

Section 1 (3)

Statewide Framework for Flood Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

Act 143 of 2024 institutionalized the requirement that Vermont Emergency Management create an all-hazards plan for State disaster response and recovery.

Title 20 : Internal Security and Public Safety

Chapter 001 : Emergency Management

(Cite as: 20 V.S.A. § 41)

§ 41. State Emergency Management Plan

The Department of Public Safety's Vermont Emergency Management Division shall create, and republish as needed, but not less than every five years, a comprehensive State Emergency Management Plan. The Plan shall detail response systems during all-hazards events, including communications, coordination among State, local, private, and volunteer entities, and the deployment of State and federal resources. The Plan shall also detail the State's emergency preparedness measures and goals, including those for the prevention of, protection against, mitigation of, and recovery from all-hazards events. The Plan shall include templates and guidance for regional emergency management and for local emergency plans that support municipalities in their respective emergency management planning. (Added 2023, No. 143 (Adj. Sess.), § 10, eff. July 1, 2024.)

The State has had a framework for all Hazards, the State Emergency Management Plan since 2014.

The Vermont State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) is an all-hazards plan addressing Vermont's hazard and threat environment, including natural, technological, and human-caused emergencies or disasters. The SEMP is the foundation of Vermont's emergency management system, promoting collaboration among all state agencies and departments with operational responsibilities and capabilities. It aligns with the National Preparedness Goal (NPG), established by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which outlines five mission areas: prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. These mission areas provide a comprehensive framework for addressing threats and hazards to safeguard the nation.

The SEMP is made up of a Base Plan, Response Plan, and Recovery Plan, as well as supporting partner, incident, and support annexes.

The Base Plan serves as the foundation for all annexes and appendices of the SEMP. It describes the overall state structure, concept of operations, and roles and responsibilities comprising the statewide approach to emergency management. The Base Plan is designed to integrate the efforts and resources of local, state, private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and, if necessary, the federal government. The Base Plan is intended for all stakeholders that are or could potentially be involved in emergency management in Vermont.

The SEMP includes Mission Area Plans focused on Response and Recovery. These plans provide more detailed information and specific guidance to enable state and local jurisdiction personnel to ensure that all core capabilities across these mission areas are achieved. These mission areas are interrelated and require collaboration to be effective and ensure a seamless transition from one phase to the next.

The Response and Recovery Mission Area Plans provide state and local jurisdiction emergency management personnel with guidance to effectively manage responses and immediate and long-term recovery activities, respectively. These plans provide an overview of relevant coordination structures and detailed processes and mechanisms for requesting response and recovery resources.

The SEMP is promulgated by the Governor every 5 years, but updates are made annually based on After Action Reviews from incidents, events, and exercises.

The SEMP's 5 year promulgation period is in 2024; VEM has updated SEMP based on After Action Reviews from the 12 major disaster declarations that have occurred since 2018.

[SEMP 2018](#)

Section 1 (4) (a) Emergency Parking plans

This amendment may be better suited to go under Title 20 : Internal Security and Public Safety Chapter 1 : Emergency Management (Cite as: 20 V.S.A. § 6) § 6. Local and regional organization for emergency management:

20 V.S.A. § 6 (c) (1) defines Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP)

(c)(1) Each local organization shall develop and maintain an all-hazards emergency management plan in accordance with the State Emergency Management Plan and guidance set forth by the Division of Emergency Management.

LEMP's are where a town would include an emergency parking plan. However, VEM has no technical expertise to assist towns with developing an emergency parking plan. If taken simply, a town would locate space outside the floodplain where cars could be parked during an emergency; however, unless it is town-owned land, there would need to be landowner agreements, and liability would need to be discussed. On the more complicated side, these plans could require site engineers, excavation expertise etc,

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. VEM regional coordinators (RC) work with towns during the development and updates of LEMP, at that time RC could encourage towns to develop a plan and include it in their LEMP.

VEM has no ability to provide financial support to towns to develop emergency parking plans.

Section 1 (4) (b) Emergency Shelter Plans

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. Under Title 20 : Internal Security and Public Safety Chapter 1 : Emergency Management (Cite as: 20 V.S.A. § 6) § 6. Local and regional organization for emergency management:

20 V.S.A. § 6 (c) (1) defines Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP)

(c)(1) Each local organization shall develop and maintain an all-hazards emergency management plan in accordance with the State Emergency Management Plan and guidance set forth by the Division of Emergency Management.

Each town is mandated to have a LEMP, in the LEMP templates provided by VEM to towns there is a section about shelter plans. This section outlines primary shelter locations and resources (Generators etc.) VEM Regional Coordinators work with towns annually to update LEMPs and encourage towns to have a robust shelter management plan.

VEM has no ability to provide financial support to towns to develop emergency shelter plans.

Section 1 (4) (C) Vulnerable populations

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. The State uses the CARE (Citizens Assistance Registry for Emergencies) run by the E911 board.

<https://e911.vermont.gov/care>

This program allows vulnerable populations to register with e911. During disasters, towns can contact the SEOC and request the list of those individuals registered in their town with the CARE program. The SEOC makes the request to the E911 board who then send password-protected information to the SEOC, who will then share it with the town.

This will give the towns information about their vulnerable residents but there is no mandate for them to use it.

The CARE program is free to towns but VEM has no ability to provide financial support to towns to use the CARE program.

Section 1 (4) (D) Emergency Notification System

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. The State uses VT Alert through the Everbridge software system. VT-ALERT is used by the state and local responders to notify the public of emergency situations. Those include, but are not limited to, evacuation information; chemical spills; shelter-in-place alerts; severe weather advisories; boil water advisories, and roadway interruptions. Residents can tailor the alerts to specific locations, types of alerts and on which devices they will be notified.

Vermont Emergency Management has partnered with Everbridge to provide Vermonters with enhanced capabilities to prepare themselves for emergencies, including:

- Users can download, and receive alerts via the Everbridge mobile app or continue to get them via SMS/TEXT, E-Mail, Mobile Phone, Work or Home Phone, and TTY/TDD Devices.
- Users can prioritize notifications by specifying the order of communication type and method.
- VT-ALERT also allows users to list up to five (5) additional locations in Vermont for which they want to receive alerts. These locations may include, for example, towns where other family members live, or where children attend school.

<https://vem.vermont.gov/vtalert>

Section 1 (4) (E) Training for town staff

VEM proposes this amendment be removed. 20 V.S.A. § 6 (a) mandates that each town have an Emergency Management Director (EMD). VEM has developed substantial training for these individuals including:

EMD Seminar - 2-hour training for new EMDs or EMCs with an introduction to duties, available resources, and best practices.

EMD Course - 8-hour training available in either a full one day course, or broken into several sessions.

<https://vem.vermont.gov/programs/emd>

EMD certification - designed for individuals that may work within the local emergency management organization and includes 60-75 hours of blended learning curriculum

<https://vem.vermont.gov/programs/emd/certification>

There is also a large amount of training from FEMA on other positions that may be utilized during and after the disaster.

Section 2 (a) Financial Assistance

This section should be clarified to define what financial assistance should be provided, is it loans or grants? VEM does not handle either of these, loans are handled by the Vermont Bond Bank and grants are cleared through the State Treasurer. Given that this assistance reaches into emergency response, housing, shelters, and infrastructure repairs; AHS, AOT, and VEM would all need to be involved in coordinating efforts.

VEM recommends this not be added as 20 VSA §3b but as its own section under 20 VSA Chapter 1, because VEM does not have the ability to be the sole manager of a program like this.

Section 2 (b) Financial Assistance

VEM proposes this section be removed. The State currently functions under the Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund program. The Emergency Relief and Assistance Fund (ERAF) provides State funding to match Federal Public Assistance after federally-declared disasters. Eligible public costs are reimbursed by federal taxpayers at 75%. For disasters after October 23, 2014, the State of Vermont will contribute an additional 7.5% toward the costs. For communities that take specific steps to reduce flood damage the State will contribute 12.5% or 17.5% of the total cost.

To receive the additional 12.5%, towns have to adopt four mitigation measures:

1. National Flood Insurance Program (participate or have applied);
2. Town Road and Bridge Standards (adopt standards that meet or exceed the 2013 template in the current: VTrans Orange Book: Handbook for Local Officials);
3. Local Emergency Management Plan (adopt annually after town meeting and before June 1);
4. Local Hazard Mitigation Plan - Adopt a FEMA- approved local plan (valid for five years). Or, a draft plan has been submitted to FEMA Region 1 for review.

To receive 17.5%, towns have to Protect River Corridors from new encroachment; or protect their flood hazard areas from new encroachments and participate in the FEMA Community Rating System.

This program incentivizes towns to work on mitigation projects to lessen the damage of the next disaster. If the state pays the entire remaining share after the FEMA reimbursement, then the town will not be incentivized to work on mitigation projects. That being said, the State can decide to cover the match at any time, like it did for the 2023 flood.

https://floodready.vermont.gov/find_funding/emergency_relief_assistance

Section 3 (a) Voluntary Buy out program

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. FEMA conducts a home buyout program and the State currently has two funds that provide voluntary buyouts for homeowners that don't meet the FEMA requirements, the Flood Resilient Communities Fund and the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Fund.

The Flood Resilient Communities Fund awards grants to mitigate flood hazards and reduce future flooding in Vermont, including buyouts of flood-vulnerable properties; conservation of vacant, at-risk parcels; and natural resource projects to restore floodplain access and flood storage. The program aims to reduce future public safety and water quality impacts of climate-related flood hazards. This is a voluntary program that will prioritize projects in communities and/or for homeowners with greatest economic need and projects that mitigate repetitive loss among low-income and marginalized portions of the population. This project is jointly managed by VEM and DEC.

All of the money currently in this fund has been obligated.

<https://finance.vermont.gov/content/community-resilience-flood-resilient-communities-fund-program>

Act 143 of 2024 established the Community Resilience and Disaster Mitigation Grant Program to award grants to covered municipalities to provide support for disaster mitigation, adaptation, or repair activities.

- (A) technical assistance for natural disaster mitigation, adaptation, or repair to municipalities;
- (B) technical assistance for the improvement of municipal stormwater systems and other municipal infrastructure;
- (C) projects that implement disaster mitigation measures, adaptation, or repair, including watershed restoration and similar activities that directly reduce risks to communities, lives, public collections of historic value, and property; and
- (D) projects to adopt and meet the State's model flood hazard bylaws.

All of the money currently in this fund has been obligated.

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/20/001/00048>

Section 3 (b) Homeowner assistance programs

VEM proposes this amendment be removed. Sub Section 1 and 3 are eligible for funding from the FRCF and CRDMF. However, there is currently no funds available in those programs.

Sub Section 2 is covered by a program sponsored by FEMA and run through the Agency of Human Services. This program becomes available after an Individual Assistance Declaration is declared for a disaster.

Section 8 (b) VEM positions

Grant Liaison

RPC are currently allowed to work with towns under EMPG funding on securing grants. The RPC are better positioned to support towns with this grant stream as they are already working with them on other grant streams. Due to the significant number and amount of grant funding VEM has to use for daily operations, VEM proposes that this position be a grants manager for VEM- working on grant research, grant application, and grant reporting. Currently, this work is spread across several positions, and consolidating it in one over-arching position reporting to the Director would allow for more efficiency and allow those other sections to focus on supporting Vermonters.

Flood Mitigation Technician

This position needs some clarification as it is named Flood Mitigation Technician but seems to have a job description that entails both mitigation and recovery. Currently VEM has mitigation staff that coordinates these technical aspects of projects with towns. VEM proposes that this position be a Mitigation Grants Manager. This would allow more flexibility in their job responsibilities, including technical coordination, outreach, and education to towns, which is currently done by the Section Chief as she has availability.

Section 9 (a1) – monitoring devices

VEM proposes this amendment be removed. Towns can currently install commercially available flood monitoring devices on their own. VEM does not have the expertise or resources to develop and deploy flood monitoring devices.

Section 9 (a2) – weather alerts

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. The State makes available to all citizens the VT Alert system. This system allows citizens to signup to receive weather alert that are sent out by the National Weather Service, the citizens can receive them via text or email.

Section 9 (b1) – weather modeling

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. The National Weather service is the subject matter expert on weather prediction. The SEOC has 24/7/365 access to their office in Burlington

and they provide both scheduled weekly briefs as well as incident specific briefs as often as we request them. During large weather events they will have a position in the SEOC under the Situational Awareness Section to provide constant update to the SEOC staff.

Section 9 (b2) – Warnings

VEM proposes that this amendment be removed. The State makes available to all citizens the VT Alert system. This system allows citizens to sign up to receive weather alerts that are sent out by the National Weather Service, the citizens can receive them via text or email. This includes all weather alerts provided by the National Weather Service (flooding, Blizzards, ice storms etc.)

Section 11 – needs assessment

This will need to be evaluated after the Bill is passed.