

## Section 1

Amend 20 V.S.A. § 3

New Language (3)

Provide an update to the legislature annually on the status of hazard mitigation plan action items.

- VEM supports this. However, a report is already required to be given in person to the State Hazard Mitigation Planning and Policy Committee. It would be more efficient if this report could just be shared and the VEM mitigation team did not have to give the same in-person presentation to 1 committee and 2 legislative bodies.

New Language (4)

Provide assistance to municipalities to develop and implement the components of the Statewide Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) described in subdivision 41(4) of this chapter.

VEM recommends this amendment be removed. The definition of assistance ( fiscal, technical?) is not clear. The State Emergency Management Plan details what the State shall do in a disaster, it does not outline what a town shall do, that is done in the Local Emergency Management Plan. 20 V.S.A. § 6 (c ) (1) 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.

Recommend that this section be removed as the subdivision 41(4) referenced is recommended to be removed.

## Section 2

Amend 20 V.S.A. § 41

VEM recommends that the Reference to Chief Recovery Officer be removed. This is not a permanent position. This position is only used during catastrophic events and, therefore, may not be in place during an update to the SEMP.

New language (4a)

VEM recommends this language be removed. 20 V.S.A. § 41 outlines the SEMP and State response, not local response. Local response is covered in 20 V.S.A. § 6 (c ) (1).

New language (4b)

VEM recommends this language be removed. 20 V.S.A. § 41 outlines the SEMP and State response, not local response. Local response is covered in 20 V.S.A. § 6 (c ) (1). There is already an

existing program towns can use to understand their vulnerable population. 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. This language is requesting a system that is already in place but does not provide resources to the towns to use it.

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

New language (4c)

VEM recommends this language be removed. VEM and the State already have a fully functional emergency notification system. 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>

This language is requesting a system that is already in place but does not provide resources to the towns to use it or VEM to market it.

New language (4d)

VEM recommends this language be removed. There are currently no requirements for positions at the local level after a disaster. It is up to the town to decide what type of structure they would like to use for recovery. For example towns do not get involved in individual assistance, that is between AHS and the individual and there is no position titled disaster waster coordinator.

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.

The root cause of this issue is not that there is training it is that towns have been mandated to have and EMD but there is no support for that position, therefore the position and responsibility usually get added to an already full plate of a town employee. VEM has added addition Regional Coordinators that work with towns to develop plans and provide training and exercise support. However there are 6 regional coordinators, so they have about 50 towns still apiece.

### **Section 3**

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 4**

VEM has no comments on the Pilot special funds language.

#### **Section 5**

VEM has no comments on the Municipal Grand List Stabilization Program language.

#### **Section 7 add new . 20 VSA § 52**

VEM recommends this entire section be removed.

#### **Section 7(1) water level alarms**

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.

VEM uses National Weather Service River gauges. We currently pay \$140,000 a year as our 1/3 portion of the network of river gauges. We utilize these forecasts to make decisions on potential Swiftwater rescue team deployments as well as coordinate with towns to understand their risk.

### **Section 7 (2) weather alerts**

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.

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

Citizens can also subscribe to weather alerts directly from the National Weather Service.

The National Weather Service also has access to WEA alerts, which can trigger alerts on citizens' mobile phones if there is imminent danger.

<https://www.weather.gov/wrn/wea#:~:text=WEA%20is%20one%20of%20many,and%20state%20public%20safety%20agencies.>

[https://www.weather.gov/mob/Severe\\_Alert](https://www.weather.gov/mob/Severe_Alert)

### **Section 7 (3a) weather prediction system**

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.

VEM include municipalities in weather briefing prior to incidents and towns can reach out to the SEOC or the Weather Service directly for spot forecast or weather updates.

Section 7 (3b)

VEM proposes this amendment be removed. As mentioned above VT Alert is a free service from VEM that allows citizens to receive all weather alerts. Citizens can also sign up for weather alerts directly from the National Weather Service, from FEMA and from the weather app on their phones.

Section 8 – needs assessment. VEM recommends this be removed. As we have recommended above the all section be removed that required additional resources, this section is not necessary.

Section 10 – no comment

Section 11 – VEM supports

Section 12 – no comment

Section 13 – no comment

Section 14 – no comment