



March 10, 2023

Dear Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders:

We renew our request to the state of Minnesota to include as a priority for the 2023 session the passage of the \$3 million appropriation for local government emergency management planning and preparedness activities and capital purchases this session. The Emergency Management Readiness Proposal is a bipartisan bill sponsored by Sens. Weber, Pappas-SF472 and Reps. Tabke, Novotny, Curran, Johnson, Huot, Torkelson, Brand, O'Driscoll – HF1273. Funding for this proposal had been included in both included in both the Public Safety Omnibus in 2022.

This funding request is a priority for the: Association of Minnesota Emergency Managers (AMEM), Minnesota Rural Counties Association (MRC), Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), Minnesota Inter-County Association (MICA) and Tribal Governments.

The \$3,000,000 increase beginning in fiscal year 2024 is requested to be added as a base appropriation from the general fund to the commissioner of public safety for the director of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (HSEM) to award grants in equal amounts (approximately \$30,000) to emergency management departments in the 87 counties, 11 federally recognized tribes, and four cities of the first class, for planning and preparedness activities, including capital purchases. The bill also provides that current local funding for emergency management and preparedness activities may not be supplanted by the state funds. The need for these funds is more critical than ever this year, due to the burden placed on local governments due to COVID-19.

The federal EMPG grants are 50% of the county funds for emergency management and preparedness activities and they currently receive no state funding. All of these local governments must meet the same requirements regardless of the size of their budgets, placing a particular hardship on rural entities. Our smallest and poorest units of government desire to provide their citizens the same level of preparedness as the largest and wealthiest communities but there is no equity in funding and staffing to assure this goal is achieved.

It is important to know that some emergency managers are currently struggling under both the national emergency of COVID-19 pandemic as well as a state emergency for spring flooding. We expect there will be more counties in the same situation in the not too distant future. Funding resources to operate under these two emergencies are required.

The majority of our rural emergency managers have no staff or often wear several hats themselves; as an example some of our county emergency managers are not only handling daily preparedness for both natural and manmade disasters, but also managing the duties of Safety Officer, Planning and Zoning, Parks, Solid Waste or various Sheriff's Office and Fire Chief's duties. Additional duties may added for Emergency Managers as necessary, such as the expansion to assist in the fight against COVID-19, which meant adding additional the following in many of our counties:

- Organizing and providing Incident Command System assistance to Local Public Health during the COVID-19 response
- Providing guidance to county administration and the county board on mitigation strategies for the response.
- Actively acquiring and distributing PPE and hand sanitizer to public safety agencies, and other organizations in the county.
- Working with various organizational structures (Healthcare Coalition, Department of Health, City Government, HSEM, etc.) in various cross organizational projects during this response. Example: Finding sites for Alternate Care Sites.
- Working with private industry partners with their response to COVID-19 (Examples: day cares, pork producers, schools)
- Assisting in developing their response to COVID-19 housing needs and in some cases assisting in getting suspected COVID-19 homeless persons to shelter when possible.

Respectfully we call your attention for the critical funding requested so that all citizens throughout the state have equal opportunity for planning, preparedness and response to disasters.

Thank you all for your consideration, while we know there are a lot of requests you are grappling with today, we have been working on this request for several years, this request for disaster preparedness funding should NOT wait for one more year. **Emergency managers create the plans and organize training to coordinate with our first responders and as such, their funding needs should be considered essential.**

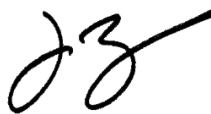
Respectfully,



Blain Johnson
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AMEM



Luke Johnson
MRC Chairman
Pipestone County
Commissioner



Julie Ring
Executive Director
AMC



Matt Massman
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MICA