



The KEMA Perspective

2018, Vol. 1

From your KEMA President

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Let me first say what an honor and privilege it is to be your KEMA President this year. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time so far and I am looking forward to these coming months culminating with a wonderful KEMA Conference in our great State Capital. It has been a pleasure to travel around our beautiful State attending the regional KEMA meetings, visiting with our membership and also handing out awards from the last KEMA Conference to so many qualified and fantastic individuals and groups. It is truly humbling to present these prestigious awards to such deserving people that their peers took time to nominate. And speaking of awards, please look around your regions and even across this state and nominate one or more of your colleagues, co-workers, or groups for the awards that will be presented in September. Look around at who is teaching, training, exercising, building effective emergency management programs, supporting those programs or even revamping existing programs to make them better than before. See those that are responding to the different disasters that are happening or have happened and take the time to write a nomination of support for one of the many awards that are available. I always consider it a treat to get to read the nominations that have been sent in to Ryan Murray our KEMA Awards Chairperson.

Now about conference this year. Check out the teaser from Mike Selves and Gary Middleton and see a glimpse of what they and your KEMA Board have lined out for you to attend. There are already two very great speakers slated and a host of breakout sessions that have something for everyone. Make plans now to ensure that you will be in attendance and receive some very progressive training and knowledge from some of the elites in emergency management. Encourage your colleagues, co-workers and even those partners that you work with from different agencies or organizations to attend this conference. I have always enjoyed the networking portion of conference and usually glean information from those of you that participate. Whether you are full time or part time, are from a rural area, suburban, metropolitan, university, hospital, military or other emergency management agency, you have valuable knowledge and wisdom that should be shared with your colleagues and peers.

In closing, I just want to thank each of you for what you do every day to improve the Response, Recovery, Mitigation & Prevention and Preparedness for your communities, counties, organizations and this incredible State of Kansas. Together we can overcome any adversity that may come our way!

At your service,

Keith Haberer, Russell and Ellsworth County Emergency Management



Southwest Region

Well, as everyone can recall, last year Clark County had the biggest wildfire in state history, which was shared from the fine state of Oklahoma. After the fire, Kansas received an abundance of rain last summer, which led to heavy vegetation growth. But all good things must come to an end, and in October of last year, Mother Nature shut off the water spout. With that being said, most of Kansas is under a drought once again, with fields with very heavy vegetation and very dry.

This year has been a year unlike others, with little to no rain, very high winds, and a heavy fuel load. Several things have changed throughout the state and counties. Kansas has signed a compact with other states to help with resources to combat large fires, including black hawks with bambi buckets and smaller fixed wing aircraft. Counties have formed fire task forces so no one community is left shorthanded. This response to fires, with combined fire equipment and personnel who have worked with each other, has helped to hit the fire lines in tandem for a quicker knock down.

Western Kansas has still had a number of large wildfires this year, but none have reached the extreme of the past two years. The biggest fire in western Kansas so far this year was the Stanton County fire, which was shared to Kansas by Baca County, Colorado. It burned more than 19,000 acres in Stanton County, and 2,000 acres in Morton County. Hamilton County had a wildfire which started after a dry lightning storm went through, which burned about 16,000 acres. Most counties in southwestern Kansas have had a number of wildfires. It would be nice if the other states would share nice things instead of wildfires.

Stevens County has been plagued with large hay fires and a cotton gin fire. The first fire was the cotton gin fire. The fire started in the burr pile and because of the wind, workers moved some of the hot bales to a bale yard to the north of the gin, which ignited other bales there. The bales were then moved to a different yard between the north one and gin yard, setting them all on fire. Winds over 45 mph definitely did not help! The loss was about 400 cotton modules. The second fire was an old hay bale yard which houses several mega hay stacks in an area of about 300 acres, with grass growing between the stacks. This fire burned about 25,000 4'x4'x8' bales. Stevens County used 4-5 area emergency managers to assist with accountability and command functions. The last fire was a hay fire located just across the highway northwest of Moscow. Due to the location and size of the fire and predicted wind change and speed, an IMT team was called to help. With concern that the fire might spread to the City of Moscow and the potential for an F-MAG request, the documentation was started early and in place. This fire burned approximately 10,000 4'x4'x8' bales.

The Southwest region has had three big exercises. In October of 2017, Scott County hosted a functional exercise with the local emergency responders and IMTs for a tornado which went through the community. Hodgeman County hosted a table top exercise in March to deal with a flood from Horse Thief Reservoir. Turnout was good for all locations, and local responders were able to see what the IMTs were capable of, in helping them deal with such an event. In January, the state wide exercise that dealt with mass fatalities was held, each county had several areas identified that needed improvement.

We are finding that the working relationships formed through KEMA meetings and other events is very helpful when we are in the time of need. We can call on our neighbors to come assist with a large event that does not need the activation of an IMT, keeping in mind that if in doubt, it is better to call for more help early, rather than wishing we would have called sooner.

Rex Beemer

SW Region VP

Tales from the Bylaws and Policy Committee:

You may ask of yourself how much time does it take to stay abreast of the Policies and by laws as well of other documents in your professional organization. Well I am here to tell you that it takes a lot of time researching what is best for the KEMA organization to keep it running consistent through the years of Board member changes. I try to make it a point to attend all KEMA Board meetings. I want to be the over site, if you will, over your organization to make sure the KEMA Board adheres to the policies and other plans we have in place to assure KEMA remains a professional organization. If the Board has questions regarding policy they look to me and the committee for verification if a board motion or activity is within policy. I must say that many conversations have come up regarding policy however the consensus of the Board which you have elected does a great job as well as those in the past adhering to the policies. Do policies get withdrawn or replaced, and the answer is yes they do to keep up with the changing world we live in. I am always impressed in the outcomes of any meeting that your Board conducts and the respect they give to each other. This comes with confidence and knowledge the Board is provided to keep your organization running in a professional manner.

I would challenge you to review what your Board needs to have in knowledge by reviewing the minutes and the documents on the KEMA website. Your Board strives to be as transparent as possible and they to my knowledge do not hold anything back in sharing with KEMA members. Some of the documents we over see is the strategic plan which is in the process of being updated this year, the by-laws are reviewed annually and the policies are updated on a regular basis. It is my goal this year to have one document that would include all policy related items placed into one document for the ease of the membership to a one stop shop for KEMA related documents.

So you ask do I enjoy what I do for your organization and the answer to that would be yes indeed I love it. It can be challenging but it is fun to see the outcome to you the membership of KEMA.

Chuck Magaha

Water, Water Everywhere, but what are we to Drink?

A case study of how one Kansas school district handled an unexpected loss of drinking water after the school day had already started.

It started out Thursday afternoon as a somewhat-typical water main issue; then a crack became a leak, became a break, became a gusher in the overnight hours, and by Friday morning, January 20th, Valley Center was about to be told “don’t drink the water.”

The first indication of a problem for the schools came at 7:00 AM Friday when USD 262 Superintendent Dr. Cory Gibson received a call that there was no water pressure at the District Office downtown. That did not immediately trigger any concern for the district at large, but shortly after 8:30, a parent contacted a principal saying they saw on Social Media that KDHE had placed all of Valley Center under a boil water advisory, meaning no drinking water for their roughly 3,000 students at seven schools.



After getting confirmation of the boil advisory from the City Administrator, Dr. Gibson's first call was to the Director of Food Services to find out the impact on meals. At the same time he was texting the Director of Maintenance for his staff to turn off all water fountains in the seven buildings.

Food services informed him that the boil order would have minimal impact on lunch, since most of the preparatory washing had been done the day before, and almost all of the water needed on Friday was going to be boiled anyway during normal preparation. The only casualty: there would be no lettuce available for the sandwiches that were served as a hot-meal alternative.

Immediately after these conversations Gibson used their Infocast software to send a digital text alert to all desk phones and electronic message boards in the district, including phones in each classroom. This was followed by an email to principals so that they could make an announcement about no drinking water over the intercom, then another email to all staff giving all the details they had up to that point.

After turning off the water fountains, maintenance's next assignment was to gather all available bottled water already in the schools, whether in concession stands, cafeterias, or elsewhere, for division and distribution to all buildings. This was supplemented by approximately 10 cases from the local grocery store, and distributed to the seven schools with an amount proportional to their population.

At the same time (around 9:00), district staff were contacting their beverage vendor in Salina: Pepsi. They ordered additional cases of water to be delivered ASAP. They were told bottled water was already loaded on a number of vehicles in their fleet, and it was simply a matter of redirecting the trucks; the first deliveries of what would end up being 5,000 bottles of water were delivered to each campus by 11:30, long before the initial local supply had been exhausted.

Distribution to the students varied according to school: in the lower levels, cases of water were taken to each classroom. In the Middle and High Schools, water was still available in the cafeterias, or students could go to the office to get a free bottle.

Once the immediate needs were addressed and a little more information was known, Assistant Superintendent Mike Bonner was in charge of notifying the larger school community; this was accomplished through email and text notification

to parents, while staff were also dealing with an influx of telephone inquiries. In the email, parents were given a brief overview of the problem, then told of the many steps the district was taking to provide a solution.

One complicating factor for the district was that the high school was hosting their annual winter basketball tournament, and Day 2, with a full slate of eight teams and four games, was scheduled to kick off that afternoon. Each of the participating schools was notified so teams knew to bring their own water. Signage was posted at all drinking fountains to alert those fans who might not have received the message, and bottled water was available to purchase at the concession stands. The school was also able to supplement the teams' supplies by providing some free bottles. This combination helped ease what otherwise might have been a bottled water surplus problem once the advisory was lifted.

As expected, KDHE rescinded the boil advisory around midday Saturday, some 28 hours after it had been put into effect. This time, the District got the information directly from the city, and didn't have to wait to find out through social media. The final day of the basketball tournament still had plenty of bottled water from the day before, but now the drinking fountains were also available, after the lines had been flushed. The district sent out a follow-up message to all parents and staff, letting them know of the resolution and that everything was returning to normal.

Dr. Gibson's self-evaluation of their reaction to the situation is spot-on: "For not having a formal plan in place, I think it went well." That being said, he acknowledges some lessons learned and things to do differently, in case there is a "next time":

- Add Loss of Drinking Water to your District Crisis Plan. USD 262 did a brief-out after the event and will use their notes to update their plan. If you have not had to live through it, learn from this narrative; walk through the steps they took and identify what your district would do...who would you call for bottled water? If your beverage supplier is not an option, are there companies that will deliver or allow you to pick up? If you are in a small city and a rural county, how much bottled water will you have quick access to if everyone else in town needs it too? How would you notify staff, students and parents? Is there pre-scripted messaging you can compile? And that's just the beginning; once you have a plan, make sure staff are familiar with their roles and the procedures you will follow.
- If there is a complete, unexpected, loss of water pressure in part of the city, assume a boil advisory is coming and activate your contingency plan right away. If the water will be off all day, it is an easier call: no water to flush, or wash hands, you are likely cancelling classes anyway. But if the pressure is expected to come back soon, you do not want to be playing catch-up if it comes with undrinkable water.
- Make sure your city knows to call you. Whether it is the City Administrator, Public Works or someone else, whomever gets that first notification from KDHE that an advisory is coming, they need to call the school next so you can react. You don't want to be finding out 30, 45, 60 minutes later after someone sees it on Social Media or TV. Unfortunately, we cannot tell you to rely on your local Health Department or Emergency Management for this notification; KDHE does not inform either of those agencies at the county level.

Cody Charvat

Sedgwick County Emergency Management

Cody.charvat@sedgwick.gov

Getting on the Same Page.....

Kevin Flory, KSFFA President

Good day Kansas Emergency Managers. You may be wondering why I am writing an article for EM, when I am affiliated with the fire service. Well, this guy named Keith asked that I write something up for his association's newsletter. Something about I owed him for the week long vacation we shared in Greensburg, KS a few years ago. Some of you may or may not know, but I also hold my KCEM as an employee of Shawnee County Emergency Management for the past ten years. I also serve as the current President of the Kansas State Firefighters Association.

I mention the above items to let you know that I am not here to point fingers because I would be pointing it at myself regardless of the argument. I recently spoke to the fire service audience at our annual conference in Garden City. I challenged them to get out and meet their Emergency Manger and start building a relationship with them. The one thing that the past few years has shown, is that none of us have all the tools we need when a big incident strikes. We need to have that working relationship with our neighbors as well as our responder partners in this state so we are all on the same page.

So specifically to wildland fires. Kansas State Fire Marshal Doug Jorgenson, Keith Haberer representing KEMA, Ross Hauck from Kansas Forest Service, Pat Collins from the State Fire Chiefs and I all held a panel discussion for the group at our conference on wildland response. Issues varying from how to access the system for outside mutual aid, accessing air support, to using the CRMCS system all were given. I tried to deliver several points to the group. One was recognizing the need early on for your normal mutual aid. I urged them to not wait till it's too late to call for assistance, especially on those days when a red flag warning is in effect. Secondly, how to know when you have exhausted your local mutual aid and know that THAT is the time to contact your county EM and let them know you will be needing more out of county assistance than normal. I stressed to them that early recognition of this and bringing in their EM is the key to getting assistance in a timely fashion. None of us on the panel lead the audience to believe that firetrucks would magically appear once a request was made. Time is of the essence in these requests and your need predictions need to start forecasting out ahead to the next twelve hours of operation. This is a difficult concept for many of us in the fire service as we are not accustomed to facing fires that extend beyond one operational period.

Third concept was the local disaster declaration. This is a needed component when we start looking at fires that will likely extended to multiple operational periods. This is where I will get on my soap box for a minute. The fire service of Kansas needs to get their act together and quit having turf wars with their EM's. I told that to the group at our conference in no uncertain terms. Conversely, the EM's in the state need to understand, their local fire chief is the Incident Commander on that fire. The EM role is to provide support and logistics and be that go to person for that Incident Commander. We have got to get our working relationships in order to provide for fast and timely service to our communities. If you don't like how they are handling their calls, WORK with them, train them, but don't go around them in their role as the IC in their jurisdiction. That is a recipe for disaster down the road.

Enough of that soapbox for now. Other topics we addressed with the fire service audience was the importance of getting their personnel ICS trained, entering their equipment in the CRMCS system, and helping to develop the credentials list for the county EM to have of the fire personnel in their region. This is one extremely weak area in the state we have found. The Fire Service has never been informed of the importance of the CRMCS system. I as president of the KSFFA have pledged to help build this into our trainings as a piece to educate the fire service on the need for that data and how it is utilized and WHY it is important to the state.

The final pieces we discussed were task forces/strike teams in Kansas, aircraft use, out of state resources, FMAGs, and why the heck do we need to call an IMT? All these items are things that the fire service is in need of some education on. Most agencies will never see an incident that requires any of the mentioned items here in our own jurisdiction. However, we all are exposed to the possibility of helping our neighbors in a crisis situation. It would be best if the Kansas Fire Service and the Kansas EM community were lockstep in how to handle the incidents. I write this article to invite comment and communication. My contact info is available at www.ksffa.com. I can be reached by phone or email most any time. I strongly urge any EM who is having issues with their local fire service to communicate with myself or Chief Collins from the KSAFC. We would both be more than willing to discuss the matter and work to build a path to training and communications. At the end of the day, we all serve our citizens. Let's work together to serve them in the best and most efficient manner possible. I look forward to seeing you all at the KEMA conference this fall. Thank you for reading this and Stay Safe!





Kansas Emergency Management Assn. (KEMA)



52nd Annual Conference

September 11-14, 2018
Ramada Inn Downtown, Topeka

PRECONFERENCE TRAINING!



EM-101



CHDS: Mobile Ed. Team (invited)

KEYNOTERS!!



Wednesday! "The Expanding Role of the Emergency Manager in the 21st Century" Mr. Ellis Stanley, Global Chair, IAEM

Thursday! "Tennessee Wildfire Response" Mr. Patrick Sheehen, Director, TN Emergency Management



BREAKOUT SESSIONS!

- Cyber Security
- UAVs in EM
- NWS Fire Weather
- Child Care Aware
- EOC/IMT Interface
- IPAWS
- Disaster Housing



AND MUCH MORE!

More Information and Online Registration Coming Soon on www.KEMA.Org

KEMA Board of Directors

President

Keith Haberer, KCEM
Russell/Ellsworth County Emergency Management
850 Elm Street, PO Box 158
Bunker Hill, KS 67626
785-483-5100
russellcountyem@rfd5.org

Secretary

Keri Korthals, KCEM, Assistant Director
Butler County Emergency Management
2100 N. Ohio, Ste B
Augusta, KS 67010
(316) 733-9796
kkorthals@bucoks.com

President Elect

Laurie Harrison
Riley County Emergency Management
785-537-6333
lharrison@rileycountyks.gov

Treasurer

DeAnn Konkol
Public Safety Division & Emergency Management Dept.
714 North Main
Wichita, KS 67203
316-660-5966
deann.konkel@sedgwick.gov

Past President

Byrdee Miller, KCEM
620-205-7033
byrdeezell@gmail.com

REGION VPs

NW Region VP

Butch Post
Rook County Emergency Management
785-425-6818
rcem@ruraltel.net

NE Region VP

Russel Stuckey, KCEM
Coffey & Woodson County Emergency Management
110 S. 6th
Burlington, KS 66839-1798
(620) 364-2721
rstukey@coffeycountyks.org

SC Region VP

Cody Charvat, KCEM, Training and Exercise Officer
Sedgwick County Emergency Management
714 N. Main
Wichita, KS 67203
(316) 660-5968
ccharvat@sedgwick.gov

NC Region VP

Marie V. Ballou, KCEM
Ottawa County Emergency Management
307 N. Concord Suite 109
Minneapolis, Kansas 67467
785-392-3600
ocemballou@ymail.com

SE Region VP

Charlie Morse, KCEM
Labette County Emergency Management
1902 S Hwy 59, Bldg C
Parsons, KS 67357
Ph: 620-421-4350
Ccmorse@labettecounty.com

SW Region VP

Rex D. Beemer KCEM
Gray County Emergency Management Director
300 South Main, P.O. Box 487
Cimarron Ks. 67835
Office: 620.855.4724
graycoem@gmail.com

Other Contacts

Initial KCEM

Gary Middleton, KCEM
PO Box 35
Berryton, KS 66049-0035
MAI.LLC@outlook.com

KCEM Renewal

John Stradal, KCEM
Cowley County Emergency Management
321 E 10th Ave.
Winfield, KS 67156
(620) 221-0470
jstradal@cowleycounty.org