Agency Mission

The mission of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) is to protect the state of Illinois through integrated approaches in Emergency Management, Nuclear Safety and Homeland Security and to prepare for, respond to, mitigate against and recover from emergencies and disasters or acts of terrorism.

IEMA Responsibilities

IEMA's primary responsibility is to better prepare the state of Illinois for response and recovery from any natural, manmade or technological disasters or acts of terrorism. During disasters, IEMA activates the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Springfield and brings together liaisons from more than two dozen state and federal agencies to coordinate response efforts. IEMA also serves as the State Emergency Response Commission and operates a 24-hour communication center and 14 agency worksites throughout Illinois.

IEMA's Division of Nuclear Safety (DNS) is responsible for protecting Illinois residents and the environment from the potentially harmful effects of ionizing radiation. DNS administers more than two dozen programs, including monitoring 11 nuclear power reactors at six nuclear power stations in Illinois, inspecting/escorting spent nuclear fuel shipments, and ensuring public and employee safety through inspection, licensing, accreditation and certification of radiologic technologists, radiation equipment and radioactive materials.

The Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF) chairman and staff are also part of IEMA. The ITTF is responsible for developing and implementing the state's homeland security strategy and administration of federal preparedness funding received by Illinois. The ITTF includes various public and private stakeholders representing nearly 70 state and local agencies, organizations and associations from all response disciplines and regions of the state.

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Facebook New Tool for Public Information

As part of the state's National Preparedness Month campaign in September 2009, IEMA launched a new Ready Illinois Facebook page. Throughout the month, the agency posted daily preparedness tips along with video clips.

By the end of 2009, nearly 1,000 people were "fans" of the Ready Illinois Facebook page. The agency continues to post a variety of preparedness information, photos, videos and other related information regularly to the Facebook page and anticipates using it as a communications tool during disasters.

State of Illinois
Illinois Emergency Management Agency

IEMA 2009 Year in Review

Message from Director Andrew Velasquez III

Every day, the men and women at IEMA work hard to enhance the state's emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Thanks to these efforts, Illinois' emergency management program is nationally accredited and our homeland security program was recently ranked in the top four percent nationally.

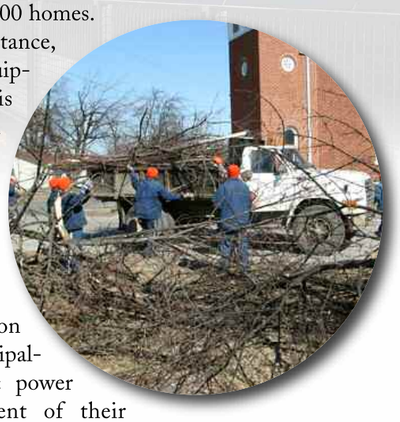
While IEMA continually strives to strengthen our preparedness, we also recognize the importance of personal preparedness.

During 2009, IEMA launched several initiatives to increase personal preparedness, including a contest for high school students to create a preparedness TV spot, a preparedness activity book for younger children, a week-long earthquake awareness effort and a Facebook page as a new avenue for promoting preparedness.

IEMA's public safety mission extends well beyond emergency preparedness, and during 2009 we also realized significant accomplishments in emergency management, nuclear safety and homeland security. These accomplishments, which directly impact public health and safety through Illinois, are highlighted in this "IEMA 2009 Year in Review."

Southern Illinois Ice Storm Brings Federal Assistance

Illinois' request for a federal disaster declaration to help nine southern Illinois counties recover from a major winter storm in late January was approved in March. The storm downed countless trees and electrical lines and cut power to more than 12,000 homes.



IEMA coordinated state assistance, including trucks and heavy equipment from the Illinois Department of Transportation and inmate crews from the Illinois Department of Corrections, to help communities clear branches and other storm-related debris.

The federal disaster declaration helped local governments, municipally owned utilities and electric power cooperatives recover 75 percent of their extraordinary costs related to storm response and recovery. By the end of 2009, these entities had received more than $10.8 million in federal reimbursement.

Counties included in the federal disaster declaration were Alexander, Gallatin, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Pulaski, Saline and Union. All nine counties were previously declared state disaster areas by Gov. Pat Quinn and included in his request to the President.

2009 State Conference

More than 1,000 Attend IEMA Conference

More than 1,000 emergency management, fire, law enforcement, EMS, public health and other professionals from around the state attended the 13th annual IEMA emergency management conference in Springfield Sept. 9-10.

The conference featured nationally recognized speakers discussing such topics as 9/11 response efforts, recovery from the devastating tornado in Greensburg, Kansas and lessons learned from the Minneapolis bridge collapse response. The conference also offered several breakout sessions, as well as pre-conference workshops on Sept. 8.

IEMA Enforces National Source Tracking System

IEMA's Division of Nuclear Safety began enforcement of the National Source Tracking System (NSTS) in January 2009 as part of its efforts to enhance controls for certain radioactive materials used in industry, academia and medicine.

The tracking system requires licensees to report the manufacture, transfer, receipt, disassembly and disposal of nationally tracked sources. NSTS will enhance the accountability of radioactive sources as IEMA conducts inspections and investigations, communicates nationally tracked source information to other government agencies and verifies legitimate ownership and use of nationally tracked sources.

Throughout 2009, IEMA staff inspected facilities to determine compliance with the NSTS requirements.

Homeland Security Program Rated in Top 4 Percent

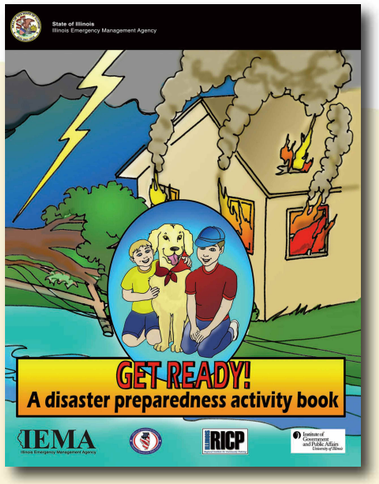
A nationwide evaluation of state homeland security program effectiveness by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ranked Illinois' program in the top four percent of state programs. Illinois received an overall effectiveness score of 91 out of 100. The national average effectiveness score was 71.

FEMA used peer reviewers from around the country to review each state's homeland security preparedness efforts, focusing on accomplishments, homeland security strategy, development of investment justifications and utilization of homeland security funding to build response capabilities to confront threats.

Illinois' homeland security strategy is developed and implemented by the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF). The task force also determines how the state's share of federal homeland security funds should be used to enhance emergency preparedness and response throughout Illinois.

Activity Book Encourages Kids to be Prepared

A new activity book unveiled at the Illinois State Fair in August 2009 teaches children about the importance of disaster preparedness. The activity book, "Get Ready! A Disaster Preparedness Activity Book," follows two young brothers as they learn about preparedness and includes mazes, word searches, crossword puzzles and other fun activities to reinforce the message.



ITTF Develops Suspicious Mail Handling Guidance

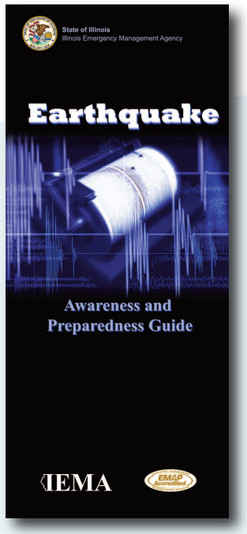
Local governments, businesses and others in the private sector now have a one-stop resource for helping their employees properly handle suspicious mail, packages and explosives. In January, the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF) unveiled training materials that are available for free through the state's Ready Illinois website.

A team of subject matter experts from fire, law enforcement, emergency management, transportation, bioterrorism preparedness, training and the U.S. Postal Inspectors developed the training course and materials for the ITTF.

The 30-minute, Web-based course, Suspicious and Unknown Mail/Package/Explosive Awareness, will help participants become more aware of potential threats and hazards. It covers characteristics of suspicious mail and packages, basic safety procedures, associated response agencies and procedures, and available resources for awareness, mitigation and preparedness.

Materials for the course include an information guide, the training program audio, a checklist and a sample template of an action plan that businesses or other entities can customize for each work location's needs, policies and procedures. The materials can be downloaded from the state's Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

IEMA Observes Earthquake Awareness Week



A year after a 5.4 magnitude earthquake shook southern Illinois, the state observed Earthquake Awareness Week April 13 – 19 to encourage people to better prepare for earthquakes.

As part of Earthquake Awareness Week, IEMA developed public information materials that were distributed to libraries, local emergency management agencies and IEMA's regional offices in Marion, Collinsville and Flora. The information was also made available through the Ready Illinois website at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

Southern Illinois is susceptible to earthquake effects from two seismic zones: the New Madrid Seismic Zone, which extends from southeastern Arkansas and southwestern Tennessee to southern Illinois, and the Wabash Valley Seismic Zone, located in southeastern Illinois and southwestern Indiana.

While shaking from a southern Illinois earthquake can be felt as far away as the far northern tip of Illinois, 29 counties in southern Illinois are considered to be most at risk for the effects of a destructive earthquake.

Display Showcases Response Capabilities

In late May, IEMA and the ITTF displayed more than 30 emergency response vehicles and other response equipment outside the State Capitol. The equipment display showcased major equipment purchased by Illinois with a portion of the state's share of federal homeland security dollars received over the past decade.

Command trailers, special teams response trucks, equipment trailers, and even two tactical boats illustrated a portion of the state's emergency response and preparedness capabilities. The ITTF has spent $68.8 million acquiring and outfitting the 443 vehicles and pieces of emergency response equipment represented in the display.

IEMA Coordinates Response to H1N1

IEMA played a key role in the state's quick response to the H1N1 flu outbreak in April 2009. The agency activated the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Springfield, bringing together representatives from several state agencies to support the state's efforts to protect public health.

Through the SEOC, IEMA coordinated quick distribution of the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) supplies to local health departments throughout the state. The supplies included anti-viral medications, masks, gloves and surgical gowns.

IEMA also established and managed a citizen call center with English and Spanish-speaking operators to provide Illinois residents with easy access to information about the H1N1 flu. The call center was staffed by state employee volunteers from several agencies.

In addition, IEMA staff continually posted updated information about the flu on the state's Ready Illinois website.

Agreement State Program Receives High Marks

The state's Agreement State Program received high marks in 2009 following a comprehensive review by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC). A five-person team spent five days reviewing Illinois' program for regulating radioactive materials against criteria outlined in the NRC Integrated Materials Performance Evaluation Program (IMPEP).

The review team found Illinois' performance to be satisfactory for all of the various performance indicators. This is the highest finding allowed by IMPEP. The review team made one recommendation in regard to program performance by the State and also identified one good practice that will be shared with all other Agreement States and NRC regions.

Based on the results of the IMPEP review, the next full IMPEP review will take place in approximately four years.

IEMA Increases Public Awareness of Radon

IEMA's radon staff continued efforts to increase public awareness of the health risks associated with radon exposure throughout 2009, beginning with Radon Action Month in January. To highlight the importance of testing homes for radon, IEMA released an agency study showing that 42 percent of nearly 72,000 homes tested in Illinois between 2003 and 2007 had radon levels greater than 4 picocuries per liter of air (pCi/l), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) recommended action level.

The 6th Annual Radon Networking Day brought together nearly 60 local officials from across the state to learn more about radon health hazards, measurement and mitigation and public outreach advice. Participants in the day-long workshop included local public health officials, radon contractors, real estate professionals, code officials, extension educators and radon grant partners.

In May, the radon program hosted a medical conference on radon and its related health risks in Oak Brook. The conference was attended by nearly 100 healthcare professionals, radon licensees and state radon program staff from Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Posters created by three Illinois students illustrating the hazards of radon gas in homes were selected to compete in the 2010 National Radon Poster Contest sponsored by the National Safety Council in partnership with the USEPA. The posters were among more than 300 entries in the statewide poster contest sponsored by IEMA, the American Lung Association (ALA-IL), the University of Illinois Extension Office and the Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago. The three finalists in Illinois were selected from 15 top entries in five regions.

Residents in 10 southern Illinois counties were eligible to receive free radon home test kits as part of a radon awareness campaign launched in June under a partnership between IEMA, the ALA-IL and the Southern Illinois Radon Awareness Task Force. The 10 participating homes found to have the highest concentrations of the radioactive gas linked to lung cancer were selected to have radon mitigation systems installed at no cost. More than 500 homes were tested during the contest. The highest radon level found was 17.8 pCi/L.

Three laws addressing radon were passed by the General Assembly and signed into law in 2009. The first (Public Act 96-0417) recommends that occupied school buildings be tested every five years for radon and that new schools be built using radon resistant new construction techniques.

Another (Public Act 96-0278) revises the Illinois Radon Awareness Act to require home sellers to disclose either that they have no knowledge of elevated radon concentrations or that prior elevated radon concentrations have been remediated. It also stipulates that provisions of the act do not apply to sales of residential dwellings located on the third story or higher above-ground level of any building.

The third new law (Public Act 96-0195) requires that all radon detection devices sold in Illinois be approved by IEMA and be calibrated to ensure the accuracy and precision of their measurements. It also creates the Radon-Resistant Building Codes Task Force to make recommendations concerning the adoption of rules for radon resistant new construction building codes.

Federal Assistance Approved Following Derecho

A particularly vicious wind storm, known as a derecho, devastated several counties in southern Illinois in early May 2009. The storm caused extensive damage throughout the area, including uprooting countless trees, downing power lines and damaging homes.

IEMA activated the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to coordinate state assistance, which included state troopers to assist with traffic control and security, and Illinois Department of Transportation crews and equipment working with inmate crews from the Illinois Department of Corrections to clear debris.

With 69 homes destroyed and nearly 560 damaged by the storm, the state sought and received U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) assistance to help homeowners and businesses recover. The SBA declaration enabled residents and businesses in nine counties to apply for low-interest loans.

Gov. Quinn toured the area a few days after the storm and, following a damage assessment by IEMA and FEMA, requested federal assistance to help local governments and people recover from the storm's aftermath.

In early July, federal assistance to local governments and electrical cooperatives was approved for Franklin, Gallatin, Hamilton, Jackson, Randolph, Saline, Union and Williamson counties, enabling them to recover 75 percent of their extraordinary costs related to storm response and recovery. By the end of 2009, reimbursements totaling more than $13.5 million had been approved.

FDA Commends Mammography Program

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) commended Illinois for its exemplary Mammography Certification Program following an on-site review in August 2009. The FDA reviewed facility inspection files, certification activities and compliance actions. FDA's report concluded that the program adequately and appropriately fulfills its responsibilities as an FDA approved certification body.

Illinois' program is one of just four in the nation approved by FDA to certify mammography facilities. This program helps ensure that Illinois patients receive quality mammograms for the early detection of breast cancer.

Public Works Mutual Aid Activated for First Time

Trucks and workers from as far away as the Wisconsin border were deployed to help with the massive storm debris cleanup following the derecho in southern Illinois in May.

Nearly 30 public works employees, along with 14 dump trucks, other vehicles and equipment, were part of the state's first-ever deployment of the Illinois Public Works Mutual Aid Network (IPWMAN). IPWMAN provides a formalized system for providing public works assistance to communities following disasters or other situations that require action beyond the normal capabilities of a local agency.

IPWMAN was officially organized in early 2009 as a network of local public works and roads departments to help other communities with personnel, equipment, materials and other resources needed during disasters.

Pilot Program Tests Responder Radiation Detectors

Local emergency response agencies in four separate areas of the state received more than 240 personal radiation detectors as part of a pilot program launched in February 2009 by the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF), the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA), the Illinois State Police (ISP), the Illinois Law Enforcement Alarm System (ILEAS) and the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS).

Under the Preventive Radiological and Nuclear Detection (PRND) pilot program, law enforcement officers and firefighters in Effingham, the Metro East area, Springfield and Champaign/Urbana received the detectors, which are designed to protect responders by alerting them to potentially hazardous radiological materials they may encounter in the line of duty. The pilot program was conducted to test preset alarm levels for the instruments and evaluate the capability of the web-based alarm reporting and tiered reachback system for responding to and adjudicating radiation alarms.

IEMA, ISP and ILEAS, the statewide mutual aid organization for law enforcement agencies, conducted training and distributed the personal radiation detectors to local and state law enforcement officers and fire services personnel. Responders receiving the personal radiation detectors were trained in how to operate the devices as well as protocols to follow when the alarm sounds.

The PRND program, an ITTF initiative, is funded by homeland security grants the state receives from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The ITTF has allocated more than $3.4 million for the pilot and initial statewide phase of the program.

Staff from IEMA's Division of Nuclear Safety compiled and reviewed results from the pilot program and will incorporate findings into the statewide rollout of the PRND program in 2010.

Ready Illinois Contest Produces New TV Spot

Illinois' campaign to encourage people to be prepared for disasters got a new TV spot in 2009 thanks to the creative efforts of a high school junior from Springfield. Lanphier High School student Brittny Barger submitted the winning entry in the "Ready Illinois High School Challenge" contest, and her script was produced as a 30-second TV spot.

The contest was sponsored by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and the Illinois Terrorism Task Force (ITTF), in cooperation with the Illinois Broadcasters Association (IBA).

Nearly 50 high school students from around the state submitted entries for the contest, which asked teens to develop a 30-second script that addressed disaster preparedness measures and directed people to the state's Ready Illinois website (www.Ready.Illinois.gov) for more information about preparedness.

In the winning spot, a woman and her dog Spencer grab their preassembled preparedness kits and head for the basement as outdoor warning sirens blare in the background. The TV spot was produced by Southern Illinois University – Carbondale student Rafal Kos.

Lanphier High School was also recognized for Barger's efforts with a check from the IBA for $10,000, which could be used for curriculum or instructional supplies/activities.

The spot airs on TV stations throughout Illinois as part of the ITTF's disaster preparedness broadcast campaign.