

Washington County Emergency Management 2025 Annual Report

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Photos on cover:

Upper right: Volunteer CERT members listen to a lecture during the November CERT exercise

Middle Left: Washington County staff reenacting a Unified Command Meeting at the April Heat Tabletop Exercise.

Lower Left: Wildfire Season Preparedness Workshop participants listening to a panel discussion.

A Letter from our Manager

I am pleased to present the first Washington County Emergency Management Annual Report, highlighting our work over the past year in preparing Washington County to respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of natural and manmade disasters. Now, more than ever, it is important to recognize the crucial role emergency managers play every day in preparing communities, coordinating response and recovery, and building long-term resilience. There are emergency managers in a variety of professional settings such as state, county, and local governments, non-profit organizations, and within our schools, hospitals and businesses. You may not always see us or know what we do, but we're behind the scenes ensuring we have systems in place to effectively respond to future emergencies, keep people safe, and keep critical systems running.

I have been continually impressed by the dedication and expertise of our team in advancing Washington County's resilience. They have excelled in fostering trust and building partnerships that enhance our preparedness and response capabilities. Their success would not be possible without the commitment of our partners in Washington County, our cities and special districts, community-based organizations, businesses, and many others. Strengthening interagency collaboration and engaging community organizations allows us to develop and implement comprehensive plans that integrate diverse perspectives and resources. These efforts reflect our shared commitment to making Washington County a community that can adapt to and recover from any challenge. Looking ahead, we remain focused on fostering a culture of preparedness and countywide resilience. The achievements highlighted in this report are a testament to the hard work of our staff and partners, whose contributions are vital to this mission. Together, we are building a prepared and resilient Washington County community for everyone.

Thank you,



John Wheeler
Manager, Washington County Emergency Management
Director, Emergency Management Cooperative (EMC) of Washington County

Mission and Strategic Goals

MISSION

Bringing people together to reduce disaster impacts through a comprehensive emergency management program that coordinates preparedness, prevention, response, recovery, and mitigation.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Develop and update risk assessments and emergency management plans and procedures, and ensure they are integrated, useful, and compliant with standards and rules.



A core function of County Emergency Management is the development and maintenance of plans and supporting documents. This is driven by state law and grant requirements. This goal pertains to the creation, maintenance, and updating of plans (Emergency Operations Plan and Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan), procedures, agreements, and related documents.

Advance multiagency coordination system readiness and supporting capabilities.



Emergency Management is expected to maintain a multiagency coordination system. For County Emergency Management, this system includes multiagency coordination groups, EOC policy group, County Emergency Operations Center, department operations centers (Land Use and Transportation, Washington County Sheriff's Office), joint information center/system, and the Internal Operations Management Team. This goal also pertains to supporting capabilities such as crisis management, communications, and situation assessment, and resource management.

Improve capabilities related to providing lifesaving and life-sustaining services.



The priorities of every emergency response are to protect life, property, and the environment. This goal addresses those priorities by meeting the critical needs of disaster victims and survivors. It focuses on direct emergency services such as alert and warning, population protection, search and rescue, medical care, and human services.

Develop and maintain a multi-year training and exercise program driven by risk assessments, corrective actions, and gaps in capabilities and plans.



Responder readiness depends above all on effective and consistent training. This goal is about maintaining a training program that identifies training priorities, arranges for instructors and course logistics, and partners with other training providers.

Continue to engage with the whole community in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters.



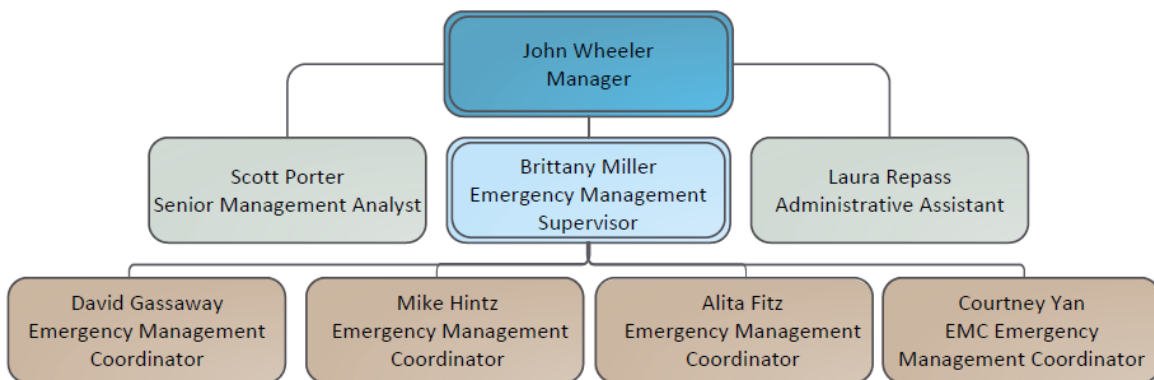
Due to the limitations of government, disaster preparedness, response, and recovery requires a partnership with the whole community, down to the level of the neighborhood, family, and individual. This goal is about empowering the community with information, resources, and education so they can build their own resilience.

Our Team



Washington County Emergency Management team members

Washington County Emergency Management (WCEM) is staffed by seven full-time and one part-time staff members. The team consists of specialists who lead a variety of projects related to alert and warning, mass care, natural hazard mitigation, emergency operations center (EOC) readiness, and grant programs. The WCEM team coordinates with local city and special district emergency managers to ensure systems, plans, and projects benefit all community members. In 2025, the team worked hard to help build a more resilient and prepared Washington County.



Planning Accomplishments

Spotlight: Community Wildfire Protection Plan Update

Washington County with the support of contract staff from Bintel, and representatives from local, state, and federal agencies updated our Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) the countywide plan for reducing our wildfire risk.

The CWPP was developed through a collaboration between communities and agencies with a role in wildfire risk reduction. It includes information such as fire history, behavior, and probability, firefighting capabilities and water sources, wildfire community hazard ratings, and wildfire mitigation recommendations, including home ignition zone recommendations.

Washington County, Oregon



2025 COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN



The plan was developed over the past nine months and included:

- A rigorous on-the-ground assessment of the county's wildfire threat and risk.
- Identifying and defining the wildland urban interface (WUI) and wildland intermix (WI) areas in the county where residential structures abut or intermix with the wildland fire threat.
- Conducting an "ignitability" analysis for each high hazard community.
- Making recommendations to mitigate the wildfire threat in the high hazard communities and countywide.

Additional Accomplishments

- ❖ **Made significant Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan progress:** To support the COOP program, WCEM developed and finalized a base plan, department disruption response procedure template, and disruption worksheet, and created several new WebEOC boards and data views. WCEM also helped County department's make progress in completing part 1 and part 2 of Mission Essential Functions.
- ❖ **Finalized Hazardous Materials Plan :** In partnership with the Washington County Local Emergency Planning Committee, WCEM substantially updated this plan. The plan provides a framework for how responders and support agencies respond to chemical spills in the County.
- ❖ **Published Mass Fatality Management Plan:** In partnership with Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP), the Washington County Medical Examiner's Office, and our city and special districts, this plan update completely re-vamped the mass fatality management plan, moving the focus from tactical on-scene management to larger system coordination and response.

- ❖ **Published Incident Cost Tracking Procedures:** Provides a standardized procedures for how incident-related costs are documented, categorized, and tracked to support the County submitting for post-disaster assistance and reimbursement.
- ❖ **Completed State Capabilities Assessment:** This annual requirement from Oregon Emergency Management allows WCEM the opportunity to reflect and connect with partners on work over the last year to determine if an emergency management capability has increased, decreased, or remained the same.
- ❖ **Completed annual Integrated Preparedness Planning:** Through a local Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop (IPPW), WCEM gathered information from internal departments and external partners about planning projects, trainings, and exercises that will occur or that partners would like to see occur in 2026. This information was then shared with the state through their state Integrated Preparedness Planning Workshop.
- ❖ **Supported water provider coordination:** Restarted the “Water Table” planning group in partnership with PHEP to provide a space for water providers to discuss and coordinate on emergency preparedness and response issues and procedures.
- ❖ **Drafted Emergency Drinking Water Framework:** As an appendix to the Logistics and Resource Management Annex of the County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), this framework outlines the County’s approach to distribution of emergency drinking water to the general public in the case of an incident that exceeds the capacity of one or more water providers to meet the short-term, life-sustaining drinking water needs of impacted residents.
- ❖ **Updated R-JIS Framework:** Participated in a regional workgroup to review and update the Regional Joint Information System (JIS) Framework which outlines how the Portland Metro region will coordinate public information during major disasters.



John Wheeler and Chair Harrington receive Washington County’s StormReady certification and signs from National Weather Service staff.

Communications and Emergency Alert Program Accomplishments

Spotlight: Alert Threshold Development



A critical responsibility of WCEM is to quickly alert the public of threats to their safety and provide them with key actions to take to protect themselves. In coordination with internal departments like Health and Human Services and the County Administrative Office, and response partners from law enforcement, fire, and our 9-1-1 dispatch center (WCCCA), WCEM developed matrices outlining alerting methods and thresholds for use. These partners discussed situations that would require the community to take action to protect themselves and the variety of alerting methods available and then determined which were appropriate to

use under different conditions. For urgent situations, requiring immediate action by the public (like a Level 3 wildfire evacuation or a Scoggins Dam failure), wide-reaching methods such as Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) or the Emergency Alert System (EAS) would be used because they push messages to cellular devices in the impacted area and interrupt radio and TV programs to broadcast the message. If the situation required less urgent or more informative messaging, the alert methods will include emailing community members who have provided their contact information and posting on social media or the Current Incident webpage.

Additional Accomplishments

- ❖ **Developed an alerting hand off procedure:** This procedure, created in partnership with WCCCA, outlines the process for shifting alerting responsibility during a wildfire from WCCCA to WCEM.
- ❖ **Kicked off Genasys evacuation zone planning:** WCEM began a project to localize data within the state-purchased Genasys evacuation zone system to ensure evacuation zones within the system matched neighborhood and community boundaries. This project will enhance Washington County's ability to rapidly alert the public about evacuations and ensure that community members are notified as quickly as possible about the need to evacuate. WCEM pulled together a team of more than a dozen internal and external partners to review the proposed evacuation zones and redraw them as needed. This project will continue through Spring 2026.

-  23 alert message templates finalized
-  8 WCCCA employees trained
-  9 PublicAlerts sent
-  10 internal employee alerts
*sent by CAO but supported by EM
-  1,994 New sign ups for PublicAlerts

Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Program Accomplishments

Spotlight: Revived the EOC Program through recruitment and training

Washington County Emergency Management focused heavily on reviving the County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) program, whose ongoing maintenance had been deferred in recent years to focus on several major incidents. This effort started in 2024 with a County-wide recruitment, and continued into 2025 with essential orientations and emergency trainings on the response plan. The successful recruitment resulted in the creation and staffing of the Mass Care Branch and the Damage Assessment Branch, two critical components of responding to large disasters, such as an earthquake or severe winter storm.

Washington County Emergency Management also hosted a quarterly EOC-wide training that brought together more than 30 EOC responders from various County departments. From Incident Commanders in Health and Human Services and operations staff from Land Use and Transportation to Safety Officers from Risk and planning section staff from the County Administrator's Office, this training highlighted the importance of a common operating picture in response. It also provided an opportunity for EOC responders to get to know each other before disaster strikes.

The work done this last year has increased Washington County's operational readiness for future disasters and established a repeatable training schedule.



David Gassaway, Emergency Management Coordinator, teaching EOC responders

Training hosted for EOC responders:

- Planning Section (2 trainings)
- Logistics Section (2 trainings)
- Mass Care Branch (2 trainings)
- Damage Assessment Group (1 training)
- Operations Section (1 training)
- Public Information Officer (2 trainings)
- Finance Section (2 trainings)
- WebEOC Basics (6 trainings)
- WebEOC Lunch and Learns (3 trainings)
- WebEOC Admin Workshop (2 trainings)

★ 3 staff certified through the State Qualification System!

Training and Exercise

Spotlight: Community engagement through emergency management hosted exercises.

Boilin' in the Burbs: Heat Response tabletop exercise

WCEM in partnership with Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center and the Ukrainian Foundation, hosted an extreme heat response exercise with funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), awarded through a competitive application process. This exercise used a fictional, but realistic, scenario to guide discussion about what organizations will do during an extreme heat incident. The exercise built stronger relationships across organizations and supported long-term planning, policy making, and collaboration to increase heat resilience.



Heat response tabletop exercise participants from Washington County, City of Hillsboro, National Weather Service, and partnering community based organizations.

Countywide Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Exercise

In October, WCEM and city partners hosted a Countywide CERT training and exercise for more than 70 volunteers. This event featured a series of stations focused on learning, practicing, and refreshing CERT skills.

These skills included: exterior building size up, scene size up, mass casualty triage and assessment, patient packaging and transport and interior search and rescue. Through this training, Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) members further developed their disaster preparedness skills so when an emergency hits, they are ready to volunteer and support the community where they live.



CERT volunteers practicing skills

Trainings taught by staff:

- ❖ Basic Public Information Officer (PIO) Course
- ❖ ICS 300 – Intermediate ICS for expanding incidents
- ❖ ICS 400 – Advanced ICS for Complex Incidents

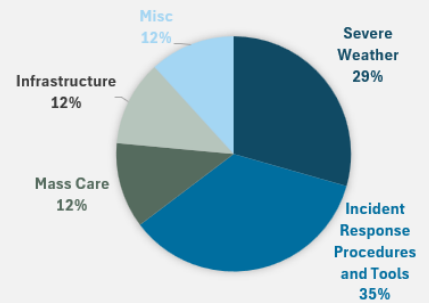
Conferences attended:

- ❖ Juvare (WebEOC) – “Orchestrate”
- ❖ Oregon Prepared (OEM)
- ❖ National Preparedness Summit – “Pathways to Recovery”
- ❖ Oregon Emergency Management Association (OEMA)

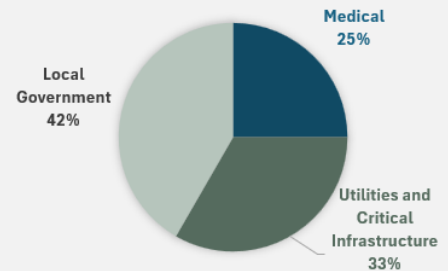
Exercises

19 facilitated/hosted
10 attended

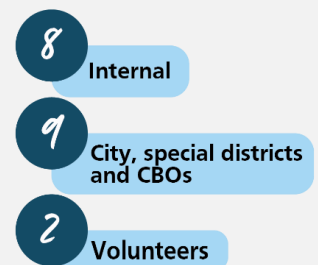
HOSTED/FACILITATED EXERCISE THEMES



ATTENDED EXERCISE THEMES



Audiences



Community Engagement and Education

Spotlight: Record High Community Engagement

Each year, WCEM is asked to participate in preparedness events hosted by local partners allowing us to directly engage with the community. This year WCEM staff participated in 26 events, a record high!

At these events, we provide the community with preparedness information, build their awareness of hazards in the county, and provide them with tools and resources to improve preparedness for themselves and their families. These events require staff to perform a variety of tasks such as providing a presentation on a specific topic or hazard or tabling an event such as National Night Out. These events are an important component of an emergency management program because they empower the community to take important steps to get personally prepared for future disasters.



Alita Fitz, Emergency Management Coordinator, with Mercy Connections leadership

Preparedness for Employees

- ❖ Employee Payroll Deduction Campaign
- ❖ Table at HR's Wellness Fair
- ❖ Frequent articles in the ONE Washington County Newsletter
- ❖ Presentation for Community Development Staff
- ❖ Presentation for Cedar Mills Library staff

Employee Payroll Deduction Campaign



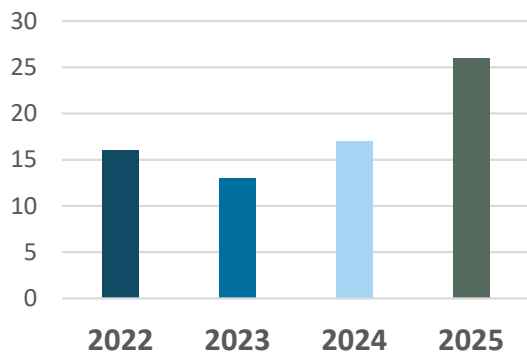
- ❖ 105 water orders
- ❖ 601 cases ordered

Social Media



- ❖ 30 preparedness posts
- ❖ 6 posts in all Safe Harbor languages
- ❖ Most Impactful post reached 19,000 people

Number of Community Events By Year



County staff and partner organizations discussing emergency preparedness

Program Achievements

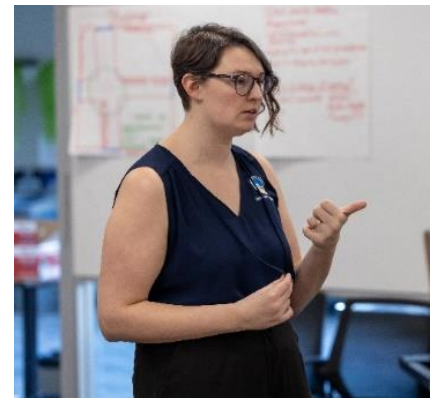
Spotlight: Developed WCEM's first 3-year Strategic Plan

WCEM developed and published its first multi-year strategic plan! The strategic plan outlines the mission, vision, and values of the program and prioritizes our efforts over the next three years based on a thorough analysis of current capabilities, gaps, and desired outcomes. See our mission and strategic goals listed on page 4 of this report.

Through a series of brainstorms, workshops, and offline editing sessions, WCEM defined our programs' direction, priorities, and actions to achieve long-term success. Moving forward, it will be a key tool used by our office to set milestones for achieving goals outlined in the plan, allocating resources efficiently, and measuring progress to ensure alignment with our mission, vision, and values.

Additional Accomplishments

- ❖ **Created and implemented WCEM Corrective Action Program:** Cataloged improvement plan items from exercises and incident after action reports between 2020-2025 to allow us to methodically track progress made on each item.
- ❖ **Participated in many discussions about federal policy impacts:** Remained flexible and engaged in the ever-changing federal landscape to determine how it would affect our operations and grant funding.
- ❖ **Grant application and management:** Coordinated with our internal department, city, and special district partners to develop projects and applications for UASI, EMPG, and SHSP grant programs, then track and report on the allocation and spending of awarded funds.
- ❖ **Courthouse evacuation after action support:** Facilitated an after action meeting with key internal responders and developed an improvement plan based on lessons learned.



Alita Fitz, emergency management coordinator, teaching Public Information Officers



EOC responders participating in an exercise

New and Improved WebEOC Functionalities!

COOP

- ❖ Orders of Succession board
- ❖ Department essential function report

EOC

- ❖ Agency and Lifeline Status board
- ❖ Agency Public Assistance board
- ❖ Windshield Damage Assessment board
- ❖ Shelter and Public Support Facilities board

Closing Remarks

Thank you for reading our 2025 Annual Report. This year, Washington County Emergency Management worked closely with our local, regional, and state partners to prepare for, mitigate against, respond to, and recover from emergencies. We finalized several plans, strengthened our alert and warning program and expanded our community engagement through public events and social media. We're looking forward to what 2026 brings!

Resources

Upcoming training and exercises:

<https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/emc/emc-events>

For internal County Employees

<https://horizons.washingtoncountyor.gov/emergency-management> <https://horizons.washingtoncountyor.gov/emergency-management/eoc>

Preparedness Information -Take 5 to Survive

<https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/take5>

Contact Us

Washco_EM@washingtoncountyor.gov

<https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/emergency>

Written By

Alita Fitz & Brittany Miller

