State of Emergency Preparedness in Franklin County
2019

Franklin Regional Council of Governments
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Executive Summary

From its beginning in 2000, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments’ Emergency Preparedness Program (EPP) has grown exponentially. Over the past 19 years, its responsibilities have grown from strictly planning assistance to include 24/7 on-call response capabilities. In order to reground and reorient ourselves to the new reality, we embarked on this strategic planning process. What follows is a summary of the progress we’ve made and recommendations to continue to improve.

Emergency preparedness will never be complete. New threats and challenges always present themselves. Changes in personnel and policy affect the landscape. This report is only a snapshot assessment of how prepared Franklin County is today and what work is still ahead of us to make us more prepared.

Areas of improvement have been concentrated into five categories:

1. **Technology** – Enhancing access to reverse 911, better radio communications, increased cell phone and broadband coverage, and implementation of communications plans and protocols.

2. **Awareness of, and access to, resources** – Increasing local emergency management directors’ knowledge of cached equipment and existing regional plans, mutual aid agreements, the multi-agency coordination center, the regional Incident Management Team; and pre-arranging contracts for emergency procurement of supplies and equipment.

3. **Awareness and customization of plans** – Reviewing the plans of neighboring communities, writing guidelines for working with social media, and creating easy to read checklists.

4. **Awareness, expectations, and acceptance of emergency roles** – Ensuring that all town employees and volunteers understand their roles during an emergency and making sure EMDs have the financial and personnel resources they need to do an effective job.

5. **Maintaining a commitment to emergency preparedness** – Making sure newly elected officials are trained in ICS/NIMS and public information and creating an emergency response fund at the town level.

These issue areas will inform the Emergency Preparedness Program’s work over the next five years. A subcommittee of the Regional Emergency Planning Committee has already begun operationalizing regional plans by adding checklists and arranging for two hazardous materials exercises. EPP staff is already working with Greenfield Community College to establish an emergency management education program. For some recommendations, we will need to seek funding to support the staff time necessary to focus on those issues. And some recommendations are more appropriate for local governments to carry out, with technical assistance from EPP staff if requested.
The Emergency Preparedness Program (EPP) at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) started 19 years ago with the Regional Emergency Planning Committee (REPC) in 2000. The Mohawk Area Public Health Coalition (MAPHCO) joined the program shortly after in 2003. Back then, the program had 0.67 full-time equivalent staff, who only provided planning services, and two funding sources, one of which was a one-year startup grant totaling $25,000.

Now, in 2019, the program has grown to include the Western Massachusetts Health & Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC) and the Franklin County Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC), which provide 24/7 response capabilities, and assists towns in exploring regionalization of public safety services. We now have 5.3 full-time equivalent staff who share 24/7 duty officer responsibilities, and an average of eight funding sources totaling over $750,000. An additional $570,000 passes through the program to other public health agencies and hospitals in western MA.

Because of this exponential growth, EPP staff felt it was time to take a step back and look at what we do, for whom we do it, what the emergency preparedness needs are Franklin County, and how we can best help our 26 towns meet those needs.

Following is an outline of that process, what we learned, and what recommendations we feel are attainable over the next five years.

**The Process**

In the summer of 2018, EPP began an internal strategic planning process and in December 2018, we invited our community stakeholders to join us.

During a two hour workshop, we examined issues and recommendations from after action reports over the last ten years—some of which had been addressed, some of which had not.

We boiled the unaddressed issues down to five categories: technology; awareness of, and access to, resources; awareness and customization (operationalization) of plans; awareness, expectations, and acceptance of emergency preparedness roles; and maintaining commitment to emergency preparedness. We asked the audience, which contained fire and police chiefs, local boards of health, emergency management directors, and elected officials, to tell us what trainings and exercises could address the problems before us; what plans may need to be written to address the problems; what structural changes in local emergency management or local government need to be made; what policy changes at the local, state, or federal level are necessary; and what can the FRCOG do to assist with any of the above.

For those who couldn’t attend the workshop, a digital survey was sent to all public safety officials, emergency managers, boards of health, town administrators, and elected officials asking them the same questions. Answers gathered during the workshop were compiled with those gathered through the online survey and form the basis of this report’s recommendations.
After Action Report Findings

PROGRESS MADE

Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) • WRHSAC Resource Caches, Map, and Guide • Disaster Animal Response Team (DART) Trailer and Pet Shelter Protocols • Reverse 911 • Real-Time Road Closure Mapping • HMCC Duty Officer System • Spontaneous Volunteer Management • Public Information Officer Training • Elected Officials Emergency Preparedness Series • Debris Management Plan • Community Organizations Active in Disasters • Sheltering

Multi-Agency Coordination Center

Though we don’t have an After-Action Report (AAR) for the ice storm that impacted Franklin County in 2008, anecdotal evidence suggested that having a single entity to provide situational awareness and intra-county resource coordination was needed. Towns in the valley did not know how badly hill towns were suffering, especially since normal communication channels were cut off.

During Tropical Storm Irene, the Northwest MA Incident Management Team (NWMIMT) assisted MEMA in operating a logistics staging area at Greenfield Community College. Again, it became evident that a having a central body providing some coordination would be helpful.

Because of those two incidents, the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council hired a consultant to write a concept of operations and standard operating guidelines for a Franklin County MACC. Under the leadership of the REPC, the MACC now has a dedicated physical location donated by Greenfield Community College. The FRCOG handles administrative oversight of the MACC and the NWMIMT handles its operations. MEMA will send a liaison to the MACC during an emergency so their one staff person will have better situational awareness and be ready to assist with a resource request that can’t be filled within the County. Most of our 26 towns have signed a memorandum of understanding stating that they support the MACC.

WRHSAC Resource Caches, Map, and Guide

Similar to how our towns share personnel because they don’t need and/or can’t afford to hire a full-time staff person of their own (e.g. FRCOG’s town accounting program), our towns sometimes need large pieces of equipment that they don’t need often and are very expensive to purchase on their own. To alleviate this problem, the WRHSAC has built up caches of equipment at the sheriff’s offices in each county. These caches include such items as light towers, message boards, traffic cones, portable radios, shelter supplies, and misting tents. The WRHSAC website (wrhsac.org) contains an interactive map where one can see what equipment is available at which agency, and find information on how to contact the person at that agency responsible for loaning out the items.

The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council’s interactive resource map can be found at www.wrhsac.org.

Strong community partnerships are key to emergency preparedness and response efforts; we appreciate Greenfield Community Colleges’ willingness to provide dedicated space for a Multi-Agency Coordination Center.
DART Trailer and Pet Shelter Protocols

Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, federal emergency planning laws have been changed to require that animals be evacuated, transported, and sheltered. To meet this need in western Massachusetts, several Disaster Animal Response Teams (DARTs) were formed. These teams provide trained personnel, pet food, kennels, etc. in order to set up a pet shelter within or near a human emergency shelter. The WRHSAC purchased DART trailers, also housed at the sheriff’s offices, to transport DART supplies to shelter locations. Local DART teams worked with WRHSAC and the State of Massachusetts Animal Response Team to develop protocols for running pet shelters.

Reverse 911

In order to rapidly notify residents of impending or active emergencies, many Franklin County towns have instituted a reverse 911 system. The system allows town officials to send a recorded message to every landline within their town boundaries and every cell phone that has registered with the system. These messages may contain evacuation or shelter in place information, severe weather warnings, or information about upcoming emergency dispensing operations.

Real-Time Road Closure Mapping

The response to Tropical Storm Irene clarified that timely road closure information is a necessity for both residents and first responders. Dispatch centers tried to reroute emergency vehicles without having a solid picture of what road conditions were throughout the County. As part of the MACC, the geographic information systems specialist will map road closures online in real-time so the public and responders can determine the best route to take after an emergency.

HMCC Duty Officer System

The Centers for Disease Control and the Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services have rolled out healthcare coalitions across the country over the last decade. Massachusetts implemented these coalitions in 2015, by bringing together public health, hospitals, long-term care, community health centers, and emergency medical services to coordinate their emergency planning. In the fall of 2016, EPP staff became duty officers, providing 24/7 on-call coverage to assist those five disciplines within Berkshire, Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties during emergency response. Similar to the MACC, the HMCC provides regional situational awareness and resource coordination.

Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteer Management

In 2013, Medical Reserve Corps units in western MA worked together to write a Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteer Plan. The Plan describes how a reception center can be opened up and managed to handle volunteers who are neither credentialed nor trained in emergency response, but show up unexpectedly on the scene of an emergency wanting to help. A just-in-time training was created to complement the plan, so EMDs not familiar with it could get up to speed quickly.
Public Information Officer Training

Every AAR we reviewed indicated communication as an area for improvement. Some of that communication takes place between responders, and some of it takes place between officials and the public.

To prepare officials for that inevitable role they’ll have to play one day, public information officer training is held several times each year across the State. As part of MAPHCO’s Elected Officials Training Series, there is a PIO module that teaches how to craft messages that the public can take in and process when they’re under the stress of an emergency. The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council has also hosted beginner and advanced PIO trainings in the region.

Elected Officials Emergency Preparedness Series

As mentioned before, MAPHCO has sponsored a training series for elected officials. This was offered in 2012 and again in 2017. Each series consisted of a seminar on administrative preparedness and risk communications. The 2012 series also included a seminar on ICS/NIMS and the 2017 series included a seminar on spontaneous unaffiliated volunteers. Both series concluded with a tabletop exercises testing what participants learned through the seminars.

Debris Management Plan

As both Elected Officials Emergency Preparedness Series, the Springfield and Conway tornados, and Tropical Storm Irene indicated, managing debris after a major storm is complicated. It requires a lot of space, which may become contaminated, a lot of manpower, and a lot of money. To try to alleviate some of the burden, FRCOG staff wrote a Franklin County Debris Management Plan, which was approved by DEP, MEMA, and FEMA. It included six regional debris sites—meaning that several towns would share in the cost of operating a single regional site. Unfortunately, the owners of those regional sites ultimately did not agree to allow their land to be used as a debris collection point. EPP staff is now working with towns to identify a location within each community that could be used for debris collection, while identifying other ways they can join together to share in the cost of implementation.

Community Organizations Active in Disasters

After the Springfield tornado, many non-governmental organizations wanted to assist with recovery, but didn’t know how to insert themselves into the emergency response system. The American Red Cross worked with those agencies to create a Community Organizations Active in Disasters group in Hampden County. Seeing the potential for such groups, WRHSAC hired EPP staff to help establish a COAD in Berkshire County and expand the Hampden County group to include Franklin and Hampshire County (eventually renamed the Pioneer Valley COAD). EPP staff wrote an emergency operations plan for the two COADs and helped them build relationships with their local EMDs and MEMA so they are better positioned now to help after the next disaster.
Sheltering

The regional Tropical Storm Irene AAR identified the need for multi-jurisdictional sheltering plans. Very few towns have the capacity to operate an emergency shelter for an extended period of time on their own. In 2013, WRHSAC hired FRCOG staff to write a regional sheltering plan covering Franklin County. The Plan identifies several locations, in case any of them are cut off by flooding rivers or damaged roads. The Plan also contains guidance on how costs may be shared by the multiple towns sending their residents to a regional shelter. WRHSAC has sponsored several sheltering drills, and developed online just-in-time training tools for volunteers staffing a shelter who may have little to no experience.

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON PROGRESS MADE:

*While the work of preparedness and improving response is ongoing, we have made progress in the region to better respond to emergencies and disasters. Working both as a region, and as individual municipalities, we have increased capacity by leveraging resources, brokering partnerships, and working collectively for the common good.*
AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

When reviewing AARs, EPP staff looked for improvements that were indicated that have not yet been addressed. These improvements were grouped into the following five categories:

- Technology
- Awareness of and Access to Resources
- Awareness and Customization of Plans
- Awareness, Expectations, and Acceptance of Emergency Roles
- Maintaining a Commitment to Emergency Preparedness

Technology

Though many towns now use a reverse 911 system, there is a wide variation in whether and how they use them to communicate with their residents. There can be barriers to how messages get approved, who can access the system, and how thorough the coverage is throughout households.

We would be remiss if we did not mention the Franklin County Emergency Communications System. For the last three years, EPP staff, the FRCOG administration, and the FCECS Oversight Committee has been working to determine how to prevent the system from failing as its aging parts become unsupported by their manufacturers. We are currently exploring either a complete rebuild of the system or abandoning the system and joining the statewide 800 MHz system (CoMIRS).

The lack of cell phone and broadband coverage in many towns makes it difficult to communicate or reach out to 911, and to take advantage of a variety of ways to reach the public with emergency messages. Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans are now expected to be uploaded to the web; MEMA and DPH expect communities to logon to WebEOC to share situational awareness and make resource requests; and many resources reside on the web as large PDF files. It is nearly impossible to do any of those things with dialup internet service.

Awareness of, and Access to, Resources

Thankfully, Franklin County has not had to endure many disasters. But that is a double-edged sword. When you don’t practice something on a regular basis, it doesn’t become muscle memory. Many local EMDs aren’t aware of the resources available to them, since they often don’t need to tap into them.

Resources we have that many don’t know about include the equipment caches at the sheriffs’ offices, the NWMIMT and MACC, and mutual aid agreements. We lack include pre-arranged contracts for emergency procurement of supplies or services and a list of vendors who can take the burden off a town after a disaster (such as debris management companies).
Awareness and Customization (Operationalization) of Plans

Over the years, the FRCOG has produced several regional response plans, but most towns aren’t aware of them. Some of these are intended to be templates, expecting local EMDs to customize them to meet the needs of their towns, but EMDs don’t typically have the time to do that. This begs the question whether planning should happen at the regional level, the local level, or both - local plans that transition to regional plans as an incident grows beyond the capacity of a single city or town.

Planning done at the local level is often done within a single community. Towns aren’t aware of their neighbors’ plans. This can result in such problems as one town planning to evacuate their residents down a road that another town plans to close during a disaster.

Though we have expended a lot of effort to train local officials on how to be a PIO, we have not spent much time training them how to use social media. A set of best practices or protocols would be helpful to those not that familiar with the social media world.

Again, tasks done infrequently don’t foster staff capacity. To address this problem, plans and EOCs need more simple checklists. Sample tracking sheets for FEMA reimbursement would also be helpful.

Awareness, Expectations, and Acceptance of Emergency Preparedness Roles

There are many players in an emergency response, but not all of them know that they have a role or understand clearly what their role is. Administration, such as town administrators, selectmen, and town accountants often self-select out of response and recovery, or are left out by others.

Alternatively, most EMDs have another emergency role they’re trying to perform while acting as EMD—most often that of the fire chief. If they’re lucky, the EMD receives a small stipend for all of the planning and coordination they’re expected to do. Very rarely does an EMD role receive its own salary line and operating budget in the town’s omnibus. As with all emergency preparedness work, until an emergency happens and people see what is lacking, it can be hard to make a case that the work needs more dedicated resources.

Maintaining Commitment to Emergency Preparedness

Once again, the fact that Franklin County experiences few disasters can work against emergency preparedness. It is difficult to keep volunteers engaged once the excitement of the most recent disaster has worn off. Getting people to participate in town-level drills and a review of plans during blue sky days is challenging.

The cadre of emergency preparedness trainees is continuously changing. New elected officials come and go and each new batch needs to be introduced to ICS/NIMS and the role of the PIO. On the other hand, it is challenging to get those with years of experience to attend trainings, figuring they’ve already covered that ground.

As mentioned above, most towns do not have an emergency preparedness budget. In addition, most towns don’t have any funds set aside specifically earmarked for disaster recovery.
Recommendations

During the workshop, and through the online survey, we asked people to discuss the five identified areas for improvement with the following questions in mind:

- What trainings and exercises can address the problem?
- Are there any plans that need to be written to address the problem?
- What structural changes in emergency management or local government need to be made?
- What policy changes at the local, state, or federal level are necessary?
- What can FRCOG do to assist?

18 people attended the workshop and 13 responded to the online survey, including selectmen, town administrators, fire and police chiefs, EMDs, local boards of health, and emergency medical service providers. In addition, EPP staff have been meeting monthly to conduct their own internal strategic planning. A summary of recommendations from all of the above follows.

### TRAINING AND EXERCISING RECOMMENDATIONS

- Hold Trainings in Multiple Locations
- Identify and Train Public Information Officers
- ICS/NIMS Trainings
- Radio Training
- Run Exercises that Engage Volunteers
- Drill More on Hazardous Materials, Sheltering, and EDS’
- EMD Certification
- Involve Youth
- More Focus on Operations-Based Exercises
- Sponsor Funding of Backfill and Overtime

### Hold Trainings in Multiple Locations

Franklin County covers a large land area. EPP staff often assume that holding an event in Greenfield will satisfy everyone’s needs, but those living in the outskirts would prefer we offer trainings multiple times in multiple locations throughout the County.

### Identify and Train Public Information Officers

Town PIOs should be identified prior to an emergency and trained, especially in social media and rumor control.

### ICS/NIMS Trainings

ICS/NIMS trainings should be offered annually or biannually for newly elected officials. Completion of these trainings should be tied to some sort of incentive in order to encourage enrollment. People taking the training for the first time should be required to take it in person (not online), so they can ask questions of the instructor and hear experiences shared by classmates.

### Radio Training

Responders across the County have always had varied levels of familiarity and comfort with using portable radios. Knowing which tower or repeater to use, which channel bank, and which frequency is a lot of technical information to retain—especially during a stressful situation. As the County migrates to the Commonwealth’s 800 MHz radio system, the FRCOG will need to work with the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security to create a training on how to use the
new radios. The FRCOG or disciplinary groups such as the Franklin County Fire Chiefs Association and Police Chiefs Association should offer that training on at least a bi-annual basis and the use of radios should be practiced during drills and exercises.

Run Exercises that Engage Volunteers

If we want to foster muscle memory, we should run exercises that engage volunteers on a regular basis. The drive-thru emergency dispensing site drills held in 2010 are a good example.

Drill More on Hazardous Materials, Sheltering, and EDS’

Franklin County responders are most fearful of incidents involving hazardous materials, sheltering, and emergency dispensing. More drills should be offered on those particular areas of concentration.

EMD Certification

Workshop attendees affirmed that EMDs, particularly new ones, could benefit from formal training in emergency preparedness and response. EPP staff is already working with Greenfield Community College to create a 10-month emergency management education program that should launch in the fall of 2019.

Involve Youth

As all employment sectors are facing a mass retirement in the near future, so is emergency management. Getting young people interested in a paid or volunteer emergency preparedness career is essential to keeping the County primed for an effective response. In addition to succession planning, we should tap into youth’s skills with social media. Recruiting a high school or college-aged student to assist in an EOC or joint information center would take a burden off the official PIO and introduce them to the world of emergency management in the process.

More Focus on Operations-Based Exercises

Now that we have many plans written and vetted through tabletop exercises, we should progress through recommended exercise protocols and move on to more drills, functional exercises, and full-scale exercises.

Sponsor Funding of Backfill and Overtime

Paid emergency response staff experience difficulty in taking time off of their regular shift work to attend a training or exercise because their department needs to cover their shift while they’re out of the office. This requires the department to backfill the shift with another staff member, or pay someone overtime who’s already on duty so they can stay late to cover the shift. With municipal budgets being so thin, there usually isn’t any backfill or overtime pay included in a department’s budget. If those sponsoring the training or exercise could reimburse the sending department for backfill or overtime costs, it would make participation more robust.
Operationalize Regional Plans

As noted in the Areas for Improvement section, regional plans need to be customized to meet local needs. This requires operationalizing them by way of adding checklists, job action sheets, messaging templates (including for reverse 911 and social media), and a social media cheat sheet.

Get Annual Bids

For contractors and emergency repair equipment companies that towns may need to contact after a disaster, it would be helpful to have up to date prices on their services. If bids were requested annually from these companies, perhaps through the FRCOG’s Collective Purchasing Program, it would make the recovery process run more smoothly and efficiently and perhaps prevent procurement missteps.

Real-Time Road Closure Information

The County needs a plan for quickly documenting and sharing road closure information during an emergency. Sharing that information in real-time would be even better. The MACC, through the GIS specialist on the NWMIMT, should be prepared to implement an ArcGIS Online map quickly during an emergency. The Situation Unit should also explore what crowdsourcing options already exist for obtaining reports of hazards on the road, such as Google Maps and Waze. Situational awareness reports coming into the MACC would inform map data and the resulting map would be visible to the public.

Resource Lists

A list of local, regional, state, and federal resources (including personnel) should be created, and it should include instructions on how to request each item. The database of heavy equipment produced by EPP in the spring of 2019 can be expanded to include these other resources. Once created, the list will be distributed to the MACC and Shelburne Control and updated on a regular basis by EPP staff.

Peer Review of Plan

EMDs should regularly peer review plans from their neighboring towns. This could prevent misalignment amongst plans and EMDs can learn best practices from each other to improve their own plans. It also could help to build a relationship between area EMDs so they don’t meet each other for the first time during an emergency.

Readiness Assessments

EPP staff could offer to evaluate towns’ readiness in a number of areas including EDS operations, EOC setup and staffing, and evacuation and shelter planning.
Points of Dispensing and Staging Area Plans

EPP staff could write local and regional plans for mass dispensing of goods, such as bottled water, food, and blankets. In addition, EPP staff could write a regional plan to identify staging areas for an influx of large equipment—such as what was created at Greenfield Community College during Tropical Storm Irene.

GETS/WPS

When disasters strike, telephone lines quickly become jammed as families try to determine if their loved ones are safe. The GETS (Government Emergency Telecommunications Service) and WPS (Wireless Priority Service) programs provide a mechanism for first responders to have priority use of the phone lines. EPP staff should send information to EMDs on both programs so they can enroll.

Don’t Rely Solely on Technology

The more and more we rely on technology to help us in our daily lives, the more and more we become vulnerable to the loss of that technology. Cell phone towers, electrical power, and internet access often go down during high winds, solar flares, or electro-magnetic pulses. We should be careful not to put all of our eggs in the technology basket. Sometimes keeping things old school and simple is best.

STRUCTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Connect Emergency Preparedness Partners • Standardize the EMD Role Across the County • Assist with the Sharing of Public Safety Services • Recruit More Volunteers • Operationalize EPP staff for Response • Diversify Funding • Examine Merging Committees • Cross-training of EPP staff

Connect Emergency Preparedness Partners

Because of the many time commitments town volunteers have, it is often the case that it is difficult to get everyone who plays a role in emergency response together in one room at the same time. Towns, perhaps with the help of EPP staff, should regularly convene emergency planning meetings that include EMDs, the board of health, fire and police, emergency medical services, the highway superintendent, the town administrator, selectmen, and the town accountant. Everyone should gain a clear understanding of what role they will play during an emergency and get to know each other before they find themselves working together in a stressful situation.

Standardize the EMD Role across the County

If EMD job descriptions and operations were standardized across the County, any other EMD could pitch in and help another town. To take it a step further, the FRCOG could hire a regional EMD for several towns to share, like it does with town accountants and building inspectors.
Assist with the Sharing of Public Safety Services
Several towns have already requested EPP’s assistance in exploring the sharing of public safety services as their numbers of volunteers and financial resources dwindle and the regulations mount. The resulting level of sharing is driven by the comfort of the stakeholders and ranges from shared administration or purchasing to a full merge of departments. Fire, police, and EMS agencies have all asked for our help and likely will continue to do so.

Recruit More Volunteers
Not only do we need to recruit youth into emergency preparedness, we need to recruit more bodies overall. The County should explore ways to make volunteering in emergency preparedness an exciting and fulfilling opportunity. For those volunteers young enough to still be in school, perhaps their volunteer hours could count toward their school’s community service requirements.

Operationalize EPP Staff for Response
EPP staff are well-trained in emergency preparedness and response. The County should use them to assist during response. The HMCC and MACC are obvious examples of where they can help, but there are likely others.

Funding
Grant funding often comes with very strict rules about how you can use it. With 83% of EPP’s funding being through grants, the program has very little flexibility in how it can support its communities. If we explored providing technical assistance or exercise planning on a fee-for-service basis, we could build up a balance of funds without restrictions. We could also investigate corporate sponsorships or grants. In order to make ourselves more attractive to funders, we will need to learn how to brand and market ourselves. We’ll also need to revamp our page on the FRCOG website to make it clear who we are, what we do, and for whom we do it.

Examine Merging Committees
EPP’s committee structure follows that of its funding structure; for the most part, a separate committee oversees each grant. This stifles cross-discipline collaboration, creates multiple meetings for the same stakeholders to attend, and creates more administrative work for EPP staff. As part of this strategic planning process, we should explore merging or reconfiguring some of those committees.

Cross-Training of EPP Staff
In order to practice what we preach, the EPP should have a continuity of operations plan in place that involves the cross-training of staff. We should strive to have at least two staff members able to perform any task, primarily based on their natural skill sets and interests.
**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers**

Each town has a different comfort level with using unvetted, uncredentialed volunteers who show up spontaneously to help after a disaster. Legal counsel from town to town likely differs in their opinions as well. Therefore, towns should use the regional SUV Plan as a template and develop their own local plan.

**Support EMDs**

In order to show the role of an EMD is valued, towns should pay them more than a small stipend for the countless hours they put into attending meetings, reviewing and writing plans, going to trainings, and participating in exercises. They should also support their professional development in the field.

**Require All Employees to Help Out**

No town has the bench depth in its emergency personnel to handle sustained operations past 48 hours. Towns should consider requiring all town employees to help out during emergencies. This can be written into job descriptions and personnel policies. Those without emergency response backgrounds can still be helpful in performing administrative tasks or answering phones.

**Rainy Day Fund**

In the truest sense of the word, towns should consider establishing a rainy day fund for the day when it rains so hard, residents are flooded out of their homes. EMDs and boards of health should have robust operating budgets and the town should have a special line item where money is socked away for a really bad rainy day.

**County-Level Command and Control**

While the MACC is moving in the right direction of providing regional assistance during emergencies, without the authority of county government, the MACC cannot perform a command and control function. The County should explore filing legislation to create county-level command and control.

**Gas Station Generators**

One of the biggest problems after a storm that disrupts power for an extended period of time is the fact that gas station pumps can’t operate. This means that residents can’t fuel their cars, responders can’t fuel their apparatus, and delivery trucks can’t make deliveries of food, water, and other essentials. If gas stations were mandated to have backup generators, or offered a tax incentive to do so, this would help alleviate the problem.

**Strike Teams**

Given the many specialty skills one can have, and not all of us are interested in the same specialties, we should explore creating several strike teams across the County (or augmenting existing teams). One could focus on mapping using GIS skills, one on amateur radio, etc.

All SUV planning and support documents are available via the WRHSAC website at www.wrhsac.org
Clearly, many suggestions for improvement came out of the December 6th workshop and its associated online survey. Some are within EPP’s mission and capabilities; some are out of our reach or are the responsibility of other parties. The suggestions within our reach and within our area of responsibility, along with recommendations developed by EPP staff during their own internal strategic planning sessions, are below in a Gantt chart. The chart outlines EPP’s goals for the next five years: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2024.

All goals are highly dependent on availability of funds to support the work.
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<th>Goal</th>
<th>FY20</th>
<th>FY 21</th>
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<td>Have a reliable radio communications system</td>
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<td>Offer ICS/NIMS in person biannually</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operationalize and exercise regional shelter plans</td>
<td><em>(Operationalize)</em></td>
<td><em>(Tabletop)</em></td>
<td><em>(Drills)</em></td>
<td><em>(Functional)</em></td>
<td><em>(Full-Scale)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operationalize and exercise debris management plans</td>
<td><em>(Operationalize)</em></td>
<td><em>(Tabletop)</em></td>
<td><em>(Drills)</em></td>
<td><em>(Functional)</em></td>
<td><em>(Full-Scale)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>EDS exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hazmat operations-based exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMD education program</td>
<td><em>(Launch)</em></td>
<td><em>(Recruit/Support)</em></td>
<td><em>(Recruit/Support)</em></td>
<td><em>(Recruit/Support)</em></td>
<td><em>(Recruit/Support)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work w/FRCOG Collective Purchasing Program to seek bids</td>
<td><em>(Create)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>contractors and emergency repair equipment companies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Resource list of local, regional, state, and federal resources</td>
<td><em>(Create)</em></td>
<td><em>(Update)</em></td>
<td><em>(Update)</em></td>
<td><em>(Update)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Create generic Point of Dispensing plan</td>
<td><em>(Write)</em></td>
<td><em>(Tabletop)</em></td>
<td><em>(Drills)</em></td>
<td><em>(Functional)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assist towns with readiness assessments</td>
<td><em>(Suggest interested towns list these needs on DLTA requests)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Create “Emergency Preparedness for Municipalities” best practices</td>
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<td>document</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standardize and/or regionalize EMD services</td>
<td><em>(Suggest interested towns list these needs on DLTA requests)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>FY20</td>
<td>FY 21</td>
<td>FY22</td>
<td>FY23</td>
<td>FY24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit white paper to state and federal legislators recommending gas stations be mandated to have backup generators.</td>
<td>(Submitted January 2019)</td>
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<tr>
<td>REPC &amp; MAPHCO explore creating specialty teams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Examine restructuring EPP committees</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assist with sharing of public safety services</td>
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## Appendix A – After Action Reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1N1 Mass Vaccination</td>
<td>2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greenfield Bioterror/Nuclear Tabletop Exercise</td>
<td>2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franklin County Regional Tropical Storm Irene</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buckland Tropical Storm Irene</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colrain Tropical Storm Irene</td>
<td>2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elected Officials Tabletop Exercise</td>
<td>2012 and 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franklin/Hampshire REPC HazMat Full Scale Exercise</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Franklin County Mass Casualty Incident Exercise Drill</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baystate Franklin Medical Center Surge Drill</td>
<td>2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conway Tornado</td>
<td>2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winter Storms Health &amp; Medical Coordinating Coalition Response</td>
<td>2017</td>
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## Appendix B – Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>After Action Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>COAD</td>
<td>Community Organizations Active in Disasters</td>
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<tr>
<td>CoMIRS</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Massachusetts Interoperable Radio System</td>
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<tr>
<td>DART</td>
<td>Disaster Animal Response Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEP</td>
<td>(MA) Department of Environmental Protection <a href="https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-environmental-protection">Website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>DLTA</td>
<td>District Local Technical Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPH</td>
<td>(MA) Department of Public Health <a href="https://www.mass.gov/service-details/department-of-public-health-dph">Website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>EDS</td>
<td>Emergency Dispensing Site</td>
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<td>EMD</td>
<td>Emergency Management Director</td>
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<td>EMS</td>
<td>Emergency Medical Services</td>
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<td>EOC</td>
<td>Emergency Operations Center</td>
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<td>EPP</td>
<td>Emergency Preparedness Program <a href="https://frcog.org/program-services/emergency-preparedness/">Website</a></td>
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<td>FCECS</td>
<td>Franklin County Emergency Communications System</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEMA</td>
<td>Federal Emergency Management Agency <a href="https://www.fema.gov/">Website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>FRCOG</td>
<td>Franklin Regional Council of Governments <a href="www.frcog.org">Website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>FY</td>
<td>Fiscal Year</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
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<td>HMCC</td>
<td>Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition <a href="https://region1hmcc.org/">Website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>Incident Command System</td>
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<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Improvement Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>MACC</td>
<td>Multi-Agency Coordination Center</td>
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<td>MAPHCO</td>
<td>Mohawk Area Public Health Coalition <a href="https://frcog.org/boards-committees/maphco/">Website</a></td>
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<td>MEMA</td>
<td>Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency <a href="https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency">Website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NIMS</td>
<td>National Incident Management System</td>
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<td>NOAA</td>
<td>National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration <a href="https://www.noaa.gov/">Website</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>NWIMT</td>
<td>Northwest Massachusetts Incident Management Team <a href="https://www.nwmimt.org/">Website</a></td>
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<td>PIO</td>
<td>Public Information Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>REPC</td>
<td>Regional Emergency Planning Committee <a href="https://frcog.org/boards-committees/franklin-county-regional-emergency-planning-committee/">Website</a></td>
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<td>SUV</td>
<td>Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRHSAC</td>
<td>Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council <a href="https://wrhsac.org/">Website</a></td>
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