



Snohomish County
County Executive's Office
Aaron Reardon
County Executive

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Snohomish County performance audit of Department of Emergency Management released

**Performance audit—the first of several measures by Executive Reardon to reinvent
the County's new Department of Emergency Management**

Snohomish County Performance Auditor Kymber Waltmunson announced today the final result of an eight month performance audit of the Department of Emergency Management (DEM) as requested by County Executive Aaron Reardon. Executive Reardon sought the audit shortly after the County assumed responsibility for the previously independent agency on January 1, this year.

“I am determined to establish the new County Department of Emergency Management as one of the best in the nation,” says Executive Reardon. “The performance audit was the first of several immediate measures I’ve taken to get us there.”

Executive Reardon stated his appreciation for the thoroughness and attention to detail provided by the Snohomish County Performance Audit Division. Specifically, the audit was to ‘assist the County in identifying and rectifying long standing organizational issues at the DEM’ as established prior to becoming a County department.

Overall, the audit team stated that DEM has met or partially met 80% of the 90 criteria established for high performing emergency management entities. The audit did identify several areas of needed improvement among them, DEM staffing and organization, full implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), grants program oversight, and strengthening of the County's Emergency Operations Center.

With Executive Reardon's hiring of John Pennington on July 10, DEM has already undergone significant changes. Under Pennington's leadership, many of the audit's

recommendations for improvement have either been solved or on track for future resolution.

Pennington, former Director for FEMA Region X, has addressed staffing and organization challenges head on by reorganizing DEM to more accurately adhere to federal recommendations for preparedness and mitigation, response and recovery and finance and logistics. Pennington also hired several new managers with exceptional skills in emergency mitigation and preparedness, logistics and finance, response and recovery and, in training and exercise coordination. He is using the audit to address other items of concern such as pursuing full compliance with applicable laws and regulations, complete NIMS compliance, strengthening of the EOC, implementation of timelines for rectifying other audit issues, and a complete departmental reorganization.

“This eight month audit reflects many of the strengths and weaknesses I recognized when I first took over DEM,” said Pennington. “It is my goal to use the audit and my experience in emergency management to make Snohomish County DEM a model of effectiveness and efficiency in disaster and emergency management.”

“We live in times of heightened risk from both human and natural disaster,” says Executive Reardon. “With the audit in hand and John Pennington as director, we are moving fast to build a new, more effective DEM that our County and region can depend on when a disaster strikes.”

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