



# Vermont Emergency Management Act 57 Need Assessment

## **Submitted To:**

House Committee on Appropriations  
House Committee on Government Operations and Military Affairs  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
Senate Committee on Government Operations

## **Submitted By:**

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## Executive Summary

ACT 57 passed during the 2024-25 legislative session with the following requirements.

### **DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; STATE STAKEHOLDERS; NEEDS ASSESSMENT; REPORT**

The Division of Emergency Management shall conduct a needs assessment to identify any additional staffing, resources, technical needs, or authority needed to carry out the provisions of this act. On or before November 15, 2025, the Division shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations and Military Affairs and the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Government Operations containing the needs assessments conducted by the State agencies and departments identified in this section

## Act 57 Requirements

Sec. 4. 20 V.S.A. § 51 is added to read:

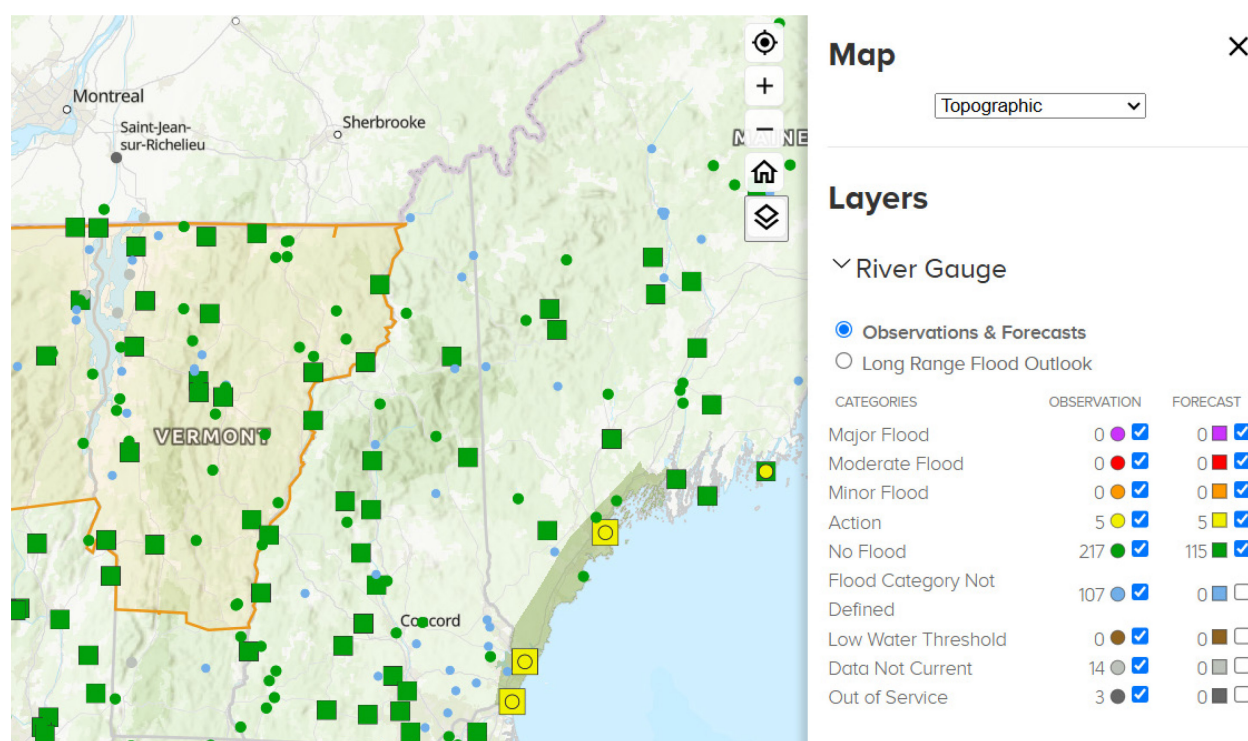
### § 51. DIVISION OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT; ALL-HAZARD AND WEATHER ALERT SYSTEMS FOR MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS

Upon request of a municipal corporation, the Division of Emergency Management shall assist the municipal corporation with access to the following:

- (1) a statewide river observation and modeling system that details current river level observations and models river flood outlooks; and
- (2) a statewide enhanced weather forecasting and alert system that:
  - (A) predicts local and regional conditions using advanced modeling; and
  - (B) issues real-time warnings for potentially dangerous weather through multiple communication channels.

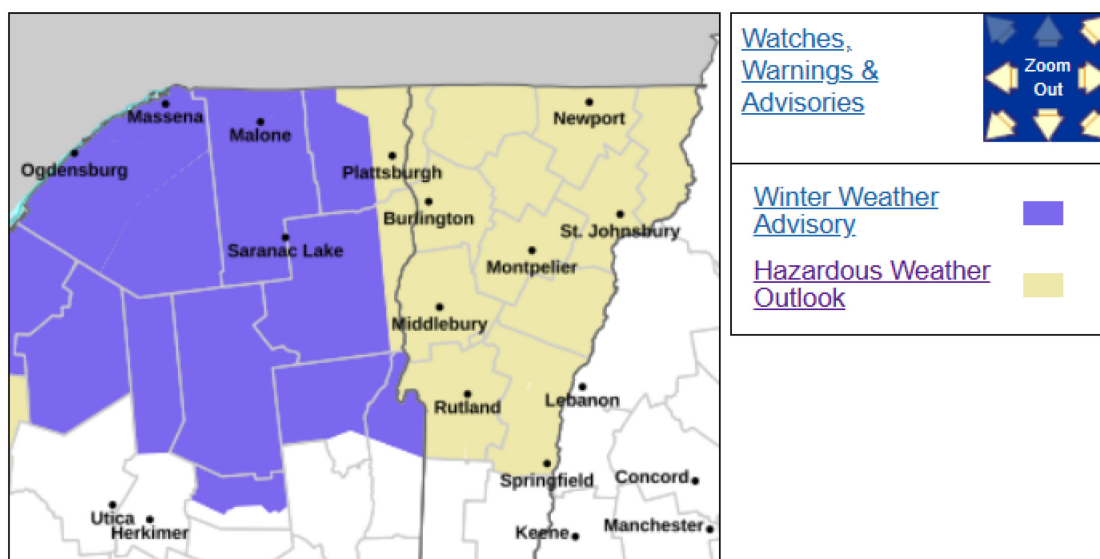
## Needs Assessment

***A Statewide river observation and modeling system that details current river level observations and models river flood outlooks*** is available through a partnership with the National Weather Service and the National Water Prediction Service. This system utilizes river gauges throughout the state to provide real-time river levels. The prediction center uses this data, along with precipitation forecasts, to predict potential flooding. These observations and modeling are available to the general public through the National Weather Service website (<https://water.noaa.gov/wfo/btv> )



The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) uses this service to understand and react to potential flooding events around the State. The SEOC will use data from the Water Prediction Service to pre-stage swiftwater teams and alert local municipalities to possible flooding. During SEOC activations, personnel from the NWS are integrated into the Situational Awareness Section as Information Advisors where they provide real-time information and analysis. Vermont Emergency Management regional coordinators also work with local Emergency Management Directors to ensure they know this resource is available to them.

***A statewide enhanced weather forecasting and alert system that predicts local and regional conditions using advanced modeling*** is available through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Weather Service (NWS). NWS uses advanced models to forecast weather events and determine if advisories, watches, or warnings are required for public safety. These alerts, watches and warnings are available to the general public through the National Weather Service website (<https://www.weather.gov/btv/>). The general public can also sign up for these watches and warning alerts to be sent to them via their mobile phones.



The State Emergency Operations Center uses this service to understand and react to potential weather events around the State. During SEOC activations, personnel from the NWS are integrated into the Situational Awareness Section as Information Advisors, where they provide real-time information and analysis. Vermont Emergency Management regional coordinators also work with local Emergency Management Directors to ensure they know this resource is available to them.

Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) uses VT Alert to ***issue real-time warnings for potentially dangerous weather through multiple communication channels.***



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.

At the end of 2024, 67,000 Vermonters had signed up to receive alerts via VT-Alert. From May 2023 to November 2024, 3,052 alerts were sent to VT Alert users. This is a voluntary program where subscribers sign up for the alerts that they wish to receive. Vermont Emergency Management (VEM) has the ultimate goal of having all Vermonters signed up to receive VT-Alerts and hopes to do this through continued outreach and marketing of the program. The Vermont Association of Broadcasters has offered to quadruple any funding VEM can secure to increase marketing of VT-Alert.

By the end of 2024, 75 municipalities had signed up to send alerts using the VT-Alert program. Municipalities are able to send public safety messaging free of charge to those subscribed to their location. If municipalities are not able to send an alert on their own, the VEM Watch Officer is available to send it on their behalf. VEM works through its regional coordinators to continue to train municipalities to be able to send their own alerts.

Vermont Emergency Management can also use the VT-Alert system to send alerts to non-subscribers via Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA). This system will alert all mobile phones in a designated geographic area and provide a safety message in the event of

an immediate risk to life and safety. The system can also call all 911-designated phone lines in a specific geographic area.

VT-Alert is also the system Building and General Services uses for SOV Alert, the system used to alert state staff if there is a threat or hazard in their office space. Forest Parks and Recreation use the system to provide information and warnings to Fire Wardens across the state.

There is a .5 FTE position at VEM that provides training to regional coordinators and municipalities. It administers the public facing side of the VT-Alert program. With the desire to gain more subscribers, there is also a need for a consistent marketing program. Consistent marketing does not currently exist.

## Conclusion

The software, position, and marketing are all funded by the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) distributed by the Federal Government. EMPG funding has been level-funded for the last 10 years as the cost of expenses covered by it continues to increase. As a result, the last several years of VT-Alert program needs have had to be covered by residual funding leftover from previous grant years. This residual funding is now drying up. EMPG funding for the current year, which was due to be received on October 1<sup>st</sup>, is currently on hold with several pending lawsuits causing it to be delayed until January 2026 at the earliest. It is also very possible that EMPG funding will no longer be awarded after this year.

VT-Alert is statutorily required to provide Vermonters with safety messaging and life safety alerts during severe weather events and disasters. With current funding mechanisms, this capability cannot be guaranteed.