We have all worked on after-action reviews for exercises to help us better achieve the goals we have set for ourselves and our organizations. But, how good are we at doing them for actual incidents or events? We all know the saying “Hindsight is 20/20!” We have the opportunity to make it 20/20 before it happens, but are we doing it proficiently?

2018 was a rough year for most of us. Union County EMA’s year came in like a lion and went out the same way! What did we learn in 2018? We learned the major benefits of completing after-action reports.

Our year started with an ice jam, working through all the rain, and then in November one of our major routes through the county became gridlocked and shutdown. A large snowstorm came through and 10 miles of State Route 15 was gridlocked. What normally would not be an issue, was exacerbated by detoured tractor trailer traffic due to a new thruway for a bridge to join Union and Northumberland Counties. Union County EMA took away some vital information due to those incidents and each was unique to say the least. One thing for certain was, we needed to learn both what went right and what went wrong in order to improve our response and support measures!

The Route 15 incident is a good example. As always, communications are key to any incident and this incident was no exception to the rule. During this incident, we experienced success and failure in our communications. Our success was vital information was heard by Emergency Management, which allowed them to support the incident. (continued next page)
Our failure was other vital information could not be heard among responding partners to accomplish the task at hand. To come from behind to work with the other entities to remedy the situation was a struggle for both emergency management and other responding agencies.

Let’s go over what went right in this incident. One proven factor was: established relationships with other organizations implemented a thought process to involve Emergency Management; which in turn lead to an education opportunity for that organization’s personnel. Emergency Management’s involvement then lessened the pressure on some of the on-scene responders because coordination seemed to improve with additional resources to assist. Direct EMA communications to on-scene personnel played a major role in the wellness checks of stranded motorists and ease the fears of people caught in the gridlock. A needed improvement was communications between all entities early on in the incident. The overloading of the radio system caused vital communications to not be heard, which in turn magnified the situation and played a part in the gridlock.

How did we begin to figure this all out? It took conducting an After-Action Review and holding a meeting with the key players involved in the incident to determine what happened and how all of us can improve for the next time. We all know there will be a next time! Holding an After-Action Review gives you and others involved the opportunity to explain your side and to understand what got us to this point - learning information that many may not know until this meeting took place. While we all have busy schedules and the task can be monotonous to complete, the overall achievements from doing such reviews play a vital role in improving not only our organizations, but those who are working and supporting us as well! Taking the steps to discuss and complete an After-Action Review with all entities is key to improve one’s responsibilities in the incident and establish lessons to be learned.

Still think you don’t have time for an After-Action Review? It is quite simple... set a couple dates with the time and location, as the first date may not work. Make it within a week, no later than two weeks after the incident. This will ensure it is still fresh in everyone’s minds. Establish your key players to bring to the table, such as EMA, Law Enforcement, 9-1-1, Fire and Public Works/Transportation and/or others, as applicable to your incident. Keep in mind that you only want one to two representatives from each organization because you are trying to keep it a workable and constructive process. Have a representative from your office or someone else take minutes. Take this information and input it into your After-Action Review Template. The After-Action Template we utilize can be found on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security website at: https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ESS%20Exercise%20After-Action%20Report%20Improvement%20Plan%20Template.docxe.

However, you don’t have to utilize a template, simply taking notes at the meeting and sorting out the positives and the negatives will give you a snapshot of where you stand. I cannot stress enough the benefits of having this meeting are worth it! After-Action Reviews are beneficial based on providing the means to make us all work together to become proficient. Our goal is to keep citizens of the Commonwealth safe and know we care enough to try harder the next time! We can only do this through After-Action Reviews and following through with our improvement plans.

(continued on next page)
A good takeaway is to remember the key words: “to discuss.” There is no room at the table for finger-pointing of any kind! Yes, things went wrong, and facts can be stated without the blaming of any particular agency. Because at the end of the day; in the all-hazards world of Emergency Management, it takes all working together for the citizens of the Commonwealth to accomplish the task at hand. We all have to accomplish the mission set forth by the organization we serve, whether it be career or volunteer!

1. **Communications** - Interoperability between agencies is essential to responding to an incident.

2. **Coordination** - Coordination with the county emergency management agency and other entities involved.

3. **Training** - Providing training to other entities as to the importance of coordination with the county emergency management agency.

4. **After Action Reports** - Ensure your key players come to the table, such as EMA, Law Enforcement, 9-1-1, Fire and Public Works/Transportation

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**MITIGATION MINUTE**

The Mitigation Minute is a series, provided by FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Assistance Division. It contains a weekly fact about grants and resources provided across the country to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to people and property from natural hazards and does not endorse any non-government organizations, entities, or services. FEMA recommends representatives from states, local communities, and tribes working to improve the lives of people in their community by mitigating hazards, to sign up for FEMA’s weekly "Mitigation Minute."

Each Mitigation Minute contains a new topic and includes an infographic, fact sheet and associated websites. Below, is the February 27, 2019 Mitigation Minute as an example of what to expect.

Click this link to subscribe to the Mitigation Minute and other FEMA resources:

https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSFEMA/bulletins/1e59bc9
Six Search and Rescue Teams Visit Former Penn Power Building

By Nancy Lowry © New Castle News

Six Search and Rescue dogs found what they were looking for in the former Penn Power building on Kennedy Square.

And had a lot of fun doing it.

The dogs and their owners are part of Pennsylvania Volunteers, a Butler County-based, nonprofit organization whose 45 members come from Butler, Beaver, Mercer and Lawrence counties and are trained volunteers who may be called upon to provide services in the event of disasters. The organization includes six K-9 Search and Rescue teams and two drone units.

"It has to be a game," Scott Ross said at Saturday's training exercise. "As long as it's fun, the dogs are willing."

Sunny approaches the former Penn Power building Saturday morning with his owner, Dr. John Osheka, carrying his soft cage and harness, and Ginny Novak, owner of Search and Rescue dog Marley, already inside the building.

Each dog got two turns to roam the empty halls and offices of the building, which has no heat or electricity and has been vacant since 1993.

Ross' dog, Fozzie, got an additional turn. Fozzie is receiving special training in human remains detection to become a cadaver dog. So at the end of the morning he got to go tracking some special "dead" scents.

The dogs are all certified search and rescue animals trained to find missing people.

Sunny, a 4-year-old AKA champion golden retriever, owned by Dr. John Osheka who heads the Search and Rescue training, and 5-year-old Jaxon, a golden retriever called an English Cream due to his white coloring, and owned by Yvonne McAvoy, are trained as air scent dogs and in narcotics detection. Both also are badge-carrying members of the Butler County Sheriff's K-9 unit.

"The sheriff's department has not yet been called upon to do a search but we have a trained unit in place and ready if that day comes," Osheka said.

Air scent dogs draw scent that comes from people and lingers in the air. They are trained to find people missing in the wilderness, generally hunting in fields and large areas where the person has been missing for a long time or there is no trail.

Ed Newcaster of Pennsylvania Volunteers in the green vest identifying him as a trained volunteer who could be used during a disaster. The Pennsylvania Volunteers and six of its Search and Rescue dogs participated in a training session Saturday at the former Penn Power building on Kennedy Square.

The other dogs are "trail scent" dogs who smell an item owned by the missing person and follow the path that person most likely took.

Others participating on Saturday are Fozzie, Ross's golden retriever; Winston, a golden retriever owned by Linda McCrillis, Marley an American Labrador retriever owned by Ginny Novak and Charley, a Golden Doodle owned by Lisa Hyatt.
VOAD IN THE NEWS - PA VOLUNTEERS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

Charley, a golden doodle rescue dog patiently waits in his crate prior to the training session Saturday at the former Penn Power building on Kennedy Square.

When "on duty," the dogs wear vests identifying each one as a search and rescue team member. Sunny and Jaxon's vests include bells so owners can hear where the dog might be and so individuals needing help hear that someone is coming.

"Those bells are the sound of hope," Hyatt said. The owners noted that golden retrievers are generally perceived as friendlier dogs than German shepherds, who are often in these kind of units.

"A child or an elderly person with Alzheimer's disease who is lost might be afraid of a big dog," Osheka said. "These dogs are less startling."

Osheka retired 13 years ago as superintendent of the New Brighton School District.

"I needed to find something to do," he said. "I started training dogs."

He noted that he has trained several dogs and has worked with the University of Pittsburgh medical center on training dogs to detect several forms of cancer in patients.

"Sunny is the best dog I've ever trained," he said.

All of the dogs are certified through the American Mantrailing, Police & Working Dog Association. Certification takes 12 to 18 months, and recertification is done every two years. But dogs and owners stay in practice with daily training sessions and weekend practices such as the search of the Penn Power building.

Sunny and Jaxon are also certified as therapy dogs and Osheka is encouraging the others to get that certification also.

Golden retriever Fozzie, waits to join the others at the former Penn Power building for a training session on Saturday.

On Saturday, the dogs followed the scent of Nancy Natale, a New Castle native and friend and co-worker of Hyatt. She hid in rooms, closets and among the city's Christmas decorations, which are stored in the front room of the vacant building. She was found every time, as was Osheka, who also hid to give the dogs a workout. Seeking Natale, Jaxon was "excited but confused" when he located News photographer/videographer Pete Sirianni, also on the scene.

"I am glad to be back in this building," Natale said. "My parents both worked for Penn Power. My dad was head of the payroll department for many years. I haven't been in this building in years."

Pennsylvania Volunteer member Ed Newcaster arranged with building owner Paul Lynch to use the three-story, 42,000-square-foot structure. He said there was concern that unexpected finds might be made.

"With the building vacant for so long, we wondered if any homeless people might be found hiding," he said.

No surprise people were located.

The biggest surprise of the morning was found in the basement. Hyatt and her sister, McAvo, ventured down the steps to see if that area might be used to hunt. Hyatt, who carried a flashlight went first — stepping from the bottom stop into about two feet of ice-cold standing water. (continued on next page)
"It was dark," she said. "But it looked like a solid, smooth surface. I was sure I saw swirls like you see on concrete surfaces."

This was the first indoor experience for the dogs who generally work outside.

The dogs' owners said they appreciated the building since outside temperatures were in single digits when they arrived and climbed only to 17 degrees by lunchtime.

"Otherwise we'd be outside going through fields," Osheka said, adding, "The dogs wouldn't have minded. It's special to see them working a field. But we feel the cold."

"This is good for the dogs who might one day be called to find someone who is lost or hiding in a building, or to find someone if a building collapses."

Osheka pronounced the morning session a success, noting that each dog did as trained — entering rooms, searching perimeters and locating its quarry each time.

Pennsylvania Volunteers members are trained to support first responders. They may be called also provides disaster support services including six K-9 units and two drone teams,

"Our motto is Eyes in the air and Paws on the ground," he said.Wilson said when possible drones are flown along with the dogs on practice events when the dogs are training outside.

The volunteers meet at 6 p.m. on the second Monday of each month at the Lyndora American Legion Post 778.
2018 proved to be a deadly year for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in civilian fire fatalities. Unfortunately, it appears that we have ranked #1 in the U.S. for total number of fire deaths (152 for the year). This is the third highest year for us behind 2008 with 178. Fire deaths are broken down as follows (unless other information becomes available):

**Fire Fatality Totals:**
- Total: 152 (ranks # 3 all time for PA.)
- Children (ages 1-17): 10
- Adults (ages 18-54): 40
- Older Adults (55 and above): 78
- Unknown age: 24

Older adults continue to be the most high-risk population accounting for over 50% of all civilian fire deaths. The Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC) will continue to promote and advocate for our Older Adults to become fire safe by presenting the National Fire Prevention Association’s (NFPA) “Remembering When: A Fire and Fall Prevention Program for Older Adults.” This program will be presented at senior centers, apartment complexes or residential communities designed for those aged 55 or older. It is imperative that the younger generation take care of the older generation.

**Fire Causes:**
- Accidental - 32
- Undetermined - 4
- Arson - 9
- Under Investigation - 107

Pennsylvania needs to do a better job when it comes to data collection of fire causes. There is some discontent among fire chiefs not wanting to put a possible fire cause into their reports, which results in a high number of “under investigation” causes. The OSFC is working to provide more education on this topic so that our data improves.

The cause of a fire is the first place to look when seeking what information to develop fire safety programs from.

**Smoke Alarm Information:**
- Present / Working - 5
- Not Present / Not Working - 14
- Unknown - 133

These numbers prove two facts; smoke alarms are still missing from homes and again, fire departments need to do better with data collection. The simple statement to say here is “how can the fire department justify the importance of smoke alarms when our data does not show just how useful smoke alarms are?” It is just a matter of time until a citizen asks this question. How are you going to answer it?

Reviewing these numbers proves to us we have some work to do around Pennsylvania. Let’s make each other a promise as a band of brothers and sisters combatting fire safety losses:
- Decrease overall fire death total by 30 percent
- Decrease older adult deaths by 10 percent
- Decrease the number of “unknown” smoke alarm information by 57 percent
- Increase the number of “present / working” smoke alarms by 76 (which is the number from the unknown goal)

Working together, we can reduce the number of fire fatalities and increase the use of smoke detectors in homes.
SEVERE WEATHER AWARENESS WEEK: April 22–26, 2019

By Jeff Jumper
State Meteorologist, PEMA

As the calendar turns, the threats shift from winter hazards to springtime severe weather for Pennsylvania. Our severe weather season begins in April and peaks over the summer months before tapering off in August. Statewide on average, tornadoes are most prevalent in May, with hail and wind damage peaking in June and July. Regardless, severe weather can happen at any time of the year and it is critical to ensure that you know how to prepare for severe weather is critical.

**Fast Facts**

Did you know in October 2018, Pennsylvania experienced its fourth largest tornado outbreak by number in history? At least sixteen tornadoes were detected as they raced across northern and western Pennsylvania.

On June 13, 2018, a 130mph tornado ripped through a large shopping center in Wilkes-Barre around 10:00 P.M., sparing significant injury and loss of life due to timing. This tornado was later declared an EF-2.

![Tornado Damage](image1)

**What makes a thunderstorm severe?**

- Wind Gusts of 58mph or Faster
- One Inch (1”) diameter Hail or Larger (quarter sized)
- A Tornado

Here are the three most important things you can do when it comes to preparing for severe weather:

**Always Know Where You Are**

The National Weather Service issues watches and warnings by location. It is very important that you know the name of the county where you live, work and travel. This will help you to identify if you are in the path of a dangerous thunderstorm.

**Have Multiple Alert Methods**

The best way to get alerts is to have multiple methods to receive them. Having a NOAA Weather Radio is encouraged. Just like a smoke alarm does for fire, the radio alerts you in the event of severe weather. This is especially important while you are sleeping. Phone apps, television, radio, email and text alerts are all good back-up methods.

**Identify Your Safe Place**

It is important to know where to go during severe weather. A sturdy, site-built facility is best. Get inside, away from doors and windows on the lowest level, preferably a basement. If tornadoes or strong winds are in the forecast, it is best to leave campers and mobile homes to find a sturdy building for the short-term. If outdoors, make plans to get to a designated safe place well before the storm arrives. Seeking cover is advisable as early as when a watch is issued, but certainly when a warning is in place.
PEMA GRANTS UPDATE

The Bureau of Grants Management encourages counties to apply for open grants. The following grants are open and accepting applications:

- The Hazardous Material Response Fund (HMRF) – HMRF provides financial assistance to counties to develop and integrate emergency response capability to health hazards, dangers, and risks posed to the public by the release of hazardous materials.

- The Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) – EMPG encourages the development of comprehensive disaster preparedness and assistance plans, programs, capabilities, and organizations by the stated and by county governments.

- The Radiation Emergency Response Fund (RERF) – RERF provides financial assistance to the 26-designated risk and support counties, municipalities, school districts, volunteer organizations, and state agencies in order to carry out the purposes of the Radiological Emergency Response Program.

### Grant DEADLINE TO APPLY Performance Report Due Dates

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<th>Deadline to Apply</th>
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<td>HMRF</td>
<td>April 5, 2019, at 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>No later than 30 days after the end of the performance period</td>
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<td>EMPG</td>
<td>April 12, 2019, at 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>1st Quarter (October 1 to December 31) - January 15</td>
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<td>4th Quarter (July 1 to September 30) - October 15</td>
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<td>RERF</td>
<td>April 12, 2019, at 5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>No later than 30 days after the end of the performance period</td>
</tr>
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**Important things to remember**

Due dates for applications cannot be extended.

All grant applications must be submitted using the Electronic Single Application (ESA)

Questions regarding grants, contact: ra-dgmmgrants@pa.gov

ESA login: https://www.esa.dced.state.pa.us

**Reminders**

Deadline and due dates may vary from year to year; please refer to PEMA guidance for each individual grant.

EMPG reimbursement requests due quarterly on the 15th of the month after the quarter ends.

For further guidance and instructions for each grant, please visit: [https://www.pema.pa.gov/about/Pages/Grants.aspx](https://www.pema.pa.gov/about/Pages/Grants.aspx)
PENNSYLVANIA DISASTER IN HISTORY

Athens, PA Bridge Destroyed by Flood, Apr 1916

NEW ATHENS BRIDGE DESTROYED BY FLOOD.

Special to The Inquirer.

TOWANDA, Pa., April 2.---A new steel bridge built across the Susquehanna River at Athens, two years ago, at a cost to Bradford county of $68,000, was destroyed by the flood today. The west and middle spans were torn out, leaving the east span intact. A pier built in 1844 and repaired with concrete for the new bridge in 1914, was undermined by the swirling flood waters, which made a hole into which the pier slid, allowing the two spans to tumble into the river.

David A. Keefe, who designed the bridge, witnessed the destruction of the structure to the scene. The State will have to rebuild the bridge.

The Interstate Fair at Athens may have to be abandoned because of the loss of the bridge which is used to reach the grounds. The river remained stationary here today at 18½ feet. Freezing temperature setting in last night has prevented the snow from melting today. All the lowlands are under water.

Abraham Hiltz, aged 70, a farmer, while hurrying along the Lehigh tracks north of Towanda tonight, bent on notifying a neighbor of danger to his livestock from the raging waters of the Susquehanna River nearby, was struck by a fast train and killed. His body was hurled one hundred feet.

~ Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia, PA 3 Apr 1916

© LENT Photo, April 3, 1916
## UPCOMING TRAINING

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<td>10-Apr-19</td>
<td>Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency</td>
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<td>G191 ICS/EOC Interface Workshop</td>
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<td>G271 Hazardous Weather and Flooding Preparedness</td>
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To register, visit Train PA: [https://pa.train.org](https://pa.train.org)
Need Ideas For Getting The Word Out?

Each month, the PEMA External Affairs Office distributes numerous preparedness resources designed to help make communicating to your communities about preparedness easy. We encourage everyone to share this valuable information with their partner agencies, schools, faith-based organizations, family and friends.

These tools are emailed each month and are also available on at www.ready.pa.gov.

**ReadyPA Monthly** - Community preparedness information designed for citizens. Forward to libraries, schools, local municipalities, etc.

**Fact Sheets** - One-page preparedness material about a specific hazard. Please make this easily printed information available to your community members, elected officials, civic organizations, and anyone who could benefit from this valuable information.

**Talking Points and Social Media Toolkit** - Graphics, tweet suggestions, and talking points for you to use on social media, websites, and when speaking to groups.

**FEATURED EMERGENCY MANAGER TOOL**

Pennsylvania State Agency Emergency & Recovery Resources Catalog.

This resource is designed for emergency management professionals and state agencies as a reference guide for state-level programs that may be available to citizens and communities when affected by an emergency or disaster.

The catalog provides resources and guidance on community development; emergency declaration; employment; finance; health; housing; property; law enforcement; elections; and schools, to name a few.

The catalog is available electronically on the PEMA website at: https://www.pema.pa.gov/Documents/1/Pennsylvania%20State%20Agency%20Disaster%20Resources%20Catalog%202018%20V2.0.pdf.

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