**LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE ASSOCIATION (LEPCA)**

**BUSINESS MEETING**

**April 21, 2023**

**8:00 a.m. to 1;00 p.m.**

**Egan Convention Center**

**Anchorage, Alaska**

**MINUTES**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Amanda Loach - Anchorage

Peter Gurney - Aleutians & Pribilof Islands

Deborah Jones - Bristol Bay

Willard Hanam - Copper River

Michael Paschall - Delta Greeley

Forest Shreeve - Denali

Nancy Durham - Fairbanks North Star Borough

Michelle Brown - Juneau

Brenda Alberg - Kenai Peninsula

Steve Rideen - Ketchikan

Frank Dorner - Kodiak

Casey Cook - Mat-Su - Co-Chair

Tom Vaden - Nome - Co-Chair

Billy Lee - Northwest Arctic

Aaron Hankins - Petersburg

Absent - Sitka

Absent - Skagway

Samantha Wilson - Southern Southeast

Absent - Valdez

Absent - Wrangell

**I. CALL TO ORDER OF LEPCA**

Co-Chair Tom Vaden called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

**A. Welcome and Introductions**

Co-Chair Vaden welcomed everyone and stated it was good to see everyone in person again. He asked for a roll call.

Mr. Roy English, LEPC Coordinator, took roll call and confirmed that a quorum was present to conduct business.

**B. Administrative Announcements**

Co-Chair Vaden made announcements about what to do in case of an emergency and other housekeeping items.

**II. APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES**

Co-Chair Vaden stated that members should have received minutes to review in their packet. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes.

**MOTION**: Steve Rideen, Ketchikan, moved to approve the LEPCA meeting minutes from October 14, 2022.

Debra Jones, Bristol Bay, **SECONDED** the motion.

Co-Chair Vaden asked if there were any changes to the minutes. Hearing none, he asked if there were any objections to approving the minutes as presented. There were none.

Motion was **APPROVED** unanimously.

**III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**A. Approval of Agenda**

Co-Chair Vaden asked for a motion to approve the Agenda as presented.

**MOTION**: Willard Hanam, Copper River, moved to approve the Agenda for April 21, 2023.

Debra Jones, Bristol Bay, **SECONDED** the motion.

Co-Chair Vaden asked if there were any changes or discussion about the Agenda. There were none.

Motion was **APPROVED** unanimously.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS - none**

**V. CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICAITONS/PRESENTATONS - SUSPENDED (written reports where available)**

**A. SERC Finance Committee - Nothing to report.**

**B. Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM)**

Bryan Fisher, Director, Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, greeted everyone. He also asked Rich Hildreth, Plans Section Manager, to join him at the table to also provide a report.

Bryan gave an update on where the Division has been and where it’s going since our meeting last fall. He thanked everyone for attending and thanked Michelle Torres and her team for coordinating this conference. There were several tracks and topics including technology and a general emergency management track.

The Division been very busy since last October. There have been a declared disaster every month for the last couple of years. It runs the gamut different types of hazards across the state. We’re still working on the earthquake in 2018, the COVID pandemic response, even though the emergency declaration ends in May 2023. We’re just beginning to deal with the operations legislative budget and audit as well as the Inspector General at Homeland Security. State Emergency Managers, FEMA, and DHS Office of Inspector General, have had several conversations raising concerns about all the different funding sources these past few years. Keep in mind that we’ve done some unusual things, we did some things that push the boundaries of the Code of Federal Regulations, and the Stafford Act because we had to. We didn’t know how serious that pandemic was going to be. Folks at OMB, the White House, certainly understand that and are willing to work with us when it comes to all of those audits that we’ll have to deal with and the funding that we spent so quickly.

Other disasters include the Typhoon Merbok, we are joint FEMA and state team, ramping up to deal with long-term recovery for that effort. He congratulated everyone in the state for their response to the storm.

As a reminder, about 1200 miles of Alaska was impacted by the remnant of Typhoon Merbok, over 40 communities were severely impacted with sea surge, storm surge, wind damage and flooding. All while on the cusp of everything freezing up as we were moving into winter. We did some unusual things with the response with debris removal, with deployment of our National Guard, with our tribal partners, folks like Calista Corporation, Bering Straits Native Corporation, the Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP), and Kawerak, Inc. The Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Faculties did an unbelievable amount of work helping communities get roads cleared and temporarily repaired for winter.

Our focus now is after the snow melts getting back into the communities to make our temporary repairs to the infrastructure, permanent. From his perspective, Bryan has never seen anything like this. We received a Presidential Disaster Declaration in about five days that included the federal individual assistant program to help our individual and family residents in record time. FEMA provided approximately $6.5 million assistance directly to the residents impacted by the storm. Money was used for repairing homes, replacing personal property loss, replacing subsistence gear, such as fishing nets, rifles, ammunitions, boats, boat motors. What FEMA can’t do is to provide cash assistance to replace subsistence camp structures such as cabins, shacks, or buildings that families live in when they’re at fish camp or on the coast to hunt. There was widespread, complete loss and destruction of substance camps and gear all along the west coast of the state. So the Governor wanted to make sure we met that need and he authorized through our state program to do that. So far, the state has distributed approximately $1 million to help the residents.

Bryan sees the continuing need for this type of assistance into the future, as we encounter flooding or other disasters, such as windstorms, that affect Alaskans. Therefore, our state program to assist residents has been re-tooled to get the money into the hands of the residents quicker. It will be based on damage assessment.

We continue to see disasters from utilities. We have challenges from maintenance and operations around the state. As a reminder, we can’t declare a disaster of a utility because of poor maintenance. We can still help in some capacity but are limited in providing funds.

We are preparing for spring breakup and the flooding. We’re launching our Riverwatch Reconnaissance Program and will pay special attention to Northwest Arctic.

If you attended the integrated preparedness planning workshop yesterday, you’ll have an idea about where we’re going for training, exercise, and outreach. There is a lot of interest in Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) in communities. It used to be funded by FEMA, the Citizen Corps program, but even without the funding, there is a lot of interest, which is encouraging. Bryan then turned the microphone over to Rich Hildreth, Plans Manager, for an update on the activities for mitigation resilience and our general planning unit.

Rich stated that there is a written report in the meeting binder. He highlighted a few key items below.

**Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) -** are being rewritten and updated right now. We are looking for public input and comments from our stakeholders by end of June. Look for outreach from our contractor.

**Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP) distribution management plan -** is being developed. We will be reaching out to quite a few jurisdictions to help us develop your distribution management plan. How do you believe resources should be brought to you and what is your plan to get it to your subordinate communities within your jurisdiction.

It considers quite a few methods, methodologies, and thoughts on how to move materials in and around Alaskan communities. So, it’s a great tool, and we’d like to use the template to formulate plans that are consistent with each other as far as organization and how products are arrayed. Then, when our state emergency operations center needs to invoke those plans, they know where they need to go to get the information.

**Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) plan -** Our team has heard the call that the whole community input form is too complex and difficult to use. We are researching how to make the form easier for a community to provide input so that when the time comes, we can submit our stakeholder preparedness reports, and we can also generate our threat hazard identification risk analysis report every third year. Look for a revision to that product to help you provide critical information in a timely manner that we can consolidate and put forward a true picture of the gaps and capabilities within the state of Alaska.

**All Hazards Resilience Team -** has a geo-hazards component, volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunami siren program. That team conducts tsunami operations workshops in the tsunami zones of Alaska and recently completed a workshop in Kodiak. Feedback from the event and great coordination with Kodiak City, Kodiak Borough, other jurisdictions, and communities within that area.

**Rural Resilience Workshop -** Similar to this Spring’s Preparedness Conference, but in the rural jurisdictions. We discuss with community leaders the importance of having the various plans and how they allow you to receive or to apply for FEMA programs.

**Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection (APIP) -** is a public-private partnership. Current membership exceeds 600 members and we’re getting government-private industry to talk about threats and hazards and how to respond to an incident. Having established relationships is valuable so that if an event happens, we know each other, and can achieve success in responding to an event.

While this group is based in Alaska, we’re getting participation within the Pacific Northwest. People are calling in from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. It’s a pretty good model for the relationship building for that public-private interface. We’re pretty pleased about that event.

**Small Community Emergency Response Plan (SCERP) -** There’s a number of folks within the room familiar with that tool. It is a flip chart that is developed to assist the very small communities, e.g., those with populations under 2,000, to work through the first 72-hours of a disaster. Our coordinator, John Andrews, has been in contact with a lot of folks in the room to help facilitate SCERPs for small communities.

**Mitigation Team -** they have a couple of key portfolios, Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program and they conduct the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. The State Hazard Mitigation Plan update is open for public comment and input and is posted on the main page of Ready.Alaska.gov. We welcome your comments.

In addition to the comprehensive update performed every five years, we also review the plan annually and make updates with input from communities. So, if there are things in the plan that need to be adjusted, let us know and we will incorporate it into our next rewrite or update.

As Director Fisher said, we are inundated with a lot of declared disasters. Currently there are 65 projects in the queue, as we work with FEMA and our local jurisdictions to complete these projects. It is a lengthy process. If your communities are calling you about mitigation programs through FEMA, the long-term mitigation is what my team does as opposed to the response part. We need our communities to be patient and to work the project with us to answer FEMA’s requests for information about the complexities of your application, the budgets, the contractors, and all the various facets of completing a project for FEMA.

Director Fisher thanked Rich for his information and indicated that he has had several conversations with FEMA staff with respect to their mitigation program. It is so hard for Alaska to compete on a national level against New York City or Miami-Dade County, or New Orleans, or California for the Building Infrastructure and Communities Grant Program. We have yet to be successful in getting a project approved.

He thinks FEMA headquarters and folks in the beltway are beginning to understand the realities here. They’re willing to come, not just to Anchorage, but also to rural Alaska and see for themselves the issues we have in the field. Now they need to change their programs, re-write their regulations, change their policies and procedures to make those programs more accessible to all of us. He asked if anyone had any questions.

Willard Hanam, Copper River, asked if the Division would like tribal and local Hazard Mitigation Plans submitted to your office to help with the state plan? Would that be beneficial?

Director Fisher responded that yes, from FEMA’s perspective it’s better to have a multi-jurisdictional local hazard mitigation plan where the tribe and the municipality or the tribe, municipality, and borough, all have a single plan written together. The threats and hazards, whether it’s a wildfire threat, or a coastal sea storm, erosion, or earthquakes, are the same regardless of the entity or organization in the community. So, we would encourage that.

One challenge we have within the State of Alaska, the Division doesn’t know what tribal grants come through FEMA to the tribes. We see the award announcements when they come out. All it says is that Tribe X got dollar Y. We don’t have any idea what the activity is, and they will not share that with us because it’s the government-to-government relationship with the federal government awarding grants directly to any of the 229 federally recognized tribes in Alaska. It’s helpful for us to know what you’re doing. But we have to hear it from you on what you received those funds for--what activity are you doing. We absolutely want to partner with you.

Willard responded that it’s a great opportunity because it’s easier for tribal entities to apply for FEMA money. If our plans are written together and our causes are alike, we can help the state, the state can help the tribes. Director Fisher agreed with that a hundred percent.

**C. Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Spill Prevention and Response (SPAR)**

Co-Chair Vaden stated that there is a written report from DEC in the meeting packet however Allison Hatcher, DEC, Inter-Agency Coordination Unit Manager will present on behalf of Tiffany Larson. Allison stated that their oil spill contingency plan (C-Plan) regulations were adopted, and these regulations became effective on February 5, 2023. The Department appreciates the industry and public stakeholders that provided input during the 2019-2020 public scoping phase. And on the proposed regulation revisions during the public comment period in 2021-2022.

To ensure a smooth transition, the update includes a new section that established a delayed implementation timeline for certain new requirements. We have a lot of tips and tools on our website, including frequently asked questions (FAQs). Please check those out. We have training videos that describe the updates and provide guidance. We are launching a new list serve to keep stakeholders informed of C-Plan news and updates.

We are also excited about our new online spill reporting tool, which can be used offline to store information, including photos, to send to DEC next time during cell or Wi-Fi service availability. You go ahead and locate on our website, you put in information, lat, long, pictures, anything else you want to submit to us. We receive it statewide in an email. It gives us a great starting point for us to start those investigations.

Exercise season is kicking off and getting into high gear. By statute, we have responsibility and legal authority to evaluate industry oil spill response capability preparedness.

Inspection season is also getting started. Inspections are scheduled throughout Alaska.

Offshore Drilling in Beaufort Sea and Cook Inlet, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement Oil Spill Preparedness Division and the United States Coast Guard are hosting two workshops the first week of May in Anchorage to develop concepts of operations and plans for drills in Beaufort Sea and Cook Inlet. Information from these will form our plans throughout the state. Virtual options are also available.

Co-Chair Cook asked if there were any questions for DEC. Hearing none, he thanked Allison for her presentation.

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Co-Chair Cook noted that there were two people signed up for public comment, but they declined and there were no comments from the floor or online.

**VII. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. LEPC and CERT Coordination Discussion. - Co-Chair Casey Cook, Mat-Su Borough**

Casey Cook, Mat-Su Borough and LEPCA Co-Chair, opened the discussion by stating that CERT stands for Community Emergency Response Team. We’ve seen a big resurgence of interest in CERT in the Mat-Su Borough. There’s questions about how to fund CERTs, since there is no longer a specific grant to support a CERT. However, there are ways to use existing grants to manage and staff the training and the support of CERT teams. If you are interested, send Casey an email for more information on CERTS.

Who are the first people in your community to experience a disaster and then respond to that disaster? It’s not the fire department, it’s not EMS, it’s not emergency management. We might be affected by it. But it’s really those people in the community who may have to take action until the first response agencies arrive.

So, who’s in charge of helping the community? This is where the CERT comes in to play. The CERT training is 20 hours. It’s a lot of good basic information for folks, such as CPR, first aid, and how to get somebody out from under a collapse. We’re not talking about vehicle extrication. It’s how to pull somebody out of a building. It’s an introduction to the incident command system and how to talk to first responders. Just because there isn’t funding for supplies and equipment, there are other ways to manage and support a CERT team in your community.

Casey thinks LEPCA needs to push this down to LEPCs, which is what he’s doing now. If you have questions about CERTS, contact Casey. Any questions.

Willard Hanam, Copper River, asked if there are trainers for these courses in the state?

Casey responded that there are trainers in the state. And then FEMA puts on an all-expense paid trip to EMI to train those folks to deliver CERT courses locally. Michelle Torres, our CERT regional program guru, can also answer that question.

Michelle Torres added that she is the State CERT Administrator and they do provide training. They will offer a state train the trainer course this fall. That means that anyone who has CERT teams, Petersburg, Ketchikan are coming online this fall. If you want instructors, you will have them take the train the trainers’ course and we will also help you get your teams up and running. Michelle meets with all the state coordinators for CERT teams for the communities quarterly. Quite a few of us are heading to the national convention in June.

Michelle stays in contact with everyone. But if you’re interested in CERT, let us know and we’ll make sure you get that training. There are a couple of options that are fantastic right now. In-person training and a hybrid where they can take the class online through the University of Utah, and then we get together for a skills day. Similar to EMTs where they have to do skills check-off, we also do a CERT skills check-off. So, there are a couple of different options for CERT training.

Willard Hanam agreed and stated that it makes sense for our rural communities, like his and others, that are hours away from help from the state or boroughs. We have local people that are going to be there anyway. Might as well have that CERT training under our belt.

Michelle commented that what’s great for the small communities, and all communities, is involving your youth. Teenagers enjoy CERT and it gives them something to do in the community that’s productive. They are also good cheerleaders, and it helps them get their families better prepared.

Casey added that there’s also the CERT newsletter that comes out once a month, which is a good way to see how people are using the program in different places and some of the things they are doing with CERT. For example, one team does traffic control for their events. CERT teams respond to disasters, and they staff our call center and our EOC. They’re the moulage victims for our exercises. Wide gamut of things folks can do under that CERT banner and the support there is from the state and Michelle.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, commented that during the presentation with Misty Richardson, Misty stated that most of their volunteers came from multiple robust CERTs in their area. So, she thinks it would be good to bring that community to one of our next conferences and have them present on the ways they keep their CERT engaged, who pays for it, where that funding comes from, do they do fundraisers, and who their strongest partners are to keep it strong. Juneau had a robust and strong CERT until their coordinator had to back away and we haven’t found someone to replace him.

Michelle Torres responded that’s a good point. Any time between now and fall conference, if anyone’s interested in CERT and who in your community would be that support for you, feel free to give her a call to discuss ideas. Not only are Ketchikan and Petersburg coming online, but we have a lot of different CERT programs coming online such as churches, business CERT classes going on and, state agencies who wanted CERT training because they have a lot of people in their building. So, we’re seeing an uptick of people who understand that they’re the people helping other people until first responders make it to them.

Communities are seeing the benefit of having CERT teams available to augment their first responders. We all know, hiring anyone has been a challenge and everyone is short staffed and wearing many hats. So, when you can have volunteers to help supplement you, that’s a tremendous relief.

Casey Cook asked if the LEPCA can write a letter or memo to get the information to the governor and the legislature to say that it’s important for us budget wise to support these local volunteer efforts, to see about getting that back into the state budget to at least fund CERT.

Director Fisher commented that for budget development they start as early as August. Timing goes through the entire fall so governor can present his budget in mid-December. He would recommend as an association, to draft a letter that addresses not only state budgeting, but also dedicated federal grant funding for CERT.

Send the letter to Bryan, Commissioner Saxe, and Commissioner Brune of the SERC. It’s helpful if we have the support at the local level, from the association at large, as we go into the process of developing the budget. He will also take that forward for the grants process with FEMA. It does come up regularly. The Citizen Corps Program, which supported CERTs, was funded in the past with seed money. Then they took it away.

If you address both federal and state funding in your letter and send it to Bryan, he can share it with state emergency response commission and with the commissioners or address it to them. Have in our pocket as we develop our budget for the next fiscal year.

Casey asked, administratively, how do we come up with a letter from the LEPCA? Is it a vote, does Casey or Tom need to write the letter, what’s the next step?

Bryan responded, administratively, one of you has to write that. Roy English, LEPC Coordinator would be happy to get it distributed to everyone. We have to verify if your bylaws allow electronic voting. We’ll help with electronic transmission, but the letter has to come from the Association. If you’re allowed an email vote, we can facilitate that as well.

**MOTION**: Michael Paschall, Delta Greeley, moved to direct Local Emergency Planning Committee Association (LEPCA) Co-Chairs to write a letter to the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in support of funding the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program in the state budget and others that we discussed.

Aaron Hankins, Petersburg, **SECONDED** the motion.

Co-Chair Casey opened the floor for discussion.

Amanda Loach, Anchorage, suggested that if we’re going to make recommendations for the state budget that we consider more items than CERT. If we’re going to have a special vote or write a letter of recommendation regarding state budget amendments that we consider other items and discuss that.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, liked what Amanda said, but she recommends that we have a focus towards a goal. It might get further if we didn’t muddy the waters. The other thing is it would be great if Bryan would send bullet points that he thinks would be helpful. When she develops a letter, if someone sends her bullet points that resonates with the audience, it helps her develop a strong letter.

Aaron Hankins, Petersburg, in addition to the LEPCA letter, it would be just as helpful to go back to your individual municipalities and supplement that with a letter from your local government just so that it gives more weight behind what we’re trying to fund, whether its CERT or anything else.

Michelle Brown asked Aaron if he was thinking about two letters, one from every municipality and they would take to leadership to have it signed and then get it back.

Aaron mentioned that it is more prudent to have a separate letter from the municipality to Bryan supporting LEPCA action. Share the draft or finished version of the letter with Bryan so they can see what we’re trying to do so they can also write their letter of support.

Debra Jones, Bristol Bay, asked if it would be better if each of us wrote a letter to the LEPCA, get that to you guys so you have our support behind the LEPCA, and then you can move forward with a letter to the state that would include our letters of support behind it.

Co-Chair Cook liked that idea because it would allow Amanda to include what other items she would like to see in the budget and so on. So, if each of you guys can do that, it would be helpful.

The motion is on the floor for us to write a letter. Let’s talk on that one first. All in favor of Chairs writing a letter of support for CERT budgeting say aye. Opposed say nay.

Motion was **APPROVED** unanimously.

*Action Item - Co-Chairs Cook and Vaden will write a letter to the Alaska Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management in support of funding the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program in the state budget and other funding sources discussed, as appropriate.*

Co-Chair Casey asked about individual letters to email them to Roy English and he can get them to the co-chairs.

Debra Jones, Bristol Bay, stated that she recently worked with tribal entities from the borough level. Her borough has passed a resolution to accept assistance from tribal entities. Along with a memo or letter from each of our LEPCs, if our local government needs to do a resolution seeking assistance from the state or federal governments, that might be beneficial too. Just so that the local government is in support of that. In her area, it’s not just a letter of support, but also a resolution from the borough assembly. Just an idea.

Co-Chair Casey asked if there were any other comments.

Director Fisher added in response to Juneau’s request for bullets, he can’t do that. But what he can offer is a little bit of background on funding history, if you want to include what it used to look like. We’ve done that a little bit for LEPC funding and provide information on Citizen Corps grant program. Other piece of advice is if you send him a letter, share it with your state legislator as well. You have a much bigger voice as a constituent than he does as a state agency representative.

Co-Chair Cook asked when the notes from this meeting will be available for review. Roy responded yes. Co-Chair Cook recommends using the minutes to help draft your letter.

Willard Hanam, Copper River, commented that it doesn’t have to be rocket science. Our geography and our population density in rural Alaska will speak for itself to the necessity of the CERT program. Just make those points. I don’t think we have to convince the state government of how isolated a lot of us are.

Amanda Loach, Anchorage, this is in response to Juneau’s point asking for priorities from the state of Alaska for their budget request.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, responded that she was asking for bullet points that are well received when you’re putting a letter of this type together. They know who they’re working with and what resonates with them. It helps her to have that insight about each thing she should cover.

Amanda Loach, Anchorage, stated that she’s interested in what’s being asked for in the budget in general because she would like to offer support for that if it’s consistent with our priorities.

Brenda Alberg, Kenai Peninsula, agreed with Amanda’s comment. Looking from a perspective of trying to get project worksheets processed through the system. How can we lend that support to the state so they can hire more individuals on whatever the team may be. If it’s political, as in, we don’t want to raise the budget, we want to show that we’re trying to save dollars. Is it understood that the State Division of Homeland Security needs those people so that they can support the communities as we’re trying to get reimbursed for disasters, as we’re trying to do mitigation projects.

Wouldn’t it be nice to flip it? That we’re actually funding mitigation projects so that those disaster dollars go down. To be able to say we have a solid team, so we’re not spending millions of dollars on contractors that don’t know our areas.

Co-Chair Casey asked if there any other questions or comments. There were none.

*Action Item - LEPCA members to write individual letters addressed to the Association providing their support to include funding for CERT in the state budget and outlining any other projects or funding needs for their LEPC.*

*If appropriate, seek additional support for CERT funding from member’s municipality or borough leadership whether through a letter or resolution by the Assembly and include that in their packet to Roy English, LEPC Coordinator. He will get those documents to the co-chairs.*

**B. Format of LEPC Status Report - Michael Paschall, Delta Greeley**

Michael Paschall commented that after watching this meeting transition from   
in-person meetings to virtual meetings, and now to hybrid meetings of both in-person and virtual, in looking at the minutes from these past meetings, the verbal reports from LEPCs were not being heard and/or recorded. He would like to amend the agenda for future meetings to have LEPCs submit written reports ahead of the LEPCA meeting for review and then for discussion at the meeting, if appropriate.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, asked if Michael was referring to this meeting or the monthly LEPC meeting. Michael responded for this meeting.

**MOTION**: Michael Paschall, Delta Greeley, moved that future agendas for the Local Emergency Planning Committee Association (LEPCA) include written reports from each LEPC in the read-ahead documents with time allowed during the meeting for discussion or questions about an LEPCs report.

The minutes of future LEPCA meetings are to include a list of LEPCs that do and do not submit a written report.

Willard Hanam, Copper River, **SECONDED** the motion.

Co-Chair Casey opened the floor for discussion.

Co-Chair Casey proposed a friendly amendment to have the state develop a form or template that can be used by LEPCs for their regular meeting minutes or can be used at the Association meeting to report that the LEPC met monthly or quarterly and to highlight any special projects or news or learning experience to share with the group. That would be helpful for us.

Michael Paschall agreed that it would be good for the state to develop some type of form that could be used by the LEPCs and **ACCEPTED** the friendly amendment.

Willard Hanam **SECONDED** the friendly amendment.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, wanted to discuss the requirement to track who is and who is not reporting and what the purpose of that is. For some organizations, it may feel like there could be consequences or negative ramifications to this requirement.

Co-Chair Cook responded that he understood Michelle’s concern. But he doesn’t think there’s negative consequences because the State’s not giving the LEPCs anything.

Rather, it’s a way to track where more outreach needs to be done. So, if Petersburg, for example, has an LEPC of one and they haven’t sent a report and they haven’t come up for the last three or four years, then that gives the State and LEPCA an opportunity to reach out to Petersburg to say hey, what’s going on. What do we need to do to support the LEPC in your location. It also gives DEC an opportunity to say, hey, what can we do on the Tier 2 stuff to make sure your LEPC is active. What do you need. So, he thinks that’s more where Michael’s coming from. Not in a negative or punitive connotation, correct Michael.

Michael Paschall, Delta Greeley, agreed with Casey’s assessment. There’s some responsibility if funding comes back. But currently, LEPCs aren’t receiving any funding. It’s an opportunity for Division to reach out and ask why we are not getting feedback into our group. And for us, as peers, to reach out, as well.

Co-Chair Casey stated that it also gives Bryan something to stand on when he’s asked ‘what is the benefit of an LEPC?’ He can point to the reports, state this is what the LEPC in your location is doing, and this is why we’re asking for the money. It’s easier to read those types of things as opposed to meeting minutes from the last 10-15 years.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, her concern is more for the small communities and LEPCs that don’t have support from their leadership. The perception could be one more reason why they don’t support the LEPC.

Co-Chair Casey asked if Michelle would be willing to work with Roy on coming up with a form that the LEPCs can use, but not seem punitive and restrictive in any way.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, agreed to work with Roy English, LEPC Coordinator.

Aaron Rankin, Petersburg, stated that he sees this more as a gap analysis tool to clearly see where there’s deficiencies before it gets too far along that it can’t be corrected in a quick manner. So, the LEPCA can step in to provide assistance if they’re seeing that a jurisdiction is crumbling. They can say, hey, what resources can we give you, whether it’s funding or just help at the state level so the ball doesn’t get dropped.

Michael Paschall, Delta Greeley, responded that he is one of the LEPCs that’s small and has no staff to write the report. That’s why he’d like to see it in writing because it’s going to make him, and everyone else, think about it more and share more information. That’s what he’s looking for with the written report.

Debra Jones, Bristol Bay, she is along the same lines that she has a large community without much support for the LEPC. She thinks it’s another way to help us be accountable. The state puts on this conference and brings us here. This is another way to make us accountable on how we’re spending our time and getting that information back to the state for better funding resources and opportunities.

Willard Hanam, Copper River, asked if this will eliminate the verbal report while we’re here. Or will this written report be back-up and we’ll still do verbal reports.

Michael Paschall, Delta Greeley, responded that verbal reports would not take place in the current format. But we would be in a position to ask more information about a project you mention in your written report. For example, this is a project that we should discuss, as opposed to routine activities that take up time. In the past, it’s been close to an hour of routine activities that LEPCs have done. Once we went to virtual format and written reports, the time decreased. He is concerned that since we’re back to meeting in-person, the meeting will extend to 12:00 or 12:15, and for those of us that have to be back for the SERC meeting, this makes it a long morning followed by a long afternoon.

This could be eliminated by having the reports in writing. It might also identify particular topics that could be placed on the agenda for a presentation because of a project that someone is doing. In his case, they’ve talked a lot about house signs, that Fairbanks and others are doing, that has developed into projects that we talked about.

Co-Chair Vaden, Nome, supports this motion. While he notes the concern about a negative connotation, the reality is, if you look around the table, we always have new people in the room when we have a meeting. He’s an LEPC chairman and attends this meeting, but it can be overwhelming for him at times. So, this form would help the new chairs a lot.

Peter Gurney, Aleutians & Pribilof Islands, agreed with Tom’s comment. They are trying to bring back the Unalaska LEPC that has been dormant for two years. Hearing the funding challenge and the solutions is helpful.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, doesn’t want to do away with the verbal report. We can turn in our written report, we’ve just been through a lot of meetings at the conference that may raise additional questions or ideas, and this is the place to bring that up before the committee. Still thinks we should do the round table because she enjoys hearing from everyone.

Co-Chair Casey responded that Tom and he run the meetings, so everyone has an opportunity to share or ask questions. So, that part won’t go away.

Forest Shreeve, Denali, wanted to echo that. He doesn’t always speak up, so he appreciates the chance to add something that’s come up since his written report. It’s important.

Co-Chair Cook concluded the discussion and asked for a verbal vote on the motion. All in favor of this change to the agenda, signify by saying aye. Opposed say nay.

Motion was **APPROVED** unanimously.

*Action Item - Roy English from the Division and Michelle Brown from Juneau LEPC, will develop a written report form or template and distribute it to LEPC Chairs so they can submit their written report to the LEPCA to be included in the meeting’s read-ahead documents with time allowed in the meeting Agenda for discussion or questions about an LEPCs report.*

**C. DEC: Railroad Transportation Presentation**

Matt Kelzenberg is the Manager of Environmental Operations with the Alaska Railroad. He has been with the railroad for 21 years and has spent most of his time involved with spill response and hazardous materials transportation. His presentation is about the railroad--who we are, what we do, and what we haul, as far as hazardous materials. He has heard contingency plan mentioned a few times. He just submitted their contingency plan for renewal this week under the new regulations.

The Alaska Railroad Corporation is an independent corporation owned by the State of Alaska. He is not a state employee. We’re managed by a seven-member board of directors appointed by the Governor. They are mandated to be self-sustaining. We do not take anything from the Alaska budget, nor do we contribute anything. We have 600 miles of track. Freight cars and passenger cars. In 2022 we hauled just over half a million passengers and 3.7 million tons of freight. The railroad has 571 full-time employees with 70% of them unionized.

We have interstate service with trains that go all the way to the Port of Seattle from the Port of Whittier. It is the longest rail haul in North America. Largest interline service would be from Florida to Fairbanks.

The railroad hauls up to 600 passengers at a time through very remote parts of Alaska, which are not accessible by road. So, for him, it’s scarier to think about an incident out there with a passenger train compared to a hazmat incident.

When he started 21 years ago, almost 40% of the freight the railroad hauled was hazardous. In 2022, we hauled a little over 57.5 thousand non-regulated railcars. We hauled 7,600 hazardous material rail cars. While these may not be big numbers compared to the past, he recognizes that they are still big numbers to a small community.

Over the past few months, he’s been getting phone calls about what materials AKRR hauls. During 2022 in Alaska, we didn’t haul vinyl chloride, which was hauled on the train in Palestine, Ohio, that derailed. But that was because we were not asked to. We are a common carrier, so if we were contracted or asked to carry that material, we would.

Mr. Kelzenberg went over their C-Plan stating that the plan is meant to assist in an emergency. If you give him a milepost, they will know where the incident is located. You can go into their plan and know the geographic spill section and know the receiving environment. You can start your planning before anyone gets there. So, it’s a useful tool for response.

DEC has put together a website, Area Plan References and Tools. He highly recommends the website to anyone doing any type of response. It’s broken down by subject and by ICS position. When there’s a response, there’s a lot of permitting involved. This site has made this a lot easier for everyone. He then went over the equipment that’s staged along the railroad for responding to spill response.

Mr. Kelzenberg asked if there were any questions or comments.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, stated that when she watches disasters unfold and the response, communications seems to be the area that breaks down first. The railroad’s communications are robust. She wonders if the railroad goes through any dead zones that affects the communications and how do they manage that.

Mr. Kelzenberg responded that there are areas with sparse cell phone service. They no longer have radio dead zones, but there are still some cell phone dead zones. New federal mandate is positive train control. Our trains are monitored for speed, length, weight, conditions, location and so forth via satellite. If there’s ever a point that it looks like a collision is imminent, it will shut the trains down.

Because of that requirement, we’ve had to make our communications network even better in Alaska. Pretty amazing technology. If there’s a communication failure, it’s usually because of the people not talking to each other, not our equipment.

Co-Chair Vaden asked if there are contingency plans for a major earthquake, such as slow down the trains or check the tracks ahead of time.

Mr. Kelzenberg responded that the railroad has policies in place that cover the different strengths of earthquakes. For example, if it’s over a 5, we stop trains and track inspectors inspect the track within their jurisdiction before allowing the trains to proceed. In general, tracks are inspected every two days by a track inspector. Same care is given with avalanches. Hearing no other questions, he concluded his presentation.

**C. DEC: Pipeline Hazard Materials Safety Administration**

Liz LaDow with the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) introduced herself to the commission by stating they are the second smallest agency under the Department of Transportation’s umbrella. Many departments help regulate lots of different things under DOT jurisdiction. So, PHMSA has two branches, the office of Hazardous Material Safety and the Office of Pipeline Safety. We separated them out because of the expertise required for the pipeline safety. There are five regional offices. Liz comes from the Atlanta regional office. She will be Alaska’s point of contact until her duties are transitioned to Ms. Evelyn Yang, who just recently joined them.

Our primary office for hazardous materials is in California with pipeline investigators based in Alaska. Our mission is essentially your safety when it comes to hazardous materials being moved in our transportation system and commerce. It doesn’t matter if it’s through highways, the air, on a vessel, on railways or in a pipe. Anything that is classified as hazardous material, we regulate. We do have partnership agreements with U.S. Coast Guard, Federal Rail, and FAA because we have a small staff of 500 across the United States and we could not do this work without their assistance.

Ms. LaDow shared information about the pipeline department. There are grants available for pipeline safety. National pipeline mapping system is a service provided by pipeline safety staff, which you may need in response to an incident. If you use the shape files, she recommends annual updates of the files in case anything has changed. She went through the rest of the slides and stated that this slide deck will be available to committee members.

For the Office of Hazardous Material Safety, we regulate every hazardous material listed in the table, including the marine pollutants. They regulate the packaging to make sure it’s fit to transport those hazardous materials under normal shipping conditions. Hazmat begins in transportation when a package is filled and closed. It can sit in a warehouse for one or two months. But once it’s filled and closed, it’s considered in transportation. It doesn’t come out of transportation until it’s delivered and offloaded. So, if you wonder whose responsibility it is, it’s ours.

Her department regulates placards, labels, markings and so on for hazardous materials. They publish the *Emergency Response Guidebook* (ERG) to provide emergency assistance to first responders during the first 15 minutes after they roll up on an incident involving hazmat. The ERG will help them figure out what their safe distances are until they get their hazmat crews there. We will soon publish the 2024 version, which will include lithium batteries.

Another resource share is that we offer free webinars, free trainings. We try to do them in small chunks of 1 hour. Access this training through our website.

She discussed HazMat grants. In 2022 they awarded $24 million in hazardous material, emergency preparedness money. They’re looking at raising our registration fees for hazmat shippers to increase the funds available for this grant.

She works with permits for emergency response especially state enforcement to make sure that we’re protecting our communities and that we are all aware of what’s moving, when it’s moving, how it’s getting there, and when it’s going to be done. She provided an email address for assistance and her contact information.

She then went on to discuss lithium batteries as Alaska moves into electric vehicles on the road. In 2017, they started to have serious discussions about lithium batteries. She shared photos and stories of several incidents that occurred because batteries on their way to be recycled or destroyed were not properly packaged for transport, which then caused fires or meltdowns through shipping containers. In addition, there weren’t any marking or placards on the packaging to tell people what was in the containers.

Through the hurricanes in Florida, firefighters discovered that when an electric vehicle goes into thermal runaway post-event, they have no way to put the fire out. The only thing they can do is move the vehicle outside the buildings where the air could mitigate the gases that are toxic to us, to simply let them burn.

Something else to consider. A colleague of hers had a friend who purchased some of the vehicles from Florida that had been deemed okay, not damaged, and defective. He bought 17, kept two on his farm in Wisconsin and shipped the rest to Russia. The two that he kept, the day after delivery, they were in flames. They had damaged batteries, and they don’t like the extreme cold in Wisconsin. Some you may know about, but some you may not know about.

She showed photos of a lithium battery which is pretty small. She stated that one by itself may not be an issue, but they weld hundreds of these together. So, when one sparks you have a thermal runaway. We’re still working on how to de-energize the battery and how to get quick access during a fire to put it out. So far, as Florida discovered, the only solution is to let them burn.

Things to think about:

* + Poor handling and use.
  + Collection and storage of end-of-life batteries.
  + Poor handling and packaging methods in transportation.
  + At risk shipments that are occurring because there’s no way to see the damage on the outside. Physical evidence or lack of evidence that you can see with your naked eye.
  + End-of-life battery handling by industry is inconsistent.

She brought a resource guide on shipping lithium batteries for reference and information.

Concerning grants, in fiscal years 16, 17, and 18, PHMSA gave Alaska roughly $450,000. These grants were used for LEPC hazmat workshop, fire symposium, hazardous material incident management courses, a commodity flow study, and we trained 25 new hazmat technicians. In 2019 we authorized $563,000 to Alaska. Unfortunately, we had to deal with Covid, and those funds weren’t used. Then we have 2020 and 2021 and we are in the process of getting the grants back up and running. Kathy Shea and Alicia are your points of contacts.

She hopes the LEPCs will talk amongst yourselves to start creating wish lists. Do you want to do a commodity flow study or a tabletop exercise within your local community and you need money for the materials. Training of hazmat technicians can also be funded by these grants. Available grants can be found in their grant resource book. It has to be managed at the local level, which is the State. She would appreciate feedback from members on what was useful today or what would you like to hear more about. She asked if anyone had any questions. Hearing none, she concluded her presentation.

**VIII. LEPC VERBAL STATUS REPORTS**

Co-Chair Casey introduced this item and asked members to mention highlights of what’s going on and any concerns you may have in your LEPC.

**Anchorage – Amanda Loach –** We had two quarterly meetings, one in December and one in March. We have six new committee members and we’re still recruiting for a transportation, elected official, media member, and a community group. We updated our bylaws. We have a new annual work plan to include updating annually, reviewing our integrated preparedness plan, our whole community information form, our emergency operations plan, and our hazard mitigation plan.

New business updates, the Anchorage OEM code was updated for the first time since 1983 with standards in emergency management and best practices. For 2023, we have Anchorage Technology Updates, our Anchorage Fire Department has Pulse Point, which is a good Samaritan app for bystanders to help with CPR, locate AEDs in the nearby area in an emergency. We updated our public information warning app, that is with RAVE local. Training and exercise will continue on that emergency public and information and warning system.

As far as avalanches go, we invited the Alaska Mountain Rescue Group to our LEPC and asked them to talk about the high risk of avalanche this year and updating our coordination with them as an after action and improvement plan from our Highland Avalanche in 2022.

We’ve also invited UAA’s Emergency Manager, John Huffman, to speak to us on the research that he did on how to improve LEPC program.

All of this information is available on our Anchorage LEPC website, which has been updated very recently with language access improvements and we are interested in any feedback that you have.

**North Slope Borough -** absent

**Aleutians & Pribilof Islands - Peter Gurney -** He’s been named the LEPC Chair for Unalaska, which includes Aleutians and Pribilof Islands. We’re just in the process of rebooting our LEPC. It went dormant in 2019 and we had limited activity or engagement. He’s developed a list of people to invite to the LEPC, which includes safety managers from the local plants and the airline and representatives from the school and a few different entities. Now he’s in the process of building back membership because of the 20 people that were members, there’s only one left on the island.

Outside of that, he’s tasked with looking at how to get funding for it so we can do the things we want to do in the community.

**Petersburg - Aaron Hankins -** They are also working on getting their LEPC back on track. He now has 14 members, some old, some new, set. They’ve had two meetings, one in January, one in February. Their focus has been the main components of LEPC, such as the Community Right to Know, standard mission stuff, and public outreach. In the past, the LEPC would have a booth at major events in town. But we don’t have the staff for that. So, we’ve started a public information campaign through our local radio station and for the schools, so the kids can bring the information home to their parents. Once our new members get caught up to speed, we hope to expand from there.

**Sitka -** Absent.

**Skagway -** Absent

**Southern Southeast - Samantha Wilson -** She is from the City of Craig. We need to bring back our LEPC. We’re still recovering from employee turnover and catching up on training. Some of the projects they’ve been working on is increasing their shelter capabilities, mass shelters. They’re working with a couple of other small communities to improve that. They do need to do more outreach to the public between our communities with regard to re-starting our LEPC meetings.

Couple of small issues that arose over the past couple of years. We had a small landslide to deal with. Had a brief water emergency, which is being looked at by engineers. We’re still improving our capabilities and for this coming year update our draft EOP and getting it approved through the City Council.

**Fairbanks - Nancy Durham -** We are in the process of holding meetings and getting re-established as well. We have 15 members and applications for two new members. We have drafted our CIMP to include a lot of components and hope to get that finalized. We’ve been holding regular trainings.

**Delta Greeley - Michael Paschall -** We looked back at communication issues, system failures, and so we’re reviewing what our back-up plans are both with citizen to agency communication, e.g., 9-1-1, cell phones, etc. But also, agency to agency communications. Have had a couple of discussions with the Division on developing an exercise to test our capacity for backup system. We discussed on revising our Community Wildfire Protection Plan because DNR and Forestry are unwilling to revise it. So, we’re trying to figure out that process.

**Denali Borough - Forest Shreeve -** Mayor Walker and he are working on getting the LEPC up and running again before the mayor’s term ends this year. Currently, Forest is the only member. His goal is to have an established LEPC before the October meeting.

They are working on a couple of big things that the LEPC would be involved in, such as an address system. They have been renaming streets and now need to hire a contractor to create street signs. In addition, they are establishing house numbers so that emergency response can quickly find residence with a number instead of knowing, “where John shot the moose at the left turn two years ago”.

They are having a health and safety fair next week and Forest will be presenting on the LEPC, Fire Wise, Ready-Set-Go, and addressing project for our community. He thanked Kenai Peninsula Borough for their information on Ready-Set-Go.

In February, they had the Anderson sewer system freeze up. So, they’ve been working on a disaster declaration with the State and the community.

**Ketchikan Gateway Borough - Steve Rideen -** The Borough is taking a more active role in the preparedness and response, especially after the Covid response. The borough assembly and manager realized that they should have a more active role in emergency response and preparedness. The Borough has hired a contractor to rewrite our EOP. It was last done in 2007. We rewrote our bylaws last year. Michelle is coming down to do a CERT class for us in September. We had the opportunity to have an 300 and 400 class in March, which was well received. We’re having a PIO class next week in conjunction with our large-scale active shooter drill being sponsored by the US Coast Guard and other partners. It will give us the opportunity to set up the EOC and get some new people involved in setting up and operating that.

This week, we have a full-scale oil response drill going on. The Coast Guard, and other federal agencies are involved with, as well as State agencies like DEC, are running a complete booming exercise along with the tabletop.

We’ll be having our tri-annual FAA drill for our airport this year. When we do these large-scale drills, we want to get in the habit of setting up our EOC so if Steve or Rick are out of town, others understand how to set it up, make the notifications, and provide the information for receiving resources. That’s something new for us.

We’re working well with our public health division for their influenza shots, we assist with that. We have a lot of stuff going on. Hopefully, nothing falls through the cracks. We’re making headway.

**Juneau - Michelle Brown -** we are 28 members strong. We have 14 primary seats and 14 alternate seats. It helps us have a quorum and a lot of diverse knowledge in the room. We have about 32 to 35 people that come to each of our monthly meetings.

Our biggest accomplishment this year is connecting with our faith organizations. They had met about five years ago to bring a group together of how our faith communities would respond to a disaster. It turned into its own little disaster, and they didn’t speak to each other for five years. They came to the LEPC and stated that it had to be tenderly handled so as not to offend anyone.

We held a luncheon and had about 35 leaders in the room. We provided a training presentation. They voted to continue on a quarterly basis to meet and learn how to work together. We saw this as a huge win. We’re hoping to start up our CERT again. This is a great place to draw an organized response from and gain a lot of volunteers. This group is diverse, but they are the leadership for our faith organizations.

We have been split. We would set up our shelter with the Red Cross in response to a disaster. Well, these faith organizations would set up their own shelters. This took away from the resources that we could draw on. Now we’re trying to work together so one location, for example, can be a place to get baby formula and diapers while another group helps with feeding people. So, this is a big win. We want to continue moving forward through trainings and support from both the city and the Red Cross.

Her advice to anyone starting a new LEPC or re-establishing their LEPC, is to keep a good distribution list, get information out to the community, and find out what residents want to get trained on so that every meeting has something interesting going on. So, it just grows. That’s what it takes. Someone going to the community, get the word spread, find out what’s needed and target what people want to learn about.

**Kodiak - Frank Dorner -** our LEPC, like most of those here, is in the process of re-starting. So, nothing to report.

**Kenai Peninsula - Brenda Alberg -** There’s been a couple of things that the Kenai Peninsula has supported. It was a workshop in collaboration with DEC to do an evaluation of who does what during a spill response on a highway. How each agency essentially passed the baton as well as the role and responsibilities during that incident. It was a discussion-based workshop with about 75 individuals who attended virtually. The next step is to do a table-top exercise this December with all the agencies.

Based on what we learned from the workshop in March and what we can do to move forward to create a standard operating procedure that all of us can function under. We know that the entities responsible for the clean-up. We know that DEC oversees that responsibility, but each one of us as first responders have a role in that at some point.

Another thing LEPC supported unanimously was our local Ready-Set-Go Program. There are brochures in front of you. This program includes a mascot, the owl. It is specific to our Borough and developed in collaboration with local, state, federal, and tribal entities. Our LEPC not only unanimously supported the program, but also made a recommendation that on the operation maps for evacuated enclosed areas, it would be indicated on the ops map by the color red.

This went forward to the Assembly and was ratified by the Assembly in April. It included not only the Ready-Set-Go Program, the use of red for operations maps in evacuated or closed areas, and also the update of the evacuation annex and the joint information system annex that both have those Ready-Set protocols in place. Good products came out of that.

Lastly to help support this local program being ratified, is the Kenai Peninsula Fire Chiefs Association unanimously supported this decision and the adoption of our local program that included city fire departments, volunteer fire departments, tribal fire departments, federal fire management officers, Division of Forestry, Chugiak National Forest, and Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. What you see before you is truly a multi-jurisdictional decision that was unanimously supported. I encourage each of you to take a look at the materials. We have a website, info.kpb.us that includes not only the program but also the tenets of Ready-Set-Go that is applicable to all hazards, not just wildfires.

The latest portion of the program is for tsunami ready that is represented by the owl. It will be added to the website.

Aaron Hankins from Petersburg asked who they used to create the pamphlet. They have some brochures in Petersburg, but it’s old and blocky.

Brenda responded that they used Creative Mischief. It was about a four-month program. Anyone who wants this material, she is happy to share statewide. Her only request is that you use the same colors on the ops map, such as red for evacuated enclosed areas, and use the same fonts, the same package. If you want to use this logo, that’s okay. Just put your Unalaska or Petersburg name in place of Kenai. It’s a great use of public funds. This was funded through the Department of Health Equity Community Grants.

**Northwest Arctic - Billy Lee -** We’re like everyone else. He’s the only person in the LEPC for the Northwest Arctic Borough. He’s been working closely with the Public Safety Director and Coordinator to get the LEPC going again. Everyone’s terms have expired, so they’re looking for people to fill those positions.

Hats off to the National Weather Service for providing updated weather patterns that are hitting our areas. We’ve seen record snowfall everywhere. So, we had a lot of searches go on. No matter what we put out there through PSAs telling people not to go anywhere, they don’t seem to listen. So, we’re trying to figure out a way to deter these people from going out there. It’s really hard to do.

We’ve saved six lives. We lost one. We found one person from his iPhone. We didn’t know iPhone had a feature in it that would tell you your exact location. It went through your systems here. We were contacted and then able to get him home.

We’re working on better communication by putting up microwave towers throughout our region. They should be up and running by this fall. Twenty-two towers all the way to Bettles and will cover the entire Northwest Arctic Borough. This will help us with our search and rescue efforts and whatever we may need.

We are on River Watch. The Borough has gone to the two main villages, Buckland and Kobuk, they have record snow in their village. Last year the river went up to the bank but didn’t go over. This year, we see it going over. So, we’re getting ready for that.

Avalanche, this is the first time in my 26 years living in the village, that he’s actually seen an avalanche because of the record snow. He sees in the future avalanche training that will need to happen in our home villages because we’re closest to the Brooks Range.

Search and Rescue does a lot of fundraising at the village level because we do a lot of hasty searches and are able to save these people.

Chris Hatch is our new Public Safety Director. He’s working with Simon Chase. That’s what’s going on in the Arctic Slope.

Peter Gurney, Aleutians & Pribilof Islands, commented that he may be able to help with the fund raising for search and rescue. He asked if Northwest Arctic is a member of the Alaska Search and Rescue Association. Billy responded no.

They do have money for training. They are looking for people to spend the money and are having a hard time finding them. He encouraged Billy to reach out to them, if he was looking for resources for avalanche and search and rescue training. Billy asked if they were from the state. Peter responded that they get their funds through the Alaska State Legislature. Billy thanked Peter for the information.

**Copper River - Willard Hanam -** he has two people on his LEPC. Jason Sever is his coordinator. They haven’t met this year since their flood incident last spring. It was discouraging. They started back up last week because the flooding is coming back to our region. Last year we had 20% more snow and this year in some parts of our region, we have 30% more snow. We’re not ready for that. We haven’t had flooding out there. We usually have an annual precipitation of 14 inches. The last two years, we’ve had over 120 inches of snow alone, let alone record rainfalls.

This has added to our erosion problems. Last year, a two story house floated away and is stuck on a bar in the Copper River intact. Flooding is a big concern. We’re filling sandbags. State DOT and other partners are helping with that. We’re going to sandbag our library, state legislative office, and fire station. All three locations flooded last year.

We have the earthquake simulator coming to our local health consortium this summer. We’re looking forward to that.

In May, they’re hosting a regionwide HAZWOPER training. Native Village of Kluti-Kaah, who he works for, we just finished a tribal CWPP, one of the first done for a tribal entity. BIA funded that for us. We put an evacuation plan in that process and are working on that for our tribe in the outlying areas.

Thanks to Delta, he started getting an addressing process started for his region with house numbers and street names. We got a couple of tribes to buy signs and a couple of villages have started. But for the most part, the community hasn’t embraced that.

As the broadband comes into your region, they have to have addresses. So, have your local people communicate with your LEPCs when that address system is going through for the broadband, capture that data and use it for a response. That’s what he’s hoping we can do statewide.

He’s looking at building an EOC for the region through the tribe. It’s still in development stages. He will use help from Bryan and other LEPCs. We’re in the unincorporated part of the state. So, we don’t have city governments, we don’t have a borough. We just have our tribal governments and a bunch of people that need help. So, we hope to fill that void or see how we can fill that void.

In May, their first emergency shelter for the region will have a grand opening in June. It’s a multi-purpose building, but it is also an official emergency shelter. We can shelter over 300 people in place.

We all need to look at updating our Small Community Emergency Response Plan (SCERP). He knows in his region, their SCERP is outdated. So, consider taking that back to your regions and have your SCERP updated. It’s a critical part of their responses.

Three tribes are working on updating their tribal hazard mitigation plans. He has pushed to make those multi-jurisdictional so we can help our town partners that don’t have access to these kinds of funds, if we make is multi-jurisdictional, we can help everybody and not just individual villages.

We are unincorporated, and Bryan stated for the parts of the state that are unincorporated, the State helps with response. But you guys are a couple hours away. So, he really wants to build up the local response and find ways to help supplement the State’s service to us.

**Bristol Bay - Deborah Jones -** she was able to attend the Rural Resiliency Workshop in March along with other rural, small communities. It was a great networking opportunity for her and the small communities. Thanks to DHS&EM for putting that together.

Some of our local tribal governments were able to attend as well and have a better understanding of the importance of emergency preparedness. They’re more willing to work together now. We’re working towards getting the LEPC active again. We have three tribes in our area and there’s a lot of support from them.

She was able to brainstorm with Kathy Shea, DEC, on the Tier II input and submission forms for seasonal and full-time entities in the Borough. Eash season we have a lot of fishing processors that come in and start-up. But the chemicals and hazardous stuff is there year-round. We typically do a pre-season walk through with our fire department every spring. We’re trying to emphasize that it’s going to better prepare us to help respond if there’s an emergency.

Another thing that came from the resiliency workshop were the different scenarios. One scenario was if your local power plant were to have a disaster, what would happen? Our power plant is located right in the middle of town, down the school road. So, if our power plant had a disaster, our emergency shelter would be put out of place. Our community health center would be put out of place. Looking at how we would re-route those things. Having local government officials there with her at the workshop emphasized the importance of making those good connections in our area so that we can provide a better service to our community.

Last time she reported that we had a new planner. He is now settled in and willing to assist with LEPC. In January, the Fire Chief resigned, so she has more duties now. The Deputy Chief has stepped up to help alleviate some of her workload. Volunteers in the department have been active and supportive. They have started working through ICS courses, 100/200/700/800 level for leadership positions and encouraging the remainder of the Borough staff as well to participate in the training so they have the better understanding.

They’ve worked through some public outreach opportunities. Have done some fire safety, as a lot of people heat their homes with wood stoves. Evacuation, escape planning, and the importance of ventilation. Making sure people keep ventilation areas clear with all the snowfall we’ve had. Next step is working with tribal governments for a community outreach program for LEPC. She thinks a big part of that is the CERT program. If she can bring that back into the area, that will help with the response and get more people involved with the LEPC as well. And just better prepare the community.

Lastly, the addressing system, they are kind of online. Some places can be found on google maps. Borough Planning Department and IT Department have been working with the contractor to get that all set up. Public Works is in the process of getting signs ordered, in conjunction with the Fire Department and Police Department to set those up for people so we have a better understanding of where people live. We’re working towards that and hope to have it up and running by the October meeting.

**Nome - Tom Vaden -** We have four exercises scheduled--an airport tabletop that we do annually, a three-year full-scale exercise; two full scale exercises with the 103rd Civil Support Unit and the Coast Guard is going to practice an oil spill in the Bering Sea in June. We asked if they’re going to do this together, but we haven’t had an answer yet. Should be interesting. There’s generally ice in the Bering Strait at that time and they’re planning on doing dispersants in the water. So, we’ll see how that works.

We’re still recovering from Typhoon Merbok. We lost three restaurants. One is back in operation. We lost a 32-room hotel. So, that loss along with the loss of the Polaris means that we’re pretty short on transient living space in Nome. That’s all he has to report.

**Mat-Su Borough - Casey Cook -** Their quarterly meetings have about 15 people in attendance. They’re gaining more interest. One of our tribes is represented again, which is nice to see.

We do the EOP review on a continual basis. Still doing the Fire Wise program. We’ve sent out fire surveys in the community. Started planning for our 15th Annual Preparedness Expo that takes place in September. He mentioned that they’ve done five CERT classes since last October and they have at least three more planned for the next 6-8 weeks. They’ve also started a senior housing emergency planning group to deal specifically with our senior assisted living and individual senior housing programs we have in the Borough to make sure that they’re ready and prepared for the next big event.

They’re still pushing Community Connect and Smart 9-1-1. Those are both addressing apps and their dispatch apps or fire department information apps. If you have questions about those, he can talk to you offline. They’re well supported and good to get information to emergency crews when needed.

Other big project is a 40-page community preparedness booklet that they’re getting ready to publish. It’ll be nice, high gloss, big letters to read, goes through gamut of disasters that can happen in the borough. He’ll have some to handout at the fall meeting. They are also happy to share the files if you can use something similar in your area. That’s the end of his report.

Co-Chair Cook asked if there was anyone online from a jurisdiction that wanted to share. There were none.

He asked if there were any public comments from the gallery. There were none.

**IX. MEMBERS CLOSING COMMENTS**

Co-Chair Cook asked General Brown to stand up. Co-Chair Cook wanted to introduce General Brown to members, as he is in charge of our Alaska State Defense Force that runs out of DMVA as well, partners with DHS&EM. He knows they’re doing a big outreach for rural communities. So, if you’re looking for emergency planning, for people, they’re looking to get out, off the road system in Alaska to establish connections for a better emergency response and infrastructure of volunteers through the Alaska Guard. If you have questions about how General Brown and his folks can help you, let Casey know.

Co-Chair Cook asked if there were any closing comments from members.

Willard Hanam, Copper River, commented that last year durng a declaration, not from the LEPC side, but from the tribal side, they lost numerous tribal assets, a culture camp, many fish camps, all eroded into the Copper River and Klutina River. When he went to declare those, the tribe couldn’t do it because these assets were on corporation land.

The corporation is a private Alaskan company, and they have to do their own declaration. But they weren’t willing to do it. So, there’s a confusing spot there for Alaskan tribal governments and ANCSA corporations that we need to figure out. He will work with Bryan and his staff. But it may be happening in other regions too. You have your ANCSA corporation where something is a declared disaster, but it’s a tribal government asset. It’s a little misunderstood. He would like to find a way in the future to make those declarations easier.

Co-Chair Cook stated that if you’re doing a disaster declaration and it’s snow related, make sure you put that into your disaster declaration. Otherwise, it is harder later on to get damages associated with snow, whether it’s debris removal, collapsed roof, whatever it is, make sure you write snow in your disaster declaration.

Co-Chair Cook asked if there are any other comments.

Michelle Brown, Juneau, stated that they are ready to go forward with their planning. They are waiting for a federal grant to hire a contractor. The LEPC and partners are stood up to start that process. So, as soon as that becomes available, we’re looking forward to proceeding.

Michelle thanked the State for this conference and for bringing it back to in-person, while still providing the virtual aspects of it. Also, just for your constant outreach, your willingness to work with the communities, the training, and everything you do to make it easy for us to participate and to succeed. So, thank you for your partnership.

Nancy Durham, Fairbanks, thanked Anchorage and Mat-Su for their help with Fairbanks’ first Preparedness Expo and for their help with some other alert and warnings, web IAP and EOC type things we’re looking at.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

Hearing no other comments from members, Co-Chair Cook entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Steve Rideen, Ketchikan, moved to adjourn the meeting. Michelle Brown, Juneau, seconded the motion.

Co-Chair cook adjourned the meeting at 11:53 a.m.

**NEXT MEETING DATE**

**Friday, October 13, 2023 in Anchorage**