical, hands-on practical training sessions.** In particular, requests to provide the Emergency Management Professional Program Basic Academy have increased as new emergency management professionals enter the field. The academy consists of five courses, Planning Emergency Operations, Public Information Basics, Science of Disasters, and Foundations of Emergency Management.

During FY 2023, VDEM's Training, Exercise, and Education Division (TEED) delivered two full academies as well as multiple individual courses across the Commonwealth. Emergency management professionals seeking the state-sponsored Advanced Professional Series (APS) certificate were offered a variety of training opportunities to increase emergency management knowledge and challenge them to continue their education. These opportunities allowed ten people to complete the program and obtain their certificate this year, compared to only five people completing the requirements in the last three years. Additional individuals are in the process of taking courses. The Training Branch expects requests for classes that are part of the APS certification increasing in the future. TEED also worked with FEMA to bring federal recovery and preparedness trainings to the Commonwealth. Five additional training sessions were offered for hurricane readiness, debris management, individual assistance and public assistance to better prepare emergency managers on response and recovery topics. TEED partnered with the seven members of the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC), and the five partners in the Rural Domestic Preparedness Consortium (RDPC) to facilitate the scheduling and delivery of DHS/FEMA sponsored training to enhance the preparedness of federal, state, local, territorial and tribal emergency responders in the Commonwealth. The training modes of delivery were mobile/ non-resident, resident, and virtual courses that span the entire homeland security domain. Courses such as cybersecurity awareness, preparedness for complex coordinated terrorist attacks, and protection and security of critical infrastructure were courses most requested and delivered here in Virginia.

A summary of the courses by category can be found on the following pages.

FY 23 TRAINING

Training Category- Incident Command System (ICS)

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	STUDENTS TRAINED	CONTACT HOURS
ICS402	ICS for Elected Officials	2	4	17	68
ICS400	Advanced ICS	30	15	500	7,500
G191	ICS/Emergency Operations Center Interface	14	8	191	1,528
ICS300	Intermediate ICS	43	21	680	14,280
V450	ICS Train-the-Trainer	1	16	14	224
G2300	Intermediate EOC Functions	3	24	51	1,224
TOTAL		93	88	1,453	24,824

Training Category- Advanced Professional Series

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	TOTAL OFFERINGS	STUDENTS TRAINED
G205	Recovery Local Govt Role	3	16	43	688
L0141	Instructional Presentation and Evaluation	2	32	34	1,088
G557	Rapid Needs Assessment	2	8	34	272
G556	FEMA Local Damage Assessment	1	8	10	80
G288	Volunteer and Donations Management	1	12	13	156
TOTAL		9	76	134	2,284

Training Category- Emergency Management Preparedness Program Basic Academy

COURSE NUMBER	COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	STUDENTS TRAINED	CONTACT HOURS
L0103	Planning Emergency Operations	3	16	65	1,040
L0105	Public Information Basics	4	24	76	1,824
L0102	Science of Disasters	3	24	60	1,440
L0146	Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program	4	16	90	1,440
L0101	Foundations of Emergency Management	2	40	47	1,880
TOTAL		16	120	338	7,624

RESPONSE PROGRAMS - TRAINING AND EXERCISES

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management Response Programs Division integrated robust training courses within the Emergency Services and Technological Hazards branches. Both programs offered and delivered a vast curriculum of hazardous materials, Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN), Search and Rescue, and Communications training along with supporting tabletop and functional exercises.

This integration allowed the technical response programs to better support their local, regional, and state partners. **Using adjunct instructors and agency staff, VDEM Response Programs delivered 109 courses to 2,216 students totaling 57,628 hours of course work on highly technical, hands-on practical training sessions.**

A summary of the courses by discipline are as follows:

Training Category- Search and Rescue

COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	STUDENTS TRAINED	CONTACT HOURS
Search Team Operations	3	40	68	2,720
Search Team Leader	2	40	12	480
Tracking Team Operations	2	40	13	520
Management Team Operations	2	40	14	560
Lost Person Behavior	3	16	36	576
SAR Mapping	4	16	43	688
SAR First Responder Module 1	6	8	129	1,032
SAR First Responder Module 2	6	8	124	992
SAR First Responder Module 3	4	8	63	504
GPS/Land Navigation	6	8	107	856
TOTALS	38	224	609	8,928

Communications Cache Training - Communications Conferences

COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	STUDENTS TRAINED	CONTACT HOURS
State	1	40	15	600
National	1	40	3	120
TOTALS	2	80	18	720

Communications Cache Training - ComU Training

COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	STUDENTS TRAINED	CONTACT HOURS
ITSL	2	40	6	480
ComL	2	40	4	320
ComT	1	40	6	240
INCM	0	24	0	0
IMTD	0	32	0	0
RADO	1	16	1	16
AUXCOM	2	16	3	1,056
TOTALS ComU	8	208	20	2,112

Communications Cache Training - Quarterly Comms Cache Training

COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	STUDENTS TRAINED	CONTACT HOURS
Module 1.1	5	4	23	460
Module 1.2	5	4	14	280
Quarterly 1 (exercise)	1	16	13	208
Module 2.1	5	4	17	340
Module 2.2	5	4	12	240
Quarterly 2 (exercise)	1	16	11	176
Module 3.1	5	4	0	0
Module 3.2	5	4	0	0
Quarterly 3 (exercise)	1	4	0	0
Module 4.1	5	4	10	200
Module 4.2	5	4	7	140
Quarterly 4 (exercise)	1	16	15	240
TOTALS	44	84	122	2,284

Training Category- Hazardous Materials

COURSE NAME	OFFERINGS	HOURS	STUDENTS TRAINED	CONTACT HOURS
Hazardous Materials Technician	5	80	108	8,640
Hazardous Materials Technician Instructor Development	1	16	7	112
2022 Hazardous Materials Conference	1	32	307	9,824
Hazardous Materials Tactical Command and Safety	2	16	39	624
Regional Hazardous Materials Team Training	1	24	720	17,280
Radiological Officer	3	4	16	64
Hazardous Materials Advanced Tactical Control	2	80	44	3,520
Chemistry of Hazardous Materials	2	80	44	3,520
TOTALS	17	310	1,285	43,584

TRAINING BY THE NUMBERS



FY 23 EXERCISES

The TEED Exercise Branch coordinated or conducted 26 disaster-related exercises and workshops with more than 1,900 participants, evaluators, controllers, and observers this fiscal year. The Exercise Branch conducted the exercises by following the FEMA consistent Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP). HSEEP provides a set of guiding principles for exercise and evaluation programs, as well as a common approach to exercise program management, design and development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning.

Three major exercises included the annual FEMA-evaluated Virginia Operations Plan Exercise (VOPEX) conducted in July 2022 for North Anna Power Station, HURREX 22 conducted at the State EOC, and VESTEX 23 conducted at the local, regional and state levels. Also, this was the start of the new eight year exercise cycle for North Anna and Surry Power Stations along with validating the State Radiological Plan which had been updated due to new regulations by FEMA and Nuclear Regulatory Commission, NUREG-0654/FEMA-REP-1, Revision 2).

Exercise Name	Entities Involved	Type	Hazard Type	Mission Area	Core Capabilities Evaluated	Participants
VOPEX 22	Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), VDEM Regions 1 &2, Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST), Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Dominion Energy, Caroline County, Hanover County, Louisa County, Orange County, Spotsylvania County, and 2-1-1 Virginia.	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	376
HURREX 22	VDEM, VEST,VDH, FEMA Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), Virginia IT Agency (VITA), Virginia Army National Guard (VANG), VEST ESFs (ESF 1, ESF 2, ESF 3, ESF 4, ESF 5, ESF 6, ESF 7, ESF 8, ESF 9, ESF 10, ESF 11, ESF 12, ESF 13, ESF 14, ESF 15, ESF 16, ESF 17), Henrico County, Isle of Wight, City of Virginia Beach, The Upper Mattaponi Tribe, IEM, and the Department of Defense	Seminar and Tabletop Exercise	Hurricane	Response	Planning, Operational Coordination	180
Culpepper Basic Course 101	Multiple state and locality members	Functional Exercise	Flooding	Response	Operational Coordination, Situational Awareness	25

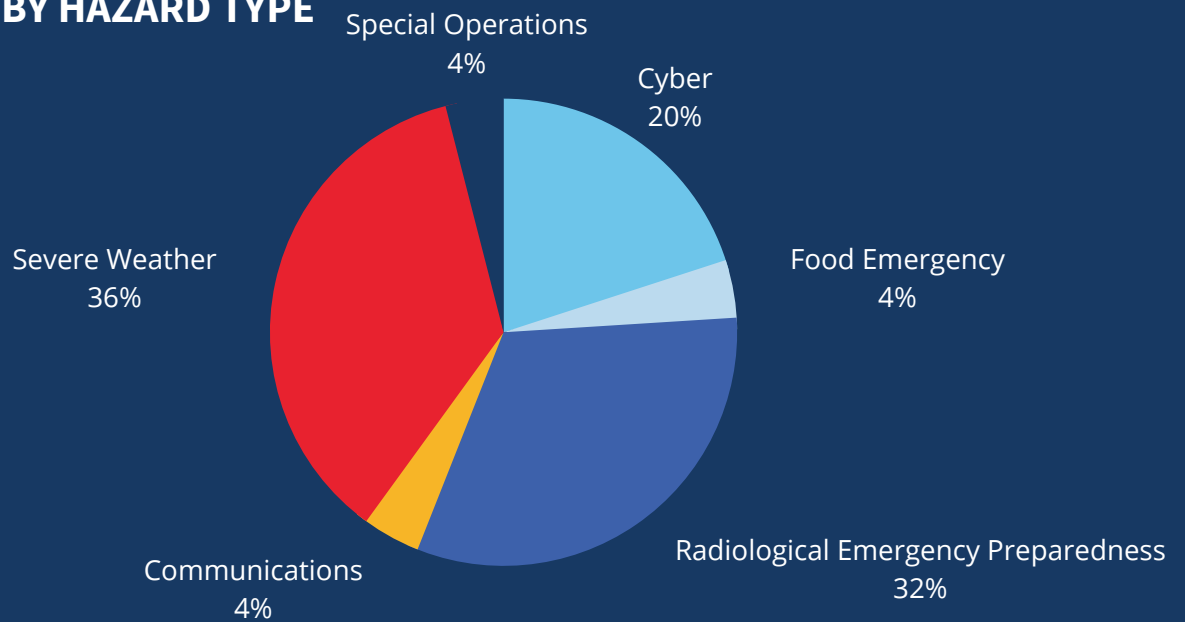
Exercise Name	Entities Involved	Type	Hazard Type	Mission Area	Core Capabilities Evaluated	Participants
Jack Voltaic (Cyber)	VDEM, VEST, Virginia State Police (VSP), Virginia Fusion Center (VFC), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Virginia National Guard (VANG), Virginia Adjutant General, FEMA, United State Army, Dominion Energy, and Joint Staff	Tabletop Exercise	Cyber Attack on Critical Infrastructure	Response and Recovery	Operational Coordination (Response), Operational Coordination (Recovery), Public Information and Warning	40
Cyber Capabilities Seminar	VDEM, VEST, VSP, Virginia Fusion Center (VFC), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Virginia Adjutant General, VANG, FEMA, United State Army, Dominion Energy, and Joint Staff	Seminar	Cyber Attack on Critical Infrastructure	Response	Capabilities Briefing	26
Cyber Fortress	VDEM, VEST, VSP, VFC, VANG, FBI, FEMA, United State Army, and Dominion Energy	Functional Exercise	Cyber Attack on Critical Infrastructure	Response	Planning, Public Information and Warning, Operational Coordination, Intelligence and Information Sharing	12
Norton Winter TTX	City of Norton, Wise County, VDEM Region 4, VDH, National Weather Service, Smyth County, Ballad Health, and VSP	Tabletop Exercise	Winter Weather	Response and Recovery	Operational Coordination, Planning, Situational Assessment, Public Information and Warning	31
REP Exercise	VDEM Region 5, VEST, VDH, Dominion Energy, Isle of Wight County	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	27
REP Exercise	VDEM Region 5, VEST, VDH, Dominion Energy, Isle of Wight County	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	27
VOPEX Lite	VDEM Region 5, VDH, VEST, Dominion Power, 2-1-1 Virginia, Isle of Wight County, James City County, Surry County, York County, City of Newport News, City of Williamsburg, New Kent County	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	67
Lunch and Learn - Exercise Games	VDEM and FEMA	Game	Flooding Event	Response	Operational Coordination, Planning, Situational Assessment	27

Exercise Name	Entities Involved	Type	Hazard Type	Mission Area	Core Capabilities Evaluated	Participants
Compact Rapid Deployable Functional Exercise	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, Coast Guard, FirstNet Authority, VDEM Region 3, VSP, VDH, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (VDCR), VDOT, Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF), Virginia Department of Fire Programs, Virginia Defense Force, Commonwealth of Virginia Incident Management Assistance Team (COVIMAT), Buckingham County, Orange County, NC, Regional Incident Management Teams, Regional Communication Cache Teams, AT&T (FirstNet Built with AT&T), and Virginia Situational Awareness Unit	Functional Exercise	Communications	Response	Operational Communications	42
Recovery Game	VDEM and FEMA	Game	Flooding Event	Response	Operational Coordination, Planning, Situational Assessment	27
VDEM/VPA Cyber	VDEM Region 5, Virginia Port Authority, VANG, Federal Bureau of Investigation – Norfolk, FEMA, United State Coast Guard, VFC, VSP, and Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)	Tabletop Exercise and Seminar	Cyber Attack on Critical Infrastructure	Response	Operational Coordination, Situational Assessment, Public Information and Warning	55
VESTEX 23	VDEM, VEST, NWS, Colonial Heights, Goochland County, Prince George County, James City County, City of Norfolk, Richmond County, City of Virginia Beach, Gloucester County, Lancaster County, City of Suffolk, Fairfax County, Loudoun County, Stafford County, Prince William County, Hampton Roads Incident Management Team	Functional Exercise	Post landfall impacts from a Category 3 hurricane	Response & Recovery	Planning, Operational Coordination, Public Information and Warning, Situational Assessment	205
Alexandria FSE	VDEM and City of Alexandria	Full Scale Exercise	EOC Severe Wind Event	Response	Planning, Operational Coordination, Situational Assessment, Public Information and Warning	47

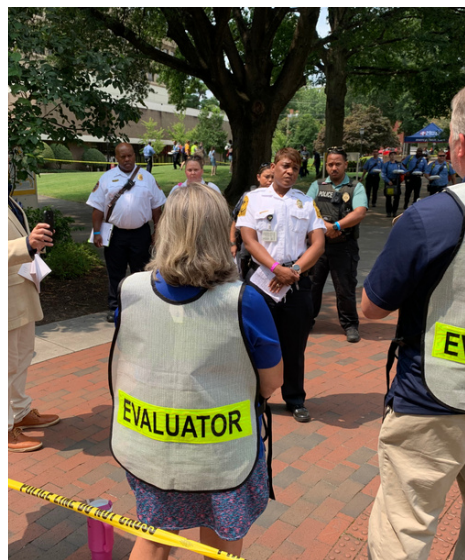
Exercise Name	Entities Involved	Type	Hazard Type	Mission Area	Core Capabilities Evaluated	Participants
Water Rescue TTX	VDEM Special Operations, GIS, Communications, Hurricane Program, Logistics, and ESF-9), Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP), VEST, VSP, FEMA, State Water Teams (City of Alexandria, Arlington County, City of Fairfax, Fairfax County, Loudon County, City of Fredericksburg, Prince William County, Fauquier County, Spotsylvania County, Stephens City, Hanover County, Henrico County, City of Richmond, Crater Regional – Colonial Heights, Chesterfield County, City of Newport News, City of Virginia Beach, City of Lynchburg, Bedford County, Botetourt County, City of Danville, City of Roanoke, Roanoke County, Franklin County, City of Salem, City of Bristol, and King George County)	Seminar and Tabletop Exercise	Water Rescue	Response	Operational Coordination, Situational Assessment, Mass Search and Rescue Operations	82
PAR/PAD Functional Exercise (NAPS)	VDEM, VEST, VDH, Dominion Energy, Caroline County, Hanover County, Louisa County, Orange County, and Spotsylvania County	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	32
West Point TTX	City of West Point & VDEM	TTX	Hurricane	Response / Recovery	Planning, Operational Coordination, Public Information and Warning, Situational Assessment	24
VOPEX Dress Rehearsal Surry Power Station	VDEM, VDH, VEST, Dominion Power, 2-1-1 Virginia, Isle of Wight County, James City County, Surry County, York County, City of Newport News, City of Williamsburg, New Kent County	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	182
VOPEX OOS-EAC drill York	VDEM Region 5, VEST, VDH, Dominion Energy, York County, Virginia Commonwealth University Hospital	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	25
VOPEX OOS-EAC / MS 1 drill York / VCU	VDEM Region 5, VEST, VDH Dominion Energy, York County, Virginia Commonwealth University Hospital	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	52

Exercise Name	Entities Involved	Type	Hazard Type	Mission Area	Core Capabilities Evaluated	Participants
VOPEX OOS-EAC / MS 1 drill Isle of Wight / Riverside Hospital	VDEM Region 5, VEST, VDH, Dominion Energy, Isle of Wight County, Riverside Hospital	Functional Exercise	Nuclear Hazard	Response	RAD Evaluation	73
R6 Windjammer Severe Weather TTX	VDEM Region 6, City of Danville, Bath County, Botetourt County, Roanoke City, Franklin County, Highland County, Rockbridge County, City of Lexington, and Craig County	Functional Exercise	Regional Severe Weather Event	Response	Operational Coordination, Situational Assessment, Public Information and Warning	60
State Air Exercise TTX	VDEM Special Operations, VSP, VFC, VDH, FEMA, Maryland Army National Guard, Pennsylvania Emergency Management, United States Coast Guard, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Civil Air Patrol, and Pennsylvania Army National Guard	Functional Exercise	Hurricane	Response	Operational Coordination, Operational Communications	51

EXERCISES BY HAZARD TYPE



EXERCISES BY THE NUMBERS



CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO TRAINING AND EXERCISES

NIMS Basic ICS and All Hazards Position Specific Training

Emergency Managers are requesting more training because of the impacts and benefits seen at the state, federal, and local levels. Emergency Managers and responders also require training for new staff from a large turnover the last couple of years and as courses updated and changed requirements in response to the current dynamic world and increasing complex threats. In situations where curriculum is outdated or needs to be revised, VDEM is in close contact with FEMA's Emergency Management Institute to ensure the proper curriculum is taught and our instructors qualifications comply with EMI's standards.

Reduced Federal Grant Support

FEMA has significantly reduced the amount of grant support for state and local governments resulting in cuts to training and exercise programs in the Commonwealth over the last seven years. VDEM's ability to meet training and exercise demand has been significantly hampered, due to no sustainable increases in recent FEMA funding.

Lack of Instructors and Students to Fill Available Classes in Rural Areas

There is an historical challenge of finding enough instructors and students to fill classes, especially in the rural regions. Small localities have a difficult time breaking away for a two-day course due to limited staffing. Training often requires back-fill and overtime costs within respective departments. VDEM is currently working with regional teams to develop a regional cadre of instructors to support this need, in addition to leveraging technology and virtual classes to improve accessibility. TEED also has the flexibility, in specific instances, to provide training on the weekends due to the busy work week schedules of our local emergency response professionals and volunteers. Currently, TEED has roughly 137 adjunct and sponsored instructors with plans to expand the number of qualified and certifiable instructors for the increased demand the localities have for the courses we instruct throughout the Commonwealth. VDEM is incorporating an EMI-approved hybrid Incident Command System (ICS) class where the students complete pertinent coursework on their own, then convene for a final training day where they conduct a student exercise to complete the course.

Commonwealth of Virginia Learning Center (COVLC)

An update to the Commonwealth of Virginia Learning Center (COVLC) by DHRM has significantly increased the workload of the TEED team. DHRM updated the site to allow only state employees to register for accounts. This change significantly impacted the ability of the VDEM customer base, which is primarily made up of non-state employees, to utilize the site for class registration. Since December 2022, VDEM received 599 account requests requiring over 85 hours of dedicated time for account creation. Additionally, more than 178 accounts had to be corrected, which added another 28 hours of work in order to make corrections and re-classify accounts. TEED is currently managing 14,574 active users in our external domain. With the limitations of the COVLC Learning Management System (LMS), TEED has developed alternatives to engage students. An example is internal agency support do develop a survey which notifies new students about intermittent issues with COVLC access, latency issues, and degraded functionality. VDEM is exploring what opportunities currently exist to address these hurdles.



STATE AGENCY MANDATES

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.8:

8. The mandates administered by state agencies and imposed on local governments, an estimate of the fiscal impact of the mandates on the affected local governments, and a written justification as to why the mandate should or should not be eliminated

SUMMARY

In FY23, the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) reviewed VDEM-specific mandates on local governments and found no changes to existing mandates.



CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.9:

The status of continuity of operations programs, plans, and systems of the Commonwealth's executive branch agencies. Such plans shall include a description of how the agency or institution of higher education will continue to provide essential services or perform mission essential functions during a disaster or other event that disrupts normal operations.

SUMMARY

Continuity of Operations (COOP) planning enables agencies to identify and prioritize the functions that must be continued immediately following an emergency disrupting its normal operations. COOP planning supports continuity of government (COG) and maintains citizens' trust in government. Through effective COOP planning, agencies maintain their ability to deliver services to citizens of the Commonwealth and continue the missions.

Executive Order Number 41 (2019) underscores the significance of continuity Planning, by identifying COOP as an overarching emergency management initiative. Specifically, EO 41 requires state agencies develop, maintain, and exercise a COOP plan. Every agency is required to test or exercise the plan and provide training and briefings to ensure all agency personnel understand their role in supporting the agency during a COOP event.

VDEM leadership and staff understand the importance of COOP and prioritize it within the agency, integrating COOP into steady-state, emergency response, and recovery efforts. The VDEM Planning Division is responsible for developing and maintaining VDEM's COOP. In compliance with EO 41, VDEM Planning Division coordinated a comprehensive plan update in 2022 with input from all divisions and bureaus. As a result, VDEM revised its COOP plan, to align with current agency structure. However, EO41 was limited and removed the requirement for agencies to submit their COOP plans to VDEM for review. VDEM recommended the administration return the COOP submission requirements in the revisions to EO41 to ensure agencies are prepared.

COOP PLANNING SUPPORT

As the Lead agency for emergency management, VDEM has additional responsibilities to support state agencies and local governments with COOP planning. The *Code of Virginia* § 46-146.18 directs VDEM to provide technical support to state agencies and local and tribal governments, this support is provided at the request of an entity.

EO 41 requires VDEM provide a COOP plan template to enable conformity of plans among the state agencies. The Strategic Planning Branch of VDEM's Planning Division completed a new template in September 2023. The new template has been provided to state emergency management coordinators and training will be offered to highlight the new template.



PLANNING EFFORTS & UPDATES

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.10:

The state of the Commonwealth's emergency prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts and the resources necessary to implement them.

SUMMARY

The Commonwealth's evolving risk environment includes pandemics, the opioid crisis, recurrent inland and coastal flooding and sea-level rise, cybersecurity threats, tornado activity, hurricanes, domestic terrorism, civil unrest, election security, severe winter weather, and myriad other challenges. Each incident challenges us to evaluate how the Commonwealth prevents, protects against, mitigates, responds to, and recovers from man-made and natural disasters.

PREVENTION

Prevention efforts include activities designed to proactively interdict events that may lead up to an emergency or disaster event. VDEM's prevention efforts consist of preparedness efforts to plan, organize, equip, train, and exercise before an emergency or disaster occurs.

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Code of Virginia §44-146.18.4 directs VDEM to prepare and maintain a State Emergency Operations Plan for disaster response and recovery operations that assigns primary and support responsibilities for basic emergency service functions to state agencies, organizations, and personnel as appropriate. The Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan (COVEOP) is produced by VDEM and promulgated and issued by a Governor's executive order. The COVEOP was last promulgated by EO 42 (2019).

The Plan describes how state government will respond to emergencies and disasters wherein assistance is needed by affected state, tribal, and local governments in order to save lives, protect public health, safety, and property, restore essential services, and enable and assist with economic recovery. The COVEOP is consistent with the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Services and Disaster Law (§ 44-3.2 of the *Code of Virginia*), the National Incident Management System as implemented in the National Response Framework (Third Edition) adopted in 2016, and the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq., as amended) with its implementing regulations.

When the Governor declares a state of emergency, the State Coordinator of Emergency Management is authorized to activate the COVEOP, the Virginia Emergency Support Team (VEST), and the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC) in order to coordinate state government emergency operations on behalf of the Governor. Updates to the COVEOP are currently under review by the Youngkin administration.

Current Updates to the COVEOP

The VDEM Planning Division conducted a comprehensive review and drafted a revision of the COVEOP. This process aimed to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that annexes align with the COVEOP. The agency leads of the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) facilitated the process with their partners.

Some of the significant changes include:

- The Adjunct Emergency Workforce (AEW) is now managed by VDEM
- Clarification of the purpose of the Virginia Incident Management Assistance Team (VEST)
- Addition of a separate Access and Functional Needs (AFN) section included in Part 2 of the COVEOP, Virginia Emergency Support Team Organization
- Clarification of agency roles and responsibilities for each ESF
- Removed references to specific plans and replaced them with an appendix listing hazard-specific and COVEOP-related annexes.

As a result of this stakeholder-driven process, the revised COVEOP will accurately depict roles and responsibilities of the current VEST operating structure and outline the Commonwealth's approach to response operations.

In 2023, the Planning Division with federal, state, and local partners, collaborated on the development of a Severe Winter Weather Annex and the Family Assistance Center Annex.

Severe Winter Weather COVEOP Hazard Specific Annex - The Planning Division coordinated with the lead agencies and private partners and completed this annex in June 2023. It was developed at a strategic level and frames the concepts defined in the COVEOP and VEST SOGs.

The Family Assistance Center (FAC) Annex - Currently under development, this plan is intended as guidance for VDEM and state partners to establish an FAC following a mass casualty/mass fatality event. During 2023, there have been 2 work session for plan review and development. Additionally, VDEM coordinated with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to provide training on establishing and FAC in the event of a transportation related disaster. A significant amount of information communicated in this session is applicable to FACs in response to other events.

PLANNING TO ADDRESS EMERGING AND GLOBAL THREATS

Given our ever-increasing reliance on technology advancements, and the interdependencies that exist between the public – private - governmental on the same critical infrastructure systems, the need exists to plan jointly with DoD to support power projection globally, as we continue to plan with traditional partners at the local/tribal/State/FEMA level. **VDEM's catastrophic planning initiative is of strategic national importance because of the growing threat from nation state actors** and their ability to disrupt community lifelines by attacking our critical infrastructure, impact public trust through disinformation, and compromising DoD's ability to project power global because of its dependence on private sector resources (specifically the communications, energy, water, transportation, and financial infrastructure).¹

¹ The Office of the Director of National Intelligence published the Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community on February 6, 2023. This report reflects the collective insights of the Intelligence Community (IC), which is committed every day to providing the nuanced, independent, and unvarnished intelligence that policymakers, warfighters, and domestic law enforcement personnel need to protect American lives and America's interests anywhere in the world.

It's imperative that Virginia's and the region's emergency response plans incorporate diverse perspectives and requirements to ensure State plans coordinate with and support national level homeland defense concepts and operational plans including a coordinated operational process to secure critical infrastructure, support state and federal operational priorities, support our residents, and ensure continuity of government.

VDEM is launching this project now to ensure that when an attack occurs we have the capability to:

- Maintain, and as needed, restore a reliable and stable civil society capable of providing citizens with its basic needs.
- Ensure and support DoD's ability to protect forces globally.
- Maintain the Commonwealth's readiness to respond to all-hazards and support socially vulnerable populations.

ADDITIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN IN FY23

Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR)

The THIRA/SPR process sets a strategic foundation for putting the National Preparedness System into action for grant funding, exercise planning, and strategic planning.

THIRA: VDEM completes the THIRA every three years. The most recent report was completed December 2022.

SPR: While the THIRA is completed every three years, the SPR is reviewed annually. This report is currently being prepared and will be complete by the end of 2023. It is important that VDEM completes the THIRA every three years, as it enables the organization to assess year-to-year trends in changes to their capabilities and capability gaps. These trends subsequently inform grant funding priorities of effort.

State Hazard Mitigation Plan and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA)

The Commonwealth of Virginia Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) provides guidance for hazard mitigation activities within the Commonwealth. The plan's vision is supported by goals and actions that will reduce or prevent injury from natural hazards to residents, communities, state facilities, and critical facilities. The 2023 plan was approved by FEMA in May 2023 and is an update from the 2018 plan.

The HMP was first issued as part of the Commonwealth of Virginia Emergency Operations Plan in July 2001 and was first approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region III on September 28, 2004. The Commonwealth received approval of its enhanced plan status on March 14, 2007, a designation which recognizes a state's additional efforts to coordinate mitigation grant administration at the state level. The plan was updated again in 2010 and 2013; however, during the 2013 update the Commonwealth did not pursue enhanced plan status. The 2018 update documented additional FEMA enhanced plan requirements.

Chapter 3 of the HMP, the Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (HIRA), defines and analyzes the natural hazards that impact the Commonwealth. The individual hazard profile sections cover three requirements for the HIRA, which are identifying and profiling hazards, assessing vulnerabilities, and estimating potential losses. Each sub-section follows the same format throughout the plan, and includes background information, location and spatial extent, significant historical events, and probability of future occurrences. There are four sub-sections within probability of future occurrences: impact and vulnerability, risk, future conditions (including climate change discussion), and jurisdictional risk (including linkages to FEMA's Community Lifelines).

During the planning process, stakeholders participated in four workshops to determine revisions and updates to previous submissions and the addition and analysis of new information.

These workshops were a collaborative effort between a variety of stakeholders, including federal, state, local and tribal governmental agencies, planning district commissions, private and non-profit organizations and institutes of higher education (IHE). The HIRA describes 17 natural hazards that pose a threat to the Commonwealth.

A VDEM-developed standardized methodology comparing the risks of different hazards across jurisdictions was used to rank and prioritize these natural hazards. As part of this methodology, several parameters were considered, including history of occurrence, vulnerability of people in the hazard area, probable geographic extent of the hazard area, and historical crop and property damage. A blend of quantitative factors is used for hazards with more complete and available impact data and/or precise probability and for hazards that lacked precise probability or impact data, a semi-quantitative scoring system was used.

2023 Overall Hazard Ranking

High	Medium-High	Medium	Medium-Low	Low	Negligible
Flood Hurricane Winter Weather	Extreme Heat Non-Tornadic Wind Tornado	Drought Extreme Cold	Earthquake Pandemic Wildfire	Erosion Impoundment Failure Karst (Sinkholes) Landslide	Land Subsidence Space Weather

ADDRESSING CAPABILITY GAPS

Addressing capability gaps for localities, state agencies, and non-profit organizations involves pass-through grants from the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), State Homeland Security Program (SHSP), Hampton Roads Urban Area Security Initiative (HRUASI), and the Non-Profit Security Grant (NSGP). The table below provides a status of efforts in each of those funding opportunities to enhance readiness throughout the Commonwealth.

ACRONYM	GRANT TITLE	PASS-THROUGH
HRUASI	Hampton Roads Urban Area Security Initiative	\$3,040,000
SHSP	State Homeland Security Program	\$5,729,002
EMPG	Emergency Management Performance Grant	\$2,684,631
NSGP	Nonprofit Security Grant Program	\$2,833,870
Total		\$14,287,503



LOCAL CAPABILITIES AND ASSESSMENT FOR READINESS(LCAR)

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this supplemental report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.10:

The state of the Commonwealth's emergency prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts and the resources necessary to implement them.

SUMMARY

VDEM facilitates the annual emergency management assessment through a standardized Local Capabilities Assessment for Readiness (LCAR) survey. The survey is developed in alignment with Virginia Code §44-146.19(F),¹ emergency management stakeholder engagement, and VDEM priority areas. Jurisdictions, including **95** counties, **38** cities, and **6** towns, are required to submit an LCAR annually by August 1st. In FY23, **138** jurisdictions (**99%**) completed the LCAR process.

Final analysis of the 2023 LCAR data will be available in December 2023. Highlights regarding local staffing, sheltering, and preparedness capabilities are provided below.

Unlike federally driven assessments linked to specific grant programs, the LCAR tools enable Virginia emergency managers and elected officials to identify, research, and analyze areas of interest to the Commonwealth. For the purposes of this report, emergency management (EM) programs are distinct from daily public safety (law enforcement, Fire/EMS, and PSAP/911) functions.

SCOPE OF REPORT

The LCAR tool currently measures the extent to which local EM programs have the framework and resources to prepare, respond, and recover from emergencies that exceed normal public safety operations and may trigger requests for external assistance.

VDEM recognizes that emergency management begins and ends at the local level; LCAR data enables state, local and other partners to understand current program capabilities and identify areas in which local emergency management program capacity could be strengthened.

As an annual snapshot capturing information ranging from staffing levels and administrative processes to recovery and mitigation activities, it is important to note that LCAR data is used for strategic, rather than operational planning.

LCAR Measurement Areas

- Administration
- Finance
- Training & Exercise
- Planning
- Public Information and Warning
- Operational Coordination
- Prevention
- Protection
- Mitigation
- Response
- Recovery
- Sheltering

¹*Code of Virginia § 44-146.19.* Powers and duties of political subdivisions. F. All political subdivisions shall provide (i) an annually updated emergency management assessment and (ii) data related to emergency sheltering capabilities, including emergency shelter locations, evacuation zones, capacity by person, medical needs capacity, current wind rating, standards compliance, backup power, and lead agency for staffing, to the State Coordinator of Emergency Management on or before August 1 of each year.

KEY FINDINGS

Analysis centers on local EM program capabilities to protect life (evacuate, shelter, and house), property (including critical infrastructure and cost recovery), and the environment through plans, partnerships, and staffing.

Staffing Profiles in EM Programs

Emergency management (EM) programs vary widely in staffing and capabilities across the Commonwealth. While code and funding mandates shape the EM program for all jurisdictions, localities retain flexibility in how these requirements are prioritized and fulfilled.

Staff Time for EM Program

While many of the designated local emergency management officials are full time employees, the emergency management function is only one of many assigned duties.

Full time Local EM Program Managers that spend at least 75% of time on EM duties



4.1 million (47%) of Virginians live in a locality with at least one full time employee spending at least 75% of their time on emergency management activities.

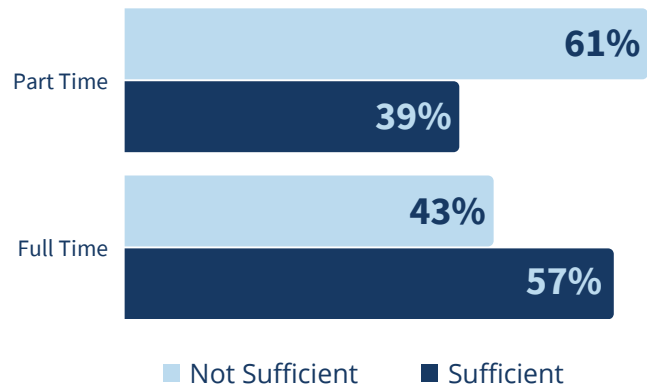
Staffing Sufficiency

Respondents were asked to assess if current staffing levels – whether full or part time – were sufficient to maintain essential EM program performance functions.

Sufficiently Staffed Local EM Programs

49%

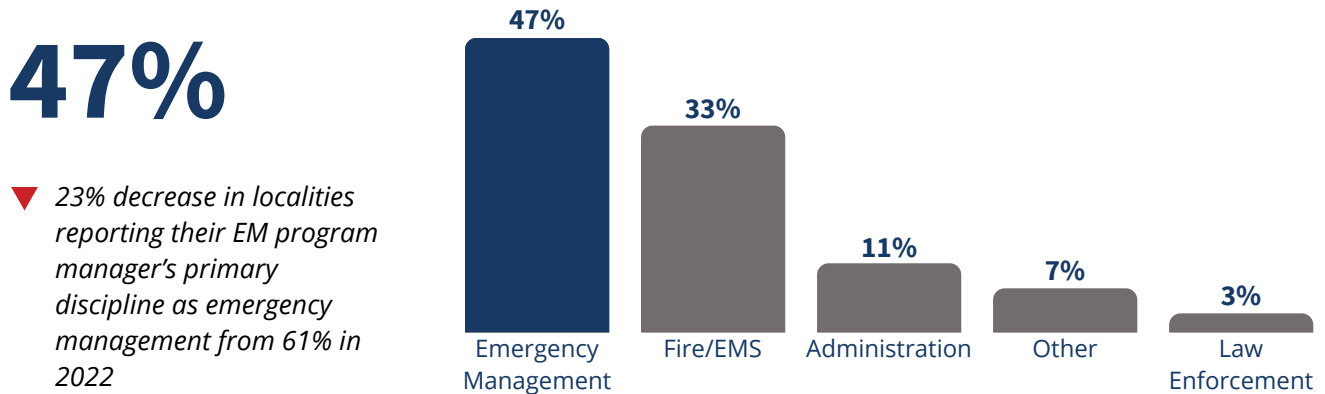
Overall less than half of programs report sufficient staffing levels to meet the needs of the locality. (Roughly one half of full time and one third of part time report sufficient staffing)



Primary Discipline of Local EM Program Managers

Primary discipline indicates focus of professional knowledge and experience, which is more likely to include specialized emergency management areas such as sheltering, recovery, and mitigation. This background can reduce challenges in both life safety operations and administrative processes for grants or disaster reimbursement.

Emergency Management as a Primary Discipline



Staffing Profile

Although each of the key elements of the staffing profile were reported at levels of slightly less than half, less than a quarter of all EM programs reported all three factors.

Local EM Programs with top three staffing factors

23%

- **Emergency manager** managing the program
- **Full-time** and invest 75% or more of time in EM functions
- **Sufficient staffing** to maintain essential EM program functions



1 in 5 Virginians - Only 1.8 million (21%) of Virginians live in a locality with all three staffing factors that increase the likelihood of maintaining EM operational resources and administrative plans, policies, and procedures.

VDEM response and administrative staff may be leveraged to augment locality staffing efforts as circumstances permit; deriving insights from LCAR is one method that VDEM can use to evaluate potential locality needs and prioritize requests for supplemental staffing during times of widespread need.

Shelter Capabilities

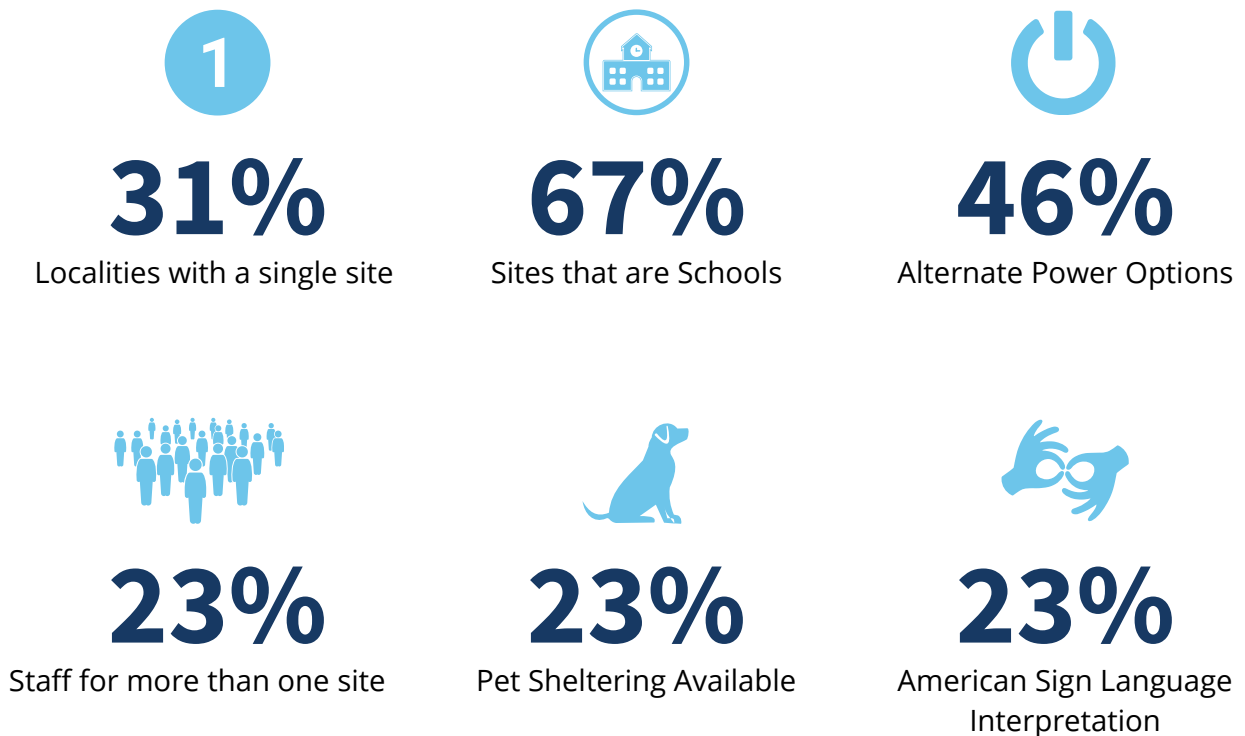
The LCAR process collects data on potential local shelter sites and staffing.¹



Supplies, including single use and durable goods, are another factor in overall shelter capacity. VDEM can provide rapid shelter support through the Deepwater terminal Logistics Support Coordination Center, potentially fulfilling requests in hours (rather than days in cases of contracted vendor deliveries).

Local Shelter Capabilities

Potential Shelter Sites



²State coordinated regional shelter information is beyond the scope of this process.

Disaster Recovery - Policies, Plans, and Procedures

Although the LCAR covers all emergency management mission areas, Recovery is highlighted in this report due to the complexity – and potential fiscal impacts. While the figures reported below reflect the overall percentages for localities, preliminary analysis suggests the long-term value of sufficient EM program staffing.

Disaster Plans reported by EM Programs

57%

Disaster Recovery

30%

Disaster Recovery Center

Disaster Policies and Contracts

72%

Disaster Expenses

35%

Pre-Disaster Debris Removal Contracts

People-Centered Disaster Functions

54%

Disaster Housing Plans

56%

Survivor Care / Case Management Capability

Finance-Focused Disaster Processes

73%

Manage Federal Public Assistance Process

67%

Manage jurisdiction-wide Damage Assessments

Recovery – Fiscal Vulnerability

Local governments that have **not reviewed or lack** existing **financial policies** and **procedures are at risk of not being fully reimbursed** for their costs following a disaster.

This would include, but not limited to:

- **pay policy** (including overtime) and method for documenting,
 - **insurance policies** on buildings, contents, and equipment,
 - **procurement policies** - including procurement with federal funds, accounting system and fund tracking to track expenditures to a disaster, and a
 - **document management process** to be able to submit documents for reimbursement
-

LCAR - Additional Analysis

VDEM integrates insights from this analysis into established annual evaluation and program delivery cycles across agency mission areas. VDEM has also begun to provide substantive analysis for the localities to inform EM program efforts to augment budget, staffing, policy, and programing discussions at local and state level. The identification of capability variances, fiscal stress, and demographic data can help prioritize efforts to build EM program capacity and find ways to buy down risk across the Commonwealth.



STATUS OF PLANS

The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) submits this report pursuant to § 44-146.18:4.11:

The status of emergency management response plans throughout the Commonwealth and other measures taken or recommended to prevent, respond to, or recover from disasters, including acts of terrorism.

LOCAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS

Code of Virginia § 44-146.19(E) requires each political subdivision (cities, counties, and towns with independent emergency management programs) to prepare and keep current an emergency operations plan (EOP) for its geographic area of responsibility. Every 4 years, each political subdivision must conduct a comprehensive review and revision of its local EOP (LEOP), and the local governing board shall adopt the revised plan every four years. It should be noted there are 7 federally recognized tribes in Virginia, which may request technical assistance from VDEM with development of EOPs.

As of October 20, 2023, 131 of the 139 jurisdictions, approximately 95%, have current LEOPs. Additionally, 1 Federally Recognized Tribe coordinated with VDEM to develop an EOP.

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION (IHE) CRISIS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS (CEMP)

There are 40 public institutions of higher education (IHEs) within the Commonwealth, and all must meet the requirements of §23.1-804 of the *Code of Virginia*. Currently, 39 of state IHEs are compliant with these requirements.

- The governing boards of each public IHE are to develop, adopt, and keep current a crisis and emergency management plan.
- Each public IHE is to conduct a comprehensive review and revision of its crisis and emergency management plan to ensure that the plan remains current. The governing board shall adopt the revised plan formally every four years and the adoption will be certified in writing to VDEM.
- Annually, the chief executive officer of each public institution of higher education is to review the institution's crisis and emergency management plan, certify in writing to VDEM that a review has been completed, and make recommendations to the institution for appropriate changes to the plan.
- Each public institution is to conduct a test or exercise of the plan annually and certify in writing to VDEM that it was conducted. Activation of the crisis and emergency management plan and completion of an after-action report by the IHE in response to an actual event or incident satisfies the requirement to conduct such a test or exercise.

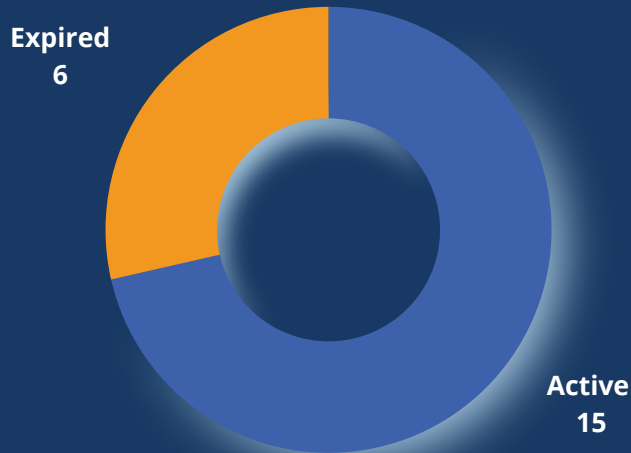
LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS

The following table provides the status of state and local Hazard Mitigation Plans for each Planning District Commission (PDC) and Regional Commission (RC).

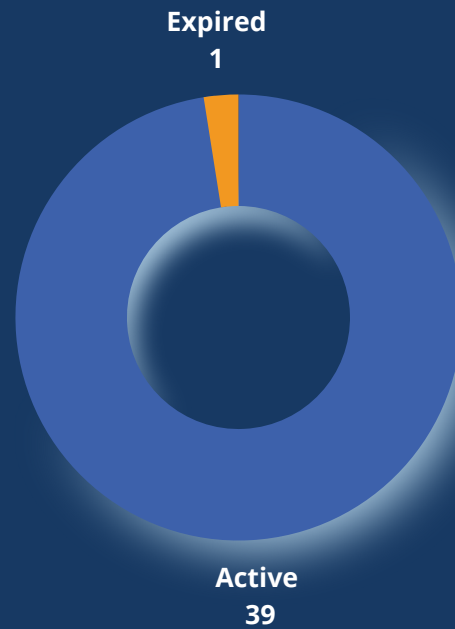
PLANNING DISTRICT COMMISSION (PDC)	PLAN EXPIRATION DATE	COMMENTS
Accomack-Northampton PDC	4/25/2027	Plan Approved
Central Shenandoah PDC	5/3/2026	Plan Approved
Central Virginia PDC	2/8/2026	Plan Approved
Commonwealth Regional Council	1/8/2023	Expired
Crater Planning District Commission	8/8/2027	Plan Approved
Cumberland Plateau PDC	2/9/2025	Plan Approved
George Washington Regional Commission	3/27/2028	Plan Approved
Hampton Roads PDC	6/7/2027	Plan Approved
LENOWISCO PDC	5/17/2026	Plan Update in Progress
Middle Peninsula PDC	4/12/2027	Plan Approved
Mount Rogers PDC	2/26/2024	Plan Approved
New River Valley PDC	11/27/2022	Plan Expired; Update in Progress
Northern Neck PDC	3/29/2028	Plan Approved
Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission PDC	8/7/2023	Expired
Northern Virginia RC	2/22/2028	Plan Approved
Rappahannock-Rapidan RC	12/10/2023	Plan Approved
Richmond Regional PDC	8/8/2027	Plan Approved
Roanoke Valley-Allegheny PDC	9/23/2024	Plan Approved
Southside PDC	9/1/2025	Plan Approved
Thomas Jefferson PDC	2/1/2028	Plan Approved
West Piedmont PDC	4/10/2027	Plan Approved

STATUS OF PLANS BY THE NUMBERS

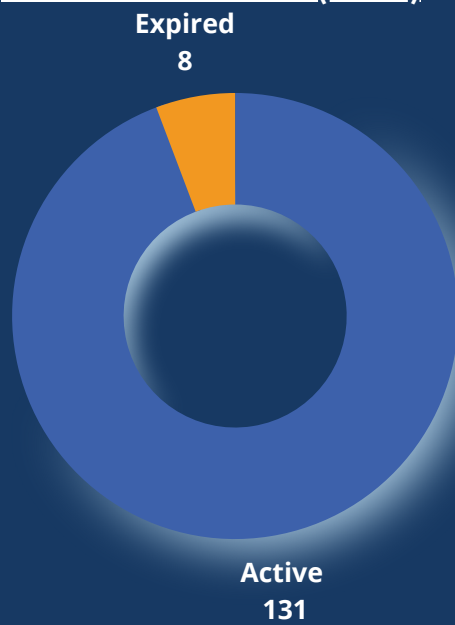
LOCAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLANS (LHMP)



CRISIS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANS (CEMP)



LOCAL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANS (LEOP)



Plan	Entity Required to Submit
Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)	Planning District Comissions
Crisis and Emergency Management Plan (CEMP)	Institutions of Higher Education
Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP)	Localities