

ACTIVITIES REPORT

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021
AND
JANUARY – DECEMBER 2022



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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FAREWELL TO DIRECTOR JOE KELLY



HSEM Director Joe Kelly retired at the end of 2022 after leading the state through emergencies and disasters over the past eight years in that role. The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University published the following article in December 2022. It is reprinted here with the author's permission. Kelly is a 1983 alumnus of Saint John's University.

**Joe Kelly '83 to retire as Minnesota's director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management
December 8, 2022
By Frank Rajkowski**

Numbers have always been important to Joe Kelly.

And there are three big ones that led the 1983 Saint John's University graduate to conclude now is the right time to step away from his duties as director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for the State of Minnesota (HSEM), a division of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

His last day on the job will be Dec. 23.

"The first number would be eight," said Kelly, who has been in his current position since January of 2015 and previously spent 31 years in the U.S. Army and Minnesota National Guard, achieving the rank of Brigadier General and serving in Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Which is really 2x4. My position is appointed by the Commissioner of Public Safety, who is appointed by the governor. I've had two terms under two commissioners now and this is a good and orderly time to leave.

"Then there's the fact that I've been (with this agency) for 12 years in total," continued Kelly, who served as deputy director of HSEM for four years before taking over his current post. "Combine that with more than 30 years in the military and it adds up to 42 years of public service. So 42 would be the second number.

"And the last number is 62, which is how old I am. When you get to be 62, you think about retiring.

"I think this job is important enough that whoever takes my place should get a full four years," he concluded. "And I don't want to be selfish and eat away at some of that time. To me, being in an appointed position, there's just a finite amount of time there. Two four-year terms seem like enough."

Minnesota Department of Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington — Kelly's boss the past four years — remembers meeting 'General Joe' for the first time during preparations for the 2008 Republican National Convention, held in Saint Paul. Harrington was chief of the Saint Paul Police Department at the time and recalled Kelly — who served as the joint military task force commander during the event — being the most prepared person in the room.

"He never seems to get rattled," Harrington said. "He's been the steady hand throughout wind storms, tornadoes, floods, blizzards and, more recently, medical emergencies and civil unrest. No matter how late or how awful things might seem, he's the voice saying, 'We got this.'

"He's the boots on the ground directing help to those in need."

Those sentiments were echoed by Gov. Tim Walz, who said Kelly has been a steady presence no matter what challenges have arisen.

FAREWELL TO DIRECTOR JOE KELLY

“Whether it’s a tornado, a flood or a snowstorm on Christmas Eve, Joe Kelly is the first call we make for emergency management,” he said in a statement. “He has continually stepped up to guide Minnesotans through historic challenges — always with calm, steady leadership. He has led a lifelong career in public service, and I am deeply grateful for his leadership and service to communities across Minnesota.”

Busy and historic three years

And there have been plenty of needs to fill the past three years. His job entails coordinating state agency preparation and response to emergencies and disasters. That meant playing a key role in Minnesota’s response to COVID-19 as well the civil unrest that followed the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police in late May of 2020.

During 2020 and ‘21, the state’s emergency operations center in St. Paul ran at full activation for a record-shattering 475 consecutive days. Add all that into the agency’s regular natural disaster response duties, including 14 this year alone that have qualified for either state or federal disaster assistance, and it’s made for an unprecedented level of effort.

“We do (hypothetical exercises) all the time,” Kelly said. “And a lot of times we accuse the exercise writers of packing too much stuff in there.

“But you would have never written an exercise that would have had historic rioting occurring in the middle of a global pandemic. We would have said you’re nuts. That’s never going to happen.”

But it did, making for a number of long days ... and long nights.

“I had some pretty (bad) sleeping conditions when I was in the army,” Kelly said. “But there were times (during the past couple of years) that I slept on a piece of cardboard in my office. Rolling up my pants as a pillow to put something behind my neck. Because we just had to keep going. I’ll admit that was hard. But it was hard for everybody. It’s been hard for all Minnesotans to go through all this.”

Responding to the pandemic

At the start of the pandemic, HESM’s primary roles included securing badly needed equipment such as face masks, nose swabs and ventilators, which were all in short supply, as well as taking on the critical task of building a statewide testing network from scratch.

“We knew if we were going to try and control a virus, we had to figure out who was sick,” Kelly said. “We had to know who had it. Testing was really hard to get our arms around. We had someone from the Met Council — Meredith Vadis — who came and worked with us. She previously had nothing to do with the Department of Health or emergency services. But she is a really smart operations person. She came in and started building this testing program, which ended up being the spit test that Minnesota kind of operationalized. And we could do 40,000 tests a day through that.

“But she built it from nothing. So our days would be spent trying to figure out how we were going to this. Where were we going to set up test centers because you had to get them out where the people are. In the end, we built up this testing network all around the state.”

Later, with the arrival of vaccines, the job became finding ways to get them distributed and administered.

“You probably saw pictures of places like the Minneapolis Convention Center and the State Fair to local National Guard armories,” he said. “Those are places where we set up networks for testing, then later for vaccines. A lot of that kind of thing is what occupied our days.

“I would say the average day at the height of the pandemic was probably 12 hours.”

A draining time

It was truly life-and-death work, which Kelly said took a toll physically and emotionally on both he and his staff.

“Draining is a good word,” Kelly said. “The duration of the pandemic response, even though it ebbed and flowed a little bit, was just relentless. It was always something. If it wasn’t setting up testing then it was setting up vaccines. Some of the darkest moments were early on when we had these crises in these long-term care facilities, these nursing homes. How do we get help in there to them? Our elders were there ... our grandparents. It just went from thing to thing to thing.”

“Relentless is maybe the word I would choose. I put the pressure and the workload of (these past few years) right up there with anything I did in the military – including a tour in Iraq. It was essentially the equivalent. But the thing that made this harder is that when I was in Iraq, I was in Iraq. This was all happening right here in Minnesota.”

And it was impacting not just Kelly, but his family as well.

“My wife Jean, who is a Bennie (class of 1984) by the way, was running the operating rooms at the University of Minnesota hospitals,” he said. “Our oldest daughter, also a Bennie, is an anesthesiologist working at a hospital. Our youngest daughter, sorry, she went to Marquette, is also in health care as a physical therapist. So my family and I were in the same war at the same time. Worse yet, they were on the front lines. And that happened to all sorts of people across Minnesota – people who owned businesses, teachers, day-care providers. Everyone was impacted by the strain of this.”

Lessons learned

Kelly credits lessons from his time in the military with helping him keep going.

“After 9/11, I was lucky enough to be a brigade commander as a colonel, and the Army said they needed one of our infantry companies to go to Afghanistan,” he recalled. “I remember calling this young captain and saying ‘Simon, I’m sorry to give you this bad news. You and your soldiers are going to deploy to Afghanistan. Here are some the details, and on a human level, I’m sorry, because I know this is going to change all of your lives and the lives of your families forever.’

“And he said to me, in one of the most humbling moments I’ve ever had as a leader, ‘That’s OK sir. This is the life we chose.’ So the last two-and-a-half to three years, I’ve tried to live up to that. It’s been hard, but it’s OK. Because this is the life we chose. It’s what we signed up for.”

Kelly said that call-to-service was ingrained in him during his time on campus at SJU.

“I think it does all go back to what I learned at Saint John’s about community, common good, service, hospitality and just taking care of each other,” he said. “That carried through into my military service.

“In addition to getting my degree at SJU, and having a wonderful undergraduate experience there, I also went through the ROTC program. So I walked off campus with a Bachelor of Science degree in one hand and an Army commission in the other.

“I’d also be remiss if I didn’t point out that I met my wife – the love of my life – there. So it had a huge impact on me.”

FAREWELL TO DIRECTOR JOE KELLY



Joe Kelly speaking at 2022 AMEM Conference.

New ways to serve

Kelly expects to continue finding new ways to serve, even as he enters retirement. But he hopes the playbook that was developed during his time overseeing HSEM, especially during the pandemic response, will prove valuable in the years and decades to come.

“Part of our challenge is that it’s not going to be another 100 years before we have another global public health emergency – unfortunately,” said Kelly, who currently resides on a lake near Lindstrom, Minnesota.

“But I have hope,” he added. “We’re a whole lot smarter now than we were. Our imaginations were limited at first when it came to understanding just how big and bad it could get. But now you have a whole generation of folks – both in and out of government and in and out of healthcare – who have seen how big and bad it can get.

“We’ve also figured out, at least within state government ... how to do that interagency work together. We have an organization chart that we didn’t have at the beginning of this which we can now use for the next public health emergency, or for the next mega-storm. We could use it for a technological incident – a cyberattack or a power grid failure.

“Our imaginations have really been opened up. I think we’re a lot smarter and a lot better prepared.”



Minnesota School Safety Center Director Randy Johnson gives media interview.

Minnesota School Safety Center

The Minnesota School Safety Center (MnSSC) continues to provide all-hazards school safety resources and training to all Kindergarten through 12th grade (public, public charter, private, and tribal) and their public safety partners. These services are provided at no cost. Additional school-safety-centric work has been coordinated through the Minnesota Department of Education and a wide range of state education professional organizations.

With students returning to the classrooms in-person for the 2022 school year, much of the MnSSC activity centered on getting back to the basics after several years away from the classroom. The MnSSC team focused on best practices of:

- ◆ Emergency operations plan updating.
- ◆ Safe school facility assessments.
- ◆ School reunification plans.
- ◆ De-escalation strategies.
- ◆ Behavioral threat assessments for schools.
- ◆ School resource officer (SRO) basic and advanced strategies courses.

The MnSSC team also provided significant support and resources for schools that suffered significant trauma due to violent incidents occurring at school sites. MnSSC team members were certified as master trainers of Department of Homeland Security National Threat Evaluation and Reporting,

An exciting development is the MnSSC's first offering of the School Based Emergency Management Certificate Program. This training track will allow educators and public safety professionals to learn the same best practices to keep students, staff, families and communities safe. The team also hosted a SRO Summit.

Moving forward, the MnSSC will continue to tailor its training and resources to specific needs of individual schools. The MnSSC strongly encourages the relationship building process between schools and their support partners in public safety and emergency management, as well as school safety engagement by students, staff, families and their communities.



HSEM held the 2022 REP exercise for the Prairie Island Nuclear Plant in person.

Training and Exercises

HSEM was proud to have a full year of classes in 2022, which hasn't happened since 2019. Instructors led 106 course offerings, which allowed 69 people to complete their Basic Emergency Management Certificate. Additionally, 41 people completed their Director/Practitioner Certificate in 2022. HSEM hosted several exercises which included seven workshops, five tabletops and two functional exercises.

The monthly training bulletin was launched to communicate with more than 750 subscribers about HSEM-initiated learning opportunities. Not registered to receive these bulletins? [Stay connected by visiting this webpage.](#)

HSEM's training program is also undergoing a makeover. In the fall, HSEM started the transition to a new learning management system, which should launch in early 2023. This new system will provide a better, more intuitive, experience for the user, and allow the training program to make data driven training decisions.

Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP)

The REP program successfully completed the Prairie Island exercise in summer 2022. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) found no findings (or issues) following the exercise.

The REP program team also got back out into the field, providing trainings. Offerings included the Minnesota Radiation Exposure Response Organizations class in July at the Lake Superior Fire Training Center in Duluth and a REP Ingestion Workshop in November in Monticello.

DO YOU HAVE INFORMATION ABOUT THREATS TO A SCHOOL OR PLACE OF WORSHIP?

Send tips to the Minnesota BCA and help solve a crime.
TIPS CAN BE ANONYMOUS.





BCA developed tip app is a free download to anyone's phone.

DPS Blog: You can help protect schools and places of worship with the new app

No matter where or how you worship or learn, your church and school should be among the places you feel safest. And although you can and should depend on law enforcement to ensure that safety, the fact is that it's a team effort. After all, law enforcement has always relied on the public to report threatened criminal activity.

As a way to facilitate that teamwork, the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) uses an app called See It, Say It, Send It. If you haven't already, you'll soon see information about this app at the gas station, hear about it on your smart phone, and see it on social media. Hopefully, you'll never need it—but if at some point you learn about planned or threatened violence at a Minnesota school or place of worship, you can use the app to report it.

When you send in a tip using the app, the BCA will triage it, notify local law enforcement, and assist as needed with the response to criminal activity. If the tip is about a school but doesn't involve criminal activity, they'll work with the Minnesota School Safety Center, the Minnesota Department of Education, and schools to determine the appropriate response. If the tip is about a place of worship, the BCA will notify local law enforcement and coordinate with the religious facility's leadership on a response.

Remember that the See It, Say It, Send It app is for reporting planned or threatened criminal activity—something that might happen in the future. If you're aware of an ongoing incident or immediate threat, always call or text 911 first. Similarly, the app is not intended to replace local law enforcement or an existing school or religious facility security plan, but rather supplement it.

Whether you have an Android or an iPhone, you can download the app for free. You can access it from your cell phone and other mobile devices. If you want to share the tip anonymously, you can.



HSEM held the 2021 REP exercise for the Monticello Nuclear Plant virtually.

Radiological Emergency Preparedness (REP)

Due to COVID, HSEM held the 2021 REP Monticello exercise in a virtual space. HSEM, the state partners and Sherburne and Wright Counties were able to successfully demonstrate all the exercise criterion without any findings from FEMA.

Minnesota made history with this exercise, becoming the first state to do a fully virtual REP exercise, with more than 270 participants, controllers, evaluators, and observers participating. were a part of the exercise this week. This was no easy task and required patience and hard work to take on the challenge and succeed at such a high level.

HSEM also received exercise credit for many tasks accomplished over the 15 month COVID and civil unrest response and recovery.

Training and Exercises

The HSEM training program continued to work to provide course offerings, all while being dedicated to the SEOC activation for COVID-19 in 2021. This included getting the majority of learners who were canceled in 2020 into courses in 2021. In all, HSEM hosted 10 virtual instructor-led courses, 19 Basic and Director/Practitioner Courses and four Senior Officials Training.

The HSEM training program also assisted multiple local jurisdictions in arranging courses with Consortium Partners, including:

- ◆ CDP – Field Force Operations, Field Force Extrication
- ◆ TEEX – Public Information in an All-Hazards Incident, Sport and Special Events Incident Management

Training exercises in 2021 included:

- ◆ Virtual Cybersecurity TTX
- ◆ Tower of Terror TTX support at AMEM Conference
- ◆ 10 Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshops (2020 and 2021 both completed in 2021)

And finally, the training team worked with current instructors, along with state and local partners on developing a Certified Instructor Program Guide. The document offers guidance and expectations of both instructors (especially new instructors) and the training team. The guide also identifies instructors who have been vetted through the HSEM Training Program. Some other benefits to this guide include:

- ◆ Uniformity in decision making and messaging to students, course hosts and instructors
- ◆ A process to follow if someone is interested in becoming an instructor for HSEM courses
- ◆ Avoiding the unfortunate occurrence of local and county officials hiring third party instructors to teach a course in this document, only to find they will not receive a certificate

National Qualification System

As a key component of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the [National Qualification System \(NQS\)](#) provides a foundational guideline on the typing of personnel resources within the NIMS framework. HSEM is working to implement a process within Minnesota over a three-year period. The goal is to better align with federal standards and guidelines allowing first responders, from multiple disciplines, to become qualified and credentialed under the NQS system.

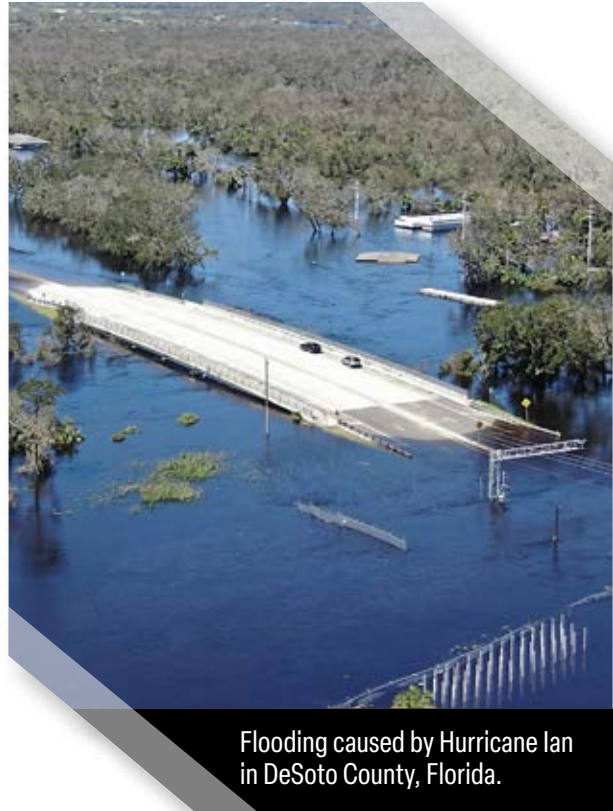
The first step in that process has been to recruit and hire a NQS Coordinator to lead the project, with the candidate expected to start in early 2023. We look forward to working with our partners as this project moves forward.

Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) Missions

In April, the Minnesota National Guard deployed a Chinook helicopter, with crew, to North Dakota to conduct heavy lift operations by emplacing large pumps atop a dam, relieving hydraulic pressure and preventing failure.



MN National Guard helicopter lifts pump into place atop dam.



Flooding caused by Hurricane Ian in DeSoto County, Florida.

In September and October, two Class-A Surface Water Treatment Operators (one from the City of Minneapolis and the other from the City of Eden Prairie) were deployed in support of the “Jackson, MS Water Crisis.” Both individuals were instrumental in getting systems back online and producing clean drinking water for the residents.

Also in October, the Minnesota All-Hazards Incident Management Team (AHIMT) deployed to Florida in response to Hurricane Ian. The team was assigned to DeSoto County, which is 50 miles inland from the Gulf Coast. The area became flooded after Ian made landfall and storm surge caused the Peace River to run over its banks. During their deployment, the AHIMT planned and executed daily response and recovery actions, set up a base camp for emergency personnel, managed donations and established points of distribution.

2022 RESPONSE



65 law enforcement agencies participated in a weapons turn-in event.

Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO)

HSEM serves as the state coordinator overseeing the Law Enforcement Support Office (LESO) program, which allows law enforcement agencies (LEA) to acquire excess DOD property for bona fide law enforcement purposes. There are currently 195 participating LEA's in Minnesota with over \$56 million dollars in equipment. In 2022 alone, Minnesota LEA's acquired 3.5 million worth of property from the program.

In January 2022, HSEM facilitated a weapons turn-in event in which 65 law enforcement agencies (LEA) returned 618 weapons to the DOD that were no longer in service, reducing overall risk of loss, damage, and theft to DOD property.

HSEM conducted a federal Program Compliance Review (PCR) in August 2022, in conjunction with representatives from the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). The purpose of a federal PCR is to confirm they state is compliant with the terms and conditions of the program. As part of the PCR the team visited 25 LEA's checking paperwork, physically inspecting property and conducting interviews. Minnesota and the LEA's visited successfully passed all aspects of the PCR.



Volunteers assisted with flooding response in Koochiching County.

Volunteers, Donations and Minnesota Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (MNVOAD)

Volunteer and Donation Management (VADM) Outreach picked up in 2022, with HSEM providing services to three tribal nations, 21 counties and 18 cities across the state.

The volunteering spirit is also alive and well with an increase in engagement with Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Programs. HSEM staff conducted three CERT leader meetings and added one CERT program.

2022 was a busy year for disasters across the state, which means voluntary organizations were in high demand. Nine counties and two cities requested assistance, so MNVOAD and HSEM coordinated to fulfill several of those requests. Volunteers proved to be invaluable for those experiencing the effects of the historic flooding along Minnesota's northern border. In all, six organizations supplied nearly 400 volunteers who donated more than 14,000 hours of time to assist flood response and recovery effort

Ongoing Pandemic Response

HSEM response efforts in 2021 continued to largely focus on the COVID-19 pandemic with a shift toward vaccinations. HSEM became instrumental in serving as a state liaison to FEMA as they set up a COVID vaccination site at the Minnesota State Fair in April. The goal was to vaccinate up to three-thousand people every day. HSEM also helped establish the Mall of America community vaccination site.

These projects were planned and logistically coordinated through the SEOC, which ended its historic activation after 475 days in July 2021.

DPS Blog: The longest job you never knew about

Most of us think of emergencies as lasting only a few hours – a few days, at most. House fires. Car crashes. Natural disasters. But Minnesotans – and the world – just lived through an emergency that lasted almost 18 months. And the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), coordinated and hosted by our division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), was in full activation for all 475 days of it. That record-setting activation officially ended last Friday, July 2, after beginning March 15, 2020.

During an SEOC activation, emergency preparedness representatives from state and federal agencies gather in one room (although, in this case, sometimes that room was virtual). They make sure whomever is involved in the incident gets the proper support, and they make it easier for agencies to communicate with one another. Communication is critical when lives are at stake.

In the case of the COVID-19 activation, the SEOC's job was to support the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) in its mission to "prevent the uncontrolled spread of the virus in Minnesota." That meant everything from distributing personal protective equipment and hand sanitizer to coordinating testing; from contact tracing to helping staff nursing homes and the vaccine site at the State Fairgrounds. Whatever the MDH needed on any one of those 475 days, the staff of the SEOC worked to make happen, some of which they had never done before. SEOC staff created solutions from scratch; there was no template.



Gov. Walz speaks with staff at the state fair vaccination site.



The SEOC was activated for 475 days during the COVID pandemic.

2021 RESPONSE

Emergencies don't politely stick to business hours or happen one at a time. While the SEOC was activated for COVID-19, they also dealt with 10 natural disasters, the civil unrest surrounding George Floyd's murder, and keeping the peace during the Derek Chauvin trial. Sometimes the SEOC ran weekdays and closed at 5 p.m.; other times it ran 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with some staff sleeping on their office floor. If the phone rang at 2 a.m., they picked it up.

COVID-19 presented an emergency so big, no one state agency in Minnesota was equipped to handle it alone. It covered every aspect of our lives: health, unemployment, agriculture and public safety, to name a few. It took a total mobilization of state government, along with private and nonprofit organizations, to respond to this once-in-a-century pandemic. The SEOC helped them bring in the resources, coordinate their efforts, and make connections. Without that amount of teamwork, Minnesota would likely have lost far more people to the virus. Instead, the governor has lifted the peacetime state of emergency and 70 percent of us have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

Most Minnesotans likely had no idea all of this work was happening on such a massive scale behind the scenes. And that's the way it should be. As HSEM Director Joe Kelly put it: "If the public doesn't know about the SEOC or the work we do, that's a good thing. That means we did our job."

Operation Safety Net and the Kim Potter Trial

During a high-profile event like the trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, it was important that members of the public could safely have their voices heard. That's why Operation Safety Net (OSN) was formed: to preserve and protect lawful First Amendment non-violent protests and demonstrations before, during and after the trial of Chauvin, who was charged and convicted in George Floyd's May 2020 murder.

Operation Safety Net was also dedicated to preventing violent civil disturbances, assaultive actions, property damage, fires and looting to government buildings, businesses, and critical infrastructure. To achieve that goal, HSEM provided security support for the duration of OSN along with the subsequent trial for former Brooklyn Center police officer, Kim Potter, who was charged and convicted in April 2021 traffic stop killing of Daunte Wright.

Line 3 Replacement Project

The Enbridge Line 3 replacement project kept emergency management partners busy during 2021. HSEM supported 14 counties along the pipeline route as work began in the spring and finished in the fall. Regional Program Coordinators assisted logistics, planning and response efforts in two regional emergency operations centers (EOCs). Polk and Pennington counties served as the EOC locations for the Northeast region of the state. Beltrami County was the EOC for the Northwest region of the state.

Demonstrations related to the replacement project occurred in the following counties and tribal lands:

- ◆ Aitkin
- ◆ Carlton
- ◆ Cass
- ◆ Crow Wing
- ◆ Fond Du Lac
- ◆ Itasca
- ◆ St. Louis



The Line 3 replacement project involved a large area of northern Minnesota.

This was the first time a regional structure successfully deployed to meet needs for an event that required resources, planning and mutual aid beyond any recent natural disaster or hazardous materials situation. Emergency managers were able to utilize an adaptable response methodology, combined with effective group communication, to build up/demobilize the regional EOC based on need. This allowed these counties to uphold public safety and meet the needs of on-scene incident command personnel. Flexibility allowed each entity to utilize the regional EOC uniquely, as it worked for the situation.

EMAC Missions

In August, ten Minnesota National Guard soldiers deployed to Washington State to help with wildfire response. The soldiers and Black Hawk helicopter provided medivac support to ground firefighting efforts and aerial fire suppression.

In September, 22 Minnesota firefighters deployed to Louisiana to assist with Hurricane Ida recovery. Nine departments sent the personnel to assist with local fire protection in areas where local firefighters were on duty since the storm hit.



Minnesota firefighters were deployed to Louisiana to assist with Hurricane Ida recovery efforts.

2022 RECOVERY

Federal Disasters

Minnesota received three Federal Disaster Declarations in 2022 that affected a total of 66 counties and five tribal nations. The estimated eligible damages from these three declarations is \$32 million. Among the most newsworthy is the devastating and historic flooding that occurred along Minnesota’s northern border in spring and summer 2022.

The HSEM recovery team is actively working on the Federal Disaster Declaration for COVID-19, which now has an incident end date of May 11, 2023. The federally declared COVID-19 disaster obligated \$208.5 million in new projects in 2022.

Recovery staff also conducted three Small Business Administration (SBA) damage surveys. This resulted in 19 counties declared for physical damages and economic injury to homeowners and businesses.

2022 State Disasters

Gov. Tim Walz also declared 11 state disasters in 2022. These incidents involved 39 county declarations and amounted in a total estimated eligible damage of \$11.5 million. The following chart is a summary of the incidents that received a declaration in 2022.



Sandbags being assembled on field before being sent to flooding areas.

2022 STATE DISASTERS AT A GLANCE

State Disaster #	Incident Type	Eligible Counties and Tribes
SD-069	Thunderstorm	St Louis
SD-068	Flooding	Houston
SD-067	Thunderstorm	Houston, Renville
SD-066	Thunderstorm	Aitkin, Becker, Cass, Crow Wing, Itasca, Lac qui Parle, Mahnomon
SD-065	Flooding	Becker
SD-064	Flooding	Cottonwood, Freeborn, Rock
SD-063	Flooding	Cottonwood
SD-062	Thunderstorm	Benton, Lyon, McLeod, Murray
SD-061	Flooding	Winona
SD-060	Thunderstorm	Fillmore, Mower, Norman, Rice
SD-059	Flooding	Big Stone, Stevens, Traverse

In addition to facilitating the reimbursements for the Federal Disaster Declaration for the pandemic, HSEM recovery staff kept busy in 2021 with 16 state disaster declarations since the onset of COVID.

The following chart is a summary of the incidents that received a declaration in 2021.

2021 STATE DISASTERS AT A GLANCE		
State Disaster #	Incident Type	Eligible Counties and Tribes
SD-058	Tornado	Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Steele, Wabasha
SD-057	Thunderstorm	Cottonwood
SD-056	Thunderstorm	Houston
SD-055	Thunderstorm	Itasca
SD-054	Severe thunderstorm, heavy rains and flooding	Marshall
SD-053	Severe winter storm	Faribault
SD-052	Heavy rains and flooding	Cass, Itasca, Norman
SD-051	High winds and heavy rains	Goodhue, Yellow Medicine
SD-050	Heavy rains, flooding and slope failures	Brown, Nicollet, Renville, Sibley
SD-049	Fires related to civil unrest	Hennepin
SD-048	Severe thunderstorms with heavy rainfalls, flooding and damaging winds	Cass, Kittson, Marshall
SD-047	Severe thunderstorms with damaging winds	Wilkin
SD-046	Heavy rains and flooding	Kittson, Le Sueur, Morrison, Renville, Washington
SD-045	Severe storms and flooding	Roseau
SD-044	Severe weather and flooding	Kittson
SD-043	Spring flooding	Hubbard, Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Polk

2022 MITIGATION AND PREVENTION

Hazard Mitigation Projects

Minnesota was the first in the nation to submit 100 percent of COVID-related Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) applications. The \$14.6 million is funding the following projects:

- ◆ Duluth water plant resiliency.
- ◆ A school safe room.
- ◆ A flood mitigation project.
- ◆ A flood buyout.
- ◆ The State Plan update.

Staffing recently increased to three people in the Hazard Mitigation program. In addition to assisting with the multiple disaster assessments in summer 2022, the team is managing many disaster (HMGP) and non-disaster (PDM/BRIC/FMA) projects throughout the state.

Communications: Closed Captioning Project

After several years of work, the Department of Public Safety's Office of Communications (OOC) will be fully launching its real-time closed captioning project in 2023. The multimedia production equipment will allow us to close caption live news conferences in real time. In addition, the new hardware and software would also allow closed captioning to be included into all of our post-production videos, which live on our DPS web and social media pages. This project was made possible by a grant facilitated through HSEM.



A new HSEM video highlighted how to assemble a winter survival kit.



MNSC staff continue to reach out to schools across Minnesota.

Outreach: Back to School

With many teachers and students heading back to the classroom full time in 2022, the OOC took this opportunity to reach out to Minnesotans about the good work of HSEM's School Safety Center. A media blitz in August and September highlighted the various ways our MnSSC staff work with educators and public safety across the state to keep our learning environments safe. Media coverage detailed the SRO training program, safety measures for alternative learning environments — like the Metro Deaf School, and the 360-degree approach to school safety.

Education: Winter Survival Kit Video

Emergency managers across Minnesota know, all-to-well, just how important it is for motorists to have a winter survival kit in their vehicle. That's why the OOC recorded an informational video on assembling a kit for the 2022-2023 winter season. This video was released on web and social media channels in time for Winter Hazard Awareness Week in November. With motorist rescues across Minnesota during blizzard conditions over the last several winters, [the video serves as a good preparedness reminder.](#)

Hazard Mitigation Projects

COVID-19 slowed project review and approval at both the state and federal levels. Despite those delays, Minnesota was awarded 22 projects in 2021.

Federal Disaster Declaration DR-4442 (2019 winter storms and subsequent spring flooding) was a large event with nearly \$10.5 million available for HMGP projects throughout the state. The majority of funding went to flood and erosion prone home buyouts, which totaled 14. Other structural projects included:

- ◆ A community safe room.
- ◆ A school safe room.
- ◆ A rural electric cooperative power-line retrofit.
- ◆ Drainage improvement.

Additionally, \$800,000 funded Advance Assistance projects in two watershed districts and two cities. The five percent initiative funded multiple back-up generators, warning sirens and a lightning detection system. One Federal Disaster Declaration (DR-4414: 2018 severe storms and flooding) project was awarded for the City of Duluth, with another still pending. Meanwhile, the Federal Disaster Declaration (DR-4390: 2018 storms, tornadoes, winds and flooding) for the City of St. Cloud's \$3 million erosion stabilization project was finally awarded.

HSEM also saw success in hazard mitigation planning in 2021 with more than 80 percent of state's population currently covered. All expiring county plans are funded for five-year updates, with the Building Resilient Community and Resilient Communities (BRIC) 2020 state set-aside will fund six county plan updates.

The announcement of \$14.6 million in HMGP funds for Federal Disaster Declaration DR-4531 (2020 COVID-19 pandemic), BRIC and Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) 2021 has brought significantly more interest than funding availability. We welcome the applications to make Minnesota more resilient!

DPS Blog: How to forget the lightning and focus on the sport

No matter what your child does for extracurricular activities – ballet, theater, track, you name it – you want them to be safe while doing it. The same is true for the hundreds of families arriving in Minnesota with their young soccer players for the annual USA CUP. The same wide-open spaces that allow players plenty of room to dribble and pass can also be risky places for lightning strikes, should the summer weather turn foul.

The National Sports Center (NSC) in Blaine, which hosts the tournament, is mitigating such risks with its new lightning detection system. The NSC used funds from HSEM's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, which help fund sustainable projects that reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from future disasters.



The National Sports Center in Blaine installed a lightning detection system.

2021 MITIGATION AND PREVENTION

The lightning detection system is called Thor Guard, and it has been operational since spring 2020. It uses sensors at the NSC Welcome Center that not only detect but also predict lightning. Many other systems work by detecting a thunderstorm's first strike and then sounding the alarm, but Thor Guard samples the electrostatic energy in the atmosphere over 170,000 times per second. The storm's strength, speed, and intensity determine when the system issues an alert and the subsequent all clear to people at the NSC.

The Thor Guard sensors are connected to clusters of horns located throughout the NSC campus. Whenever lightning is detected, the horns sound an alert staff and visitors. The horn clusters also contain strobe lights for lightning and two levels of heat warnings, which can help players avoid heat-related conditions like dehydration and heatstroke. In addition, any member of the public can view the information picked up by the sensors on [NSC's ThorTV website](#).

The NSC is the world's largest amateur sports facility, hosting everything from golf to rugby, which means there are large numbers of staff and visitors on campus every day. The Thor Guard system helps keep them all safe by giving officials plenty of time to suspend play and seek shelter before that first lightning strike on or near the campus.

The NSC staff is impressed with the new lightning detection system. "We are very pleased with the results we have seen so far with Thor Guard," says Bret Kirchner, NSC's golf course superintendent and head of the Thor Guard project. "It provides plenty of lead time for people to seek shelter, but also eliminates false alarms by using the advanced algorithms."

2022 DEVELOPMENT AND GRANTS

SEOC Project

HSEM began preparation work on the new SEOC facility after the Legislature approved the \$29.5 million in funding in 2020. Through the past two years, HSEM has secured 12 acres of land in Blaine for the facility's new site. HSEM has also worked with an architect to create schematic designs for the SEOC building and secure a construction company for the build. However, construction costs have risen due to inflation and increased demands on the supply chain during the design phase, which means HSEM has yet to break ground on this project.

To reduce costs, HSEM decreased the square footage of the new facility. This means using some previously dedicated work areas for dual purposes, while still keeping the facility as functional as possible for building with a 50-year life span. Given the continued cost pressures, HSEM requested an additional \$10 million in funding during the 2021 Legislative session, but lawmakers were unable to pass the bonding bill.

HSEM is now requesting an addition \$11.4 million from the Legislature to cover the costs of the facility with its reduced footprint. Groundbreaking on the new SEOC could take place in late spring 2023, but that cannot happen without this additional funding.

Learning From Partners Abroad

Emergencies are never planned and they don't recognize borders. That's why (whether it's flooding, tornadoes, an earthquake, or a pandemic) disaster response often looks the same no matter where you live. Having partners in planning and preparedness before your worst days actually occur help as well. Those ideas are just some of the emergency management concepts that HSEM Deputy Director Kevin Reed discussed at a 2022 Disaster Management Workshop in Croatia.

Reed was one of the 28 participants in the program, which was sponsored by the Minnesota National Guard.



Interim director Kevin Reed met with emergency planners from Croatia.



Architect's schematic rendering of the new SEOC facility in Blaine.

2022 DEVELOPMENT AND GRANTS

Grant Funding

The following is the total of Homeland Security funding that HSEM administered and distributed to local jurisdictions in Minnesota under the 2022 fiscal year award cycle.

- ◆ Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)
Award: \$11,159,500
 - State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP):
\$4,847,500
 - Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI):
\$5,250,000
 - Operation Stonegarden Grant Program (OPSG):
\$1,062,000
- ◆ Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)
Award: \$6,290,016.

One significant project supported by the DPS Commissioner's Office is a Specialized Rescue Vehicle. Scott County purchased the resource to serve the joint SWAT team in Scott/Carver counties. The south-metro tactical consortium has a history of responses to areas including Mall of America and the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport.

Securing Non-Profit Organizations

HSEM administered and distributed more than \$1,040,636 in Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funding to applicants in fiscal year 2022. NSGP provides support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of terrorist attack and located within one of the specific UASI-designated eligible urban areas.

Additionally, HSEM grants staff was able to award out the \$225,000 that the Minnesota Legislature has continued to appropriate to secure and protect eligible non-profit organizations throughout Minnesota.

2021 DEVELOPMENT AND GRANTS

The following is the total of Homeland Security funding that HSEM administered and distributed to local jurisdictions in Minnesota under the 2021 fiscal year award cycle.

- ◆ Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) Award: \$10,914,500
 - State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP): \$4,602,500
 - Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI): \$5,250,000
 - Operation Stonegarden Grant Program (OPSG): \$1,062,000
- ◆ Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) Award: \$6,280,633

ABOUT US

New Leadership

HSEM will undergo a leadership change in 2023 with the recent retirement of Director Joe Kelly. The process to find a new director is currently underway. During this transition period, Kevin Reed will assume the interim director role at HSEM.



Retired Joe Kelly and Interim HSEM director Kevin Reed.

A Look Ahead

The HSEM leadership team recently adopted the 2023–2024 Strategic Plan. In addition to defining divisional goals for the next two years, it reminds us all of HSEM's core values, mission and vision.



PREPAREDNESS

- Expand training offerings to all platforms: in-person, virtual, hybrid, on-demand “podcasts.”
- Develop and deepen instructor training cadre. Identify HSEM class “leads.”
- Develop statewide school threat assessment model.
- Develop and “brand” Minnesota school emergency plan template.
- Expand local emergency manager handbook to include all program areas.



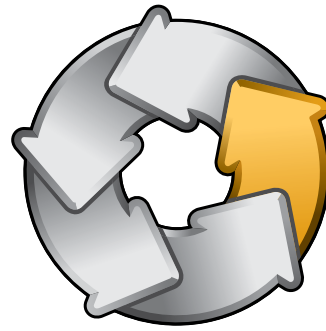
RESPONSE

- Develop deployable local EOC support capability.
- Complete design, construction, equipping, furnishing and occupation of new SEOC, ensuring seamless transition with no capability gaps.
- Enhance the utilization of WebEOC to support local response needs.



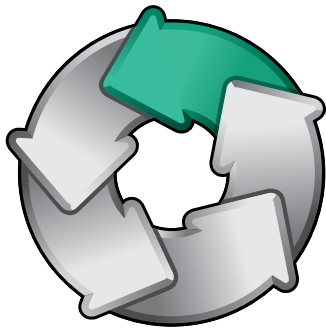
RECOVERY

- Strengthen county emergency managers' ability to support applicants, post-disaster.
- Establish and support regional peer-to-peer support system.
- Build recovery "reserve" team to assist with public assistance work surges.
- Conduct state disaster program analysis.
- Facilitate access to FEMA resources by underserved communities.



PREVENTION

- Develop a state mitigation program for sirens, river gauges, shelters and generators.
- Start the discussion on state financial participation for the non-federal cost share.



DEVELOPMENT

- Create individual development plans for each employee.
- Reimagine monthly staff meetings to focus on staff engagement and teambuilding.
- Support staff through mentoring, coaching, conference, training and professional development opportunities, wellness, etc.
- Create key performance and process measurement systems.



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT