



Melissa Spencer, Coordinator

Board of Supervisors Update

As of March 10, 2026

Response:

December 28 & 29 brought a significant snowstorm that caused a closure of I-35 starting at the Ames exit to the Minnesota border. While this storm didn't bring significant snowfall amounts, extreme wind conditions caused visibility issues for the safe operation of Iowa DOT snowplows. Staff participated in webinars provided by the Iowa DOT to prepare for the closure with coordinated public messaging. Staff worked with county partners identified in the County Closure plan to ensure there was hotel space for stranded motorists and for the influx of semi traffic that will stop in Ames. One local after-action item is to have a discussion with Ames for better semi traffic parking so the Iowa DOT can better direct semis on the best place to stop and not cause traffic issues for Ames.

Facilities Management and EMA Staff assisted with deployment of cots and bedding kits to The Warming Place extreme temperature shelter at the First United Methodist Church in Ames. Staff also continued support to the shelter with additional bedding kits as needed during sheltering operations.

Planning

Spencer assisted "The Warming Place" with planning recommendations and ongoing support through weather monitoring for shelter activation.

Staff spent considerable time this quarter completing emergency support function (ESF) plan updates and developing the new response support function (RSF) for Natural & Cultural Affairs recovery. The agency is required to review 5% of the Emergency Operations Plan and develop Recovery Support Functions annually to be a complaint agency.

Staff continue to work with Story County IT to determine if the TEAMS platform can be leveraged to create a virtual EOC capability. This would allow for increased communication capabilities with the City of Ames and ISU for coordinated events and allow a pathway for EOC staff to conduct EOC operations when they cannot physically respond to the EOC in Nevada. There is a lot of back-end system development and security that must be worked through before deployment of a virtual system.

RAGBRAI is transiting through Story County on July 21st after an overnight stay in Boone and riding to Marshalltown. We have reached out to RAGBRAI officials about the projected travel routes and have been told we will not receive that information until it is released on April 3rd. Internally, we are already having discussions on what coordination could look like and will work to engage partners once the travel path is known.

Preparedness:

PREVENTION

PREPAREDNESS

RESPONSE

RECOVERY

MITIGATION

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The Iowa Economic Development Authority grant for creating a solar charging station continues to progress. The charging bases were delivered and PowerFilm Solar is developing the solar panels that will connect to the charging bases. The Memorandum of Agreement has been written, and communities will be required to attend a brief training before the solar panel and base will be deployed to the community. The project allows each community to receive on set of panels and a charging base to allow for a public charging station to keep cell phones, computers and medical devices charged during disaster response and recovery. The ownership of the systems remains with the Commission.

On the Stop The Bleed front, Harding is working with Public Health and the PHEP grant, we have been able to secure individual Stop The Bleed kits for all of the Secondary Roads vehicles. He will work with the department to get training and deliver the kits.

Training

Exercises

Severe Weather Awareness Week is the week of March 23rd with the Statewide Tornado Drill on Wednesday March 25th at 10AM. We will be conducting a countywide drill with Ames PD and Story County Sheriff's Office Dispatch centers to test the internal procedures and outdoor warning sirens. This is an annual drill that ensures that allows for agency review of plans and that outdoor warning sirens are functioning in Story County communities.

On March 26th, we will be hosting a tabletop exercise, facilitated by Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management, with a focus on Mass Care and Health and Medical ESFs. We have invited partners from Story County Public Health, Theilen Student Health Center, both hospitals, the Story County Medical Examiner, Story County Sheriff's Office, Story County Secondary Roads and EOC staff to participate. The purpose of the exercise is to use the provided scenario to review and walk through the related Emergency Support Functions from the updates made this year.

Operations

In February, Harding attended a meeting of the Metropolitan Incident Command Radio Network (MICRN) for a discussion about dissolving the organization and associated radio talk groups. This communication channel was established many years ago to facilitate communications with public and private partners to discuss weather related impacts in Polk County. Over the years, the communication channel evolved to be used as a platform to communicate with the National Weather Service in Johnston. After much discussion, it was determined the organization should not be dissolved and new leadership should be elected. Harding was elected as the Emergency Management representative and Chair to the organization. His expertise and understanding of communication systems and pathways will be very valuable as MICRN is updated.

The coordination between the Board of Supervisors and the Commission for the remodel of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) continues. The Request For Proposal (RFP) was let and 2 bids were received from Communication Innovators and Tr-City Electric Company. The RFP's were evaluated by EMA staff, Story County IT & Facilities Management Directors and RMH Engineering. TriCity Electric scored highest on the evaluation and quoted the project for \$104,530.00. The Commission and Story County Board of Supervisors met at a special meeting on March 5th to review the bids and motion to

approve the contractor. The next steps are to develop a contract and enter into contract negotiations with the selected vendor.

There are two legislative issues in the Ways & Means subcommittee at the state house that could affect how the Commission conducts business and is funded. SF2458 requires local emergency management commissions to take over the current joint 911 service boards' responsibilities, including the maintenance of a 911 service plan, strikes provisions concerning formation of joint 911 service boards, waivers, and alternatives to joint 911 service boards, and makes certain conforming changes to signify this transfer. Currently there are about 1/3rd of the EMA programs that also serve as the 911 Program Manager. This has no financial benefit or cost savings to the Commission as current 911 staff would have to be retained to meet the program requirements. The Iowa Emergency Management Association is in support of the bill, but as the representative of this agency to IEMA, we are not in support of this legislation. There is also a portion of this bill that calls for the consolidation of Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). This would require Ames and Story County to consolidate dispatch centers by 2033.

The second piece of legislation is HSB 689 which relates to emergency management agency budgets. This bill only affects those Commissions who choose to use the Special Levy as defined in Iowa Code 29C.17, of which Story County is one. This bill would directly affect 39% of the Commission across the State who use the special levy to fund their budgets.

This bill would require the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to approve the levy set by the Commission. The Commission can choose to change how the budget is funded, but along with that, the Commission By-laws and 28E Agreement will have to be changed. IEMA has registered against this bill and this agency's vote was against this bill as well.

While both bills are still in Committee and there has been no recent action, it is my understanding they are now both funnel proof.

Looking Forward

Spencer will be attending two classes provided by Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX), in July and August, that will complete her Infrastructure Protection Certificate program. Completing this program will provide additional knowledge and skills for planning, response and recovery to impacted critical infrastructure from a disaster or emergency. The training also gives Spencer the skills to conduct risk assessments for critical facilities which identifies vulnerabilities and develop plans for reducing or stopping future impacts.

Spencer will be attending the Election Security tabletop exercise provided by the Secretary of State office on March 30th. This is always a great opportunity for election staff to discuss scenarios that could impact elections and the priorities of emergency management if a disaster or emergency would disrupt a voting site or elections in general.