



**Snohomish County
Office of the County Performance Auditor**

AUDIT FOLLOW UP: Department of Emergency Management

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 BACKGROUND.....1

2 OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY1

3 OVERVIEW.....2

4 FOCUS ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND PROGRESS3

4.1 DEM IS FOCUSING ON MAKING ORGANIZATIONAL, MANAGEMENT, AND STAFFING IMPROVEMENTS TO EXECUTE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS EFFECTIVELY.3

4.1.1 DEM’s Compass - Recommendation 1.....3

4.1.2 DEM Objective Achievement (Internal Controls)- Recommendation 2.....3

4.1.3 Organizational Structure - Recommendation 3.....4

4.1.4 Adequate DEM Staffing - Recommendation 4.....4

4.1.5 Documentation - Recommendation 5.....4

4.1.6 Technology - Recommendation 6.....5

4.2 DEM IS IN COMPLIANCE WITH MOST APPLICABLE LAWS AND REGULATIONS.....5

4.2.1 Full compliance with all laws and regulations- Recommendation 7.....5

4.3 DEM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (NIMS) IS PARTIALLY COMPLETE.....6

4.3.1 Full implementation of NIMS requirements - Recommendation 8.....6

4.4 DEM SHOULD IMPROVE DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLANNING.7

4.4.1 Activity alignment with County Hazards - Recommendation 9.....7

4.4.2 Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan- Recommendation 10.....8

4.4.3 Drills, exercises and training documentation - Recommendation 11.....8

4.4.4 Training plans and logs - Recommendation 12.....9

4.4.5 Coordination and communication - Recommendation 13.....9

4.5 DEM LARGELY MANAGES GRANT PROCESSES EFFECTIVELY.10

4.5.1 Sub-Recipients - Recommendation 15.....10

4.5.2 Grant Documentation - Recommendation 16.....10

4.5.3 Grant Reporting - Recommendation 17.....10

4.6 THE COUNTY IS WORKING TOWARD SUFFICIENT PLANNING FOR CONTINUITY OF GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS..... 11

4.6.1 Snohomish County’s Continuity Plans - Recommendation 18..... 11

5 APPENDIX.....12

1 BACKGROUND

The audit of Snohomish County's Department of Emergency Management (DEM) was completed in August of 2006. The audit was requested by the county executive shortly after the county integrated DEM operations into county government. This audit follow up report reflects the degree to which recommendations made in the audit have been addressed by DEM.

Management and staff of the Department of Emergency Management have dedicated much time and energy in the last year to address the recommendations made in the audit report. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was activated three times in the last year (twice for federally declared flood disasters) which tested DEM and its ability to plan, mitigate, respond and recover from emergency events. The department has made many positive changes or is in the process of making changes to enhance and improve the county's emergency management function.

Noteworthy Accomplishments

In addition to addressing audit recommendations:

- DEM transitioned into a county department in 2006 requiring existing staff to learn and develop new policies, procedures and protocols.
- Snohomish County led the state in requests to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for federal aid to repair damages caused in the November 2006 floods. DEM believes that this was in large part due to DEM's outreach to citizens informing them of FEMA's processes.
- DEM has established a framework for four groups of specialized volunteers (veterinarian, pharmaceutical, mortuary, language) that will utilize their expertise to assist DEM in emergencies.

2 OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this audit follow up is to determine if the recommendations made by the Office of County Performance Auditor in the Department of Emergency Management Audit were addressed.

To determine whether recommendations were addressed the auditors:

- met with DEM's director and managers
- interviewed and surveyed DEM staff
- interviewed other county entities associated with the Department of Emergency Management
- surveyed member cities/external emergency management partners
- reviewed DEM supplied documents, reports, plans and assessments
- observed DEM staff meeting and DEM sponsored training

3 OVERVIEW

Report Structure

The follow up report contains the six focus areas from the audit report (3.1 – 3.6) with corresponding recommendations. Comments are provided under each recommendation describing the progress made toward addressing the recommendation.

Color Coding

The Office of County Performance Auditor uses the following color system to show progress on audit recommendations:

	The audit recommendation has been addressed or the issue has been resolved by alternate means.
	Resolution of this audit recommendation has been initiated or plans are in place to resolve the issue.
	Little or no progress has been made toward addressing the recommendation.

Recommendation Status

When recommendations are fully addressed (color coded green), they are considered “closed.” Recommendations that are color coded yellow or red are considered “open” and will be evaluated annually until closed.

The Department of Emergency Management has addressed or partially addressed all of the audit recommendations. DEM expects to fully address the 6 open recommendations within the next six months, barring any unforeseen county emergencies. Given the complexity and scope of the recommendations, DEM has made sufficient progress on 11 recommendations to consider them closed.

Rec #	Was the recommendation addressed?	Rec #	Was the recommendation addressed?
1	Yes	10	Partial
2	Yes	11	Partial
3	Yes	12	Partial
4	Yes	13	Yes
5	Yes	14	
6	Yes	15	Yes
7	Yes	16	Yes
8	Partial	17	Partial
9	Yes	18	Partial

4 FOCUS ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND PROGRESS

4.1 DEM is focusing on making organizational, management, and staffing improvements to execute emergency management functions effectively.

4.1.1 DEM's Compass - Recommendation 1

DEM leadership should undertake a strategic planning process and document the results. The strategic plan should include development of performance measures linking activities to goals and objectives, as well as address resources.

DEM management and staff have made improvements within the organization that have led to better planning, additional resources and enhanced performance for the county 's emergency management entity.

DEM leadership conducted a strategic planning process resulting in the 2007 Department of Emergency Management Strategic Plan. The timing of the planning process coincided with major staff changes and the transition of DEM to a Snohomish County department with county oversight. The Strategic Plan contains goals and objectives, performance measures and timetables for task implementation and review. The Plan focuses on improvement of fundamental emergency management tasks that do not require additional resources.

4.1.2 DEM Objective Achievement (Internal Controls)- Recommendation 2

DEM leadership should design and implement internal controls to ensure that DEM objectives are met.

Internal controls are elements of an organization that support people in the achievement of the organization's objectives. A number of controls have been implemented at DEM including:

- A positive "tone at the top" has been established and DEM staff report that they feel like part of a team.
- A shared mission and achievable goals and objectives are documented.
- Critical decisions are made by people with the necessary expertise, knowledge and authority.
- An information management system has been designed.
- Staff understand their respective roles and how they fit into the larger organization.
- A positive office culture exists.
- DEM has incorporated county policies and procedures in hiring practices, finances, budgeting and reporting.
- Multiple guidelines, protocols and plans have been written and incorporated into the organization's operation.

Areas where progress is being made but not yet complete are in developing internal policies and procedures for the department, and in determining performance targets and personalized training programs for staff.

4.1.3 Organizational Structure - Recommendation 3

DEM leadership should redesign job descriptions and the organizational structure to ensure that DEM:

- 1. Is flexible and responsive*
- 2. Includes both big picture and detail orientations*
- 3. Integrates teamwork and communication*

DEM's current organizational structure reflects the key functions of emergency management: preparedness and mitigation, response and recovery, and resources and logistics. A number of job descriptions have been re-written to coincide with the new structure. DEM's management has worked to integrate teamwork and improved communication among staff.

DEM has also restructured the EOC organization to reflect an integration of the incident command structure (ICS) with emergency support functions (ESF). Appendix A depicts the EOC organizational structure.

4.1.4 Adequate DEM Staffing - Recommendation 4

DEM leadership should ensure that DEM is adequately staffed to achieve its objectives.

Current DEM staffing consists of six full-time general fund positions, five full-time grant fund positions and between two and four part-time grant fund positions. DEM will receive additional grant funding in 2008 to hire a full-time administrative support person – a position that every DEM staff member interviewed indicated was needed in order to improve operational efficiency. DEM's management is planning for future staffing needs taking into consideration the current reliance on grant funded positions.

4.1.5 Documentation - Recommendation 5

DEM leadership should develop and update documentation according to legal requirements and strategic priorities.

DEM has changed its operational construct from tactical to strategic; essentially serving as coordinators of information and resources during an emergency as opposed to providing a field presence. DEM documents their strategic emphasis on their website, in the Interlocal Agreement with member cities, in their Strategic Plan, and it has been thoroughly communicated and understood by DEM staff. DEM's strategic construct was tested a number of times in the past year and was well received by most outside partners and member cities.

DEM has been actively developing, updating and implementing a number of emergency management plans that the audit found were needed. Completed plans include: Communications Plan, Physical Security Plan, Emergency Operations Center Plan, DEM Emergency Preparedness Plan, and a Strategic Plan. DEM is currently working on a Public Information Plan, a Recovery Plan, Suggested Operating Guidelines and a county wide Continuity of Government Plan. A number of these plans require input and expertise from multiple departments, agencies and jurisdictions.

4.1.6 Technology - **Recommendation 6**

DEM leadership should ensure that an effective and informative website is developed and maintained and that technology is appropriately incorporated into DEM operations.

Website - DEM worked with the Department of Information Services (DIS) to remove outdated links on its website. The site's content has improved; however, the website is a continuing work in progress. DEM plans to train two additional staff on website management to help update the site in a more timely manner.

Information Management – Critical documents, plans, procedures and contacts are now organized into a technology based information management system that all staff have access to and are utilizing.

WebEOC – DEM worked diligently to assist DIS in removing technical obstacles that had hindered DEM's ability to fully utilize its resource coordination and emergency management communication system, WebEOC. This technology is now a part of DEM's protocol. Training will begin this fall to fully incorporate the member cities into WebEOC.

Additional technology is being utilized to strengthen response capabilities at DEM's EOC. For example:

- A Mobile Emergency Operations Center (MEOC) trailer was purchased that will be used for remote activation of the DEM EOC during certain events.
- Incorporating MyStateUSA, an internet-based interoperable communications system will allow the county and all of its partners to quickly broadcast messages via phone, PDA, pager, email to essential personnel regarding emergency events. DEM is in the process of purchasing this software.

4.2 DEM is in compliance with most applicable laws and regulations.

4.2.1 Full compliance with all laws and regulations-**Recommendation 7**

DEM leadership should work to come into full compliance with all laws and regulations focusing on:

- NIMS
- HSPD-5, HSPD-7, HSPD-8
- DMA 2000
- National Preparedness Goal

One of the primary challenges of emergency management entities is to stay abreast of and in compliance with the often changing expectations of federal, state and local governments. DEM has been working toward full compliance with all pertinent laws and regulations.

NIMS - DEM has met or exceeded National Incident Management System (NIMS) training requirements to date. They have also assessed the needs of other Snohomish County departments and entities relating to NIMS training requirements for 2007 and 2008. See the NIMS section below for additional information.

HSPDs - The Homeland Security Presidential Directives (HSPDs) pertain to NIMS compliance, identification and protection of critical infrastructure, and mitigation and preparedness response for terrorism. DEM has satisfied the intent of all of the HSPDs and is waiting for state approval on its terrorism annex.

DMA 2000 - DEM complies with the basic tenets of the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 and works cooperatively with Surface Water Management on this issue.

4.3 DEM implementation of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) is partially complete.

4.3.1 Full implementation of NIMS requirements - **Recommendation 8**

DEM should make every effort to be in full compliance with NIMS by September 2006. This will include full implementation and documentation of NIMS requirements in relation to:

- 1. ICS*
- 2. Public Information System*
- 3. SOGs*
- 4. Mutual Aid Agreements including updating current agreements and new agreements with:
 - a. Independent EOCs in Snohomish County*
 - b. Stakeholders**
- 5. After-Action Issue Implementation*
- 6. Inventory Community Response Assets (personnel, teams, facilities, equipment, and supplies) including:
 - a. Snohomish County assets*
 - b. Regional assets*
 - c. Nonprofit assets*
 - d. Public sector assets**

NIMS integrates effective practices in emergency management preparedness and response into a comprehensive framework for incident management. Periodically, new requirements are added to NIMS making “full implementation and compliance” a moving target. DEM has made progress toward full implementation of NIMS throughout its operation.

ICS – DEM utilizes the Incident Command System (ICS) for EOC activations. Some of the outside partners and member cities remarked that they saw ICS fully utilized for the first time during the November '06 floods.

Public Information System – DEM is in the process of developing a public information plan and system in collaboration with the county executive's office.

SOGs – The Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) are being created, updated, consolidated or deleted. They currently exist in draft form.

Mutual Aid Agreements – DEM has recently formalized an agreement with the Monroe Correctional Complex for flood preparedness and response support. In addition, DEM has drafted an agreement relating to the use of the Mobile Communication Vehicles and an inter-jurisdictional mutual aid agreement among the four EOCs of Snohomish County. DEM's Director stated that they will continue to promote additional mutual aid agreements with entities in the region that play a role in providing emergency support.

After-Action Issue Implementation – The best approach to using after-action reports is not yet formalized. The Deputy Director reports that each participant in an activation or exercise will be required to fill out an after-action report which will ask for recommendations for improvements to the emergency management process. The feedback will determine if policy/procedure/plans should be changed.

Inventory Community Response Assets – DEM plans to adopt a resource tracking software system designed by San Juan County to gather countywide asset data. DEM will encourage all partners (internal, external, member cities) to load their specific assets into the system where it will become a dynamic tool for resource tracking. In addition, DEM has established a number of staging areas throughout the county that will serve as drop off/pick up points for equipment and supplies during and after events.

4.4 DEM should improve disaster preparedness planning.

4.4.1 Activity alignment with County Hazards - Recommendation 9

DEM should ensure preparedness for all hazards and alignment of activities with Snohomish County hazards including the following:

- 1. Take additional actions focusing on mitigation*
- 2. Develop additional hazard-specific plans*
- 3. Seek out opportunities to practice response to specific Snohomish County hazards*

DEM has made improvements in disaster preparedness planning by expanding and enhancing the EOC, acquiring additional equipment and resources for DEM, developing and updating a number of planning documents, focusing efforts on mitigation, and working to improve the level of communication and coordination with its partners.

Mitigation - DEM has focused efforts on mitigation and has taken on more of a coordinating role within Snohomish County to acquire additional funds through federal mitigation grant programs. By providing education and technical assistance to member

cities on mitigation, DEM hopes to improve the region's preparedness for future disasters.

Hazard Specific Plans – DEM just completed a terrorism annex that is being reviewed by the state and has plans to develop a catastrophic plan and a flood plan.

Practice Specific Snohomish County Hazards – In the last year, DEM has activated the EOC for two floods (later declared federal disasters) and for a severe wind storm. DEM has “practiced” their response on these occasions and has made process improvements after each event. In addition, a region-wide exercise called, “Sound Shake” will take place in early 2008 which will test the response and recovery capabilities using an earthquake scenario.

4.4.2 Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan- **Recommendation 10**

DEM should undertake a thorough update of the CEMP, including the ESFs. This should include attention to:

- 1. RCW, NIMS, and EMAP compliance*
- 2. Consistent CEMP format and clarity*
- 3. Disseminate to and educate all designated partners*
- 4. Include hazard-specific and public awareness and education annexes*

DEM's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) has been updated and reviewed by the state, is NIMS compliant and will be enhanced over time. It will remain in draft form until the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) and the Annexes are completed. DEM has redeveloped the ESF structure so that it mirrors both the state and federal guidelines. DEM's terrorism annex has been submitted to the state for review and they plan to write a catastrophic annex and a flood plan. Once the state reviews DEM's plans they are then circulated to county departments, member cities and critical partners for review.

4.4.3 Drills, exercises and training documentation - **Recommendation 11**

DEM should ensure that appropriate documentation is in place for training that they provide. This should include:

- 1. Specific goals and objectives*
- 2. Assessment of constituency training needs*
- 3. Participant lists*
- 4. Course evaluations*

DEM's Preparedness and Mitigation Division has assessed the need for ICS training among its partners, but has not completed assessments of other training needs to date. DEM has met with some of the member cities regarding their training and exercise requirements with a goal to help coordinate efforts of these communities within geographic proximity to each other.

In addition to training its own staff and member cities, DEM has hosted a training for county elected officials and decision makers on critical disaster priorities and will be

providing training on specific Emergency Support Functions for county departments and affected agencies.

The Training and Exercise Coordinator's goal is to develop a 5 year plan on the training needs of all entities associated with DEM. Another goal is to maintain a current schedule of trainings and exercises on the website. In order to keep the website up to date, additional DEM staff will need to be trained on website editing. For all training that does take place, DEM maintains participant lists and course evaluations.

4.4.4 Training plans and logs - Recommendation 12

DEM should develop and document training plans and training logs for each DEM staff person.

The Deputy Director, along with the Training and Exercise Coordinator, plan to design individual training programs for each staff member at DEM. Currently, staff training that is completed is being logged by the Finance Coordinator.

4.4.5 Coordination and communication - Recommendation 13

DEM should develop specific processes to ensure sufficient communication, coordination, and service to member cities, internal and external partners, and regional EOCs.

Overall communication, coordination and service to DEM's partners has improved. For example:

- Each member city/town has a specific DEM liaison who serves as the primary point of contact for information involving DEM.
- The new Interlocal Agreement with member cities/towns includes specific level of service language so that expectations and responsibilities are clear. The Interlocal has been extended to cover a two-year time period.
- Of the entities that responded, all indicated that DEM has made progress, has competent leadership, assembled a knowledgeable staff and is headed in the right direction.
- Entities report that they have confidence in DEM and its ability to manage events. One responded by saying, "I feel very comfortable that my taxpayer dollars are well spent by DEM and the preparation, response, recovery and mitigation functions are a credit to the County and all members of DEM."
- A Mutual Aid Agreement among the four EOCs in Snohomish County has been drafted that spells out the type of emergency assistance and under what circumstance that assistance could be offered by the EOCs.

Though most comments were positive, DEM's response to the floods and storms in 2006 received mixed reviews. These same partners now believe that DEM is better organized and that DEM staff more fully understand their roles and are working more cooperatively with member cities.

4.5 DEM largely manages grant processes effectively.

4.5.1 Sub-Recipients - Recommendation 15

DEM should continue to develop and implement effective sub-recipient equipment monitoring processes.

Equipment monitoring for sub-recipients has improved and will continue to do so as DEM grows familiar with their new process. All high value items (over \$5,000) purchased through grants are identified and tracked by function and receiving jurisdiction. DEM then randomly selects items to physically verify by making site visits or by viewing photographs of equipment installations.

Grantors do not require specific monitoring of items under \$5,000, however, DEM has indicated that it would like to establish such a policy for small and attractive items.

4.5.2 Grant Documentation - Recommendation 16

DEM should develop centralized files and data management procedures including comprehensive files for each grant.

Accurate and complete grant documentation is required in order to fulfill grant requirements. Progress has been made in centralizing grant files, improving the grant filing system, and better data management procedures. The county's finance department is now responsible for submitting DEM's year end grant documentation and noted that improvements have been made since last year.

4.5.3 Grant Reporting - Recommendation 17

DEM should implement continuous monitoring processes including methods for ensuring that:

- *Grants are closed out timely*
- *Grant objectives are being met*
- *Grant reporting requirements are submitted as required*

The majority of DEM's funding comes from an array of grants. This highlights the importance of a well-managed grants program. More progress could be made to ensure an effective and efficient grants program by establishing clear oversight of grant related functions.

4.6 The county is working toward sufficient planning for continuity of government operations.

4.6.1 Snohomish County's Continuity Plans - **Recommendation 18**

A comprehensive COOP plan should be developed for Snohomish County government. The Executive's Office should determine what, if any, role DEM will play in the development of the COOP plan.

A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) enables government to preserve, maintain and/or reconstitute its capability to function effectively in the event of an emergency. In the past year, DEM has played an active role in the development of Snohomish County's COOP. They serve as an equal partner to the county executive's office in its role in helping develop the COOP. The county has been laying the groundwork for a countywide COOP process for some time and has just recently embarked on that process in earnest. It is anticipated that a countywide COOP will be operational within 12 months.

5 APPENDIX

Appendix A – EOC Organizational Chart

