

WAPELLO COUNTY EMA

Ready for Anything.

Your all-hazards
Emergency Management Agency



Plan. React. Adapt.

Your all-hazards Emergency Management Agency

How Wapello County plans for, responds to, and recovers from disasters, and how you can be ready too.

Wapello County Emergency Management Agency · Protection Through Preparedness

Cover photo: Wapello County tornado, March 31, 2023. Wapello County Sheriff's Office, Deputy McConnell.

Experience you can call on.



Tim Richmond

Emergency Management Director

Tim Richmond, an Iowa Certified Emergency Manager, has directed the Wapello County Emergency Management Agency since 2017 and chairs the county's 911 Service Board and EMS Advisory Council. An Advanced EMT with more than 30 years as a volunteer responder, he serves as Deputy Chief of the Wapello County Rural Fire Department and teaches fire and EMS courses for Indian Hills Community College and the Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau. He also serves as Chillicothe City Clerk and Cass Township Clerk, and spent 26 years in corporate facilities and operations management. He graduated summa cum laude from Buena Vista University with a B.A. in Organizational Leadership and Psychology (double major).

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Jake Bohi

Emergency Management Specialist

Jake Bohi joined the Wapello County Emergency Management Agency in July 2023. He helped design, write, and maintain the Wapello Life app and supports the Director across the agency's work. He served 13 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, active and reserve, leaving as a Gunnery Sergeant, then 28 years with the Phoenix Police Department, retiring after his last 19 years as a bomb technician and HazMat technician. He protected events such as the Super Bowl and World Series from chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive threats, and wrote domestic preparedness curriculum for Arizona's law enforcement academies. A former international director of the International Association of Bomb Technicians and Investigators, he co-founded its Certified International Post Blast Investigator certification. He is also a certified EMT.

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FEMA Basic Academy graduating class.

Emergency management is a profession of continuing education.

Get the alerts. Sign up for Wapello Ready Alerts and the free Wapello Life app at wapelloready.org, so warnings reach you at home and on the go.

Who we are and what we do

3–13

The law, mitigation, and history

19–22

When disaster strikes

14–18

References

23

Safeguarding the rhythm of our lives.

An emergency manager is the community's planner and coordinator for disasters.

Disasters start local, and so do we.

The Wapello County Emergency Management Agency (WCEMA) is the county's all-hazards coordinating agency. We plan for three kinds of hazards: **natural** (tornadoes, floods, winter storms), **technological** (hazardous-materials spills, long power outages, infrastructure failures), and **human-caused** (terrorism and cyberattacks).

We bring **expertise** when incidents grow complex, **education** before they happen, **resources** when they strike, and a **seamless process** that protects lives, property, the environment, and the economy.

Did you know?

The local emergency management agency is the only local entity that:

- coordinates and supports **multiple disciplines**
- keeps an **all-hazards** focus
- works **countywide**

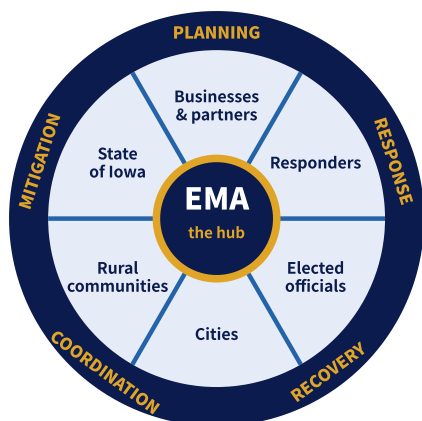
Our mission

The mission of the Wapello County Emergency Management Agency is to develop a comprehensive and integrated community system that coordinates emergency management resources to protect lives, property and the environment through developing mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities for all hazards that may impact our county.

We strive to build a safer future through effective partnerships of local government, emergency services, private sector, volunteer agencies and citizens through coordinating resources, expertise, leadership, and advocacy through a comprehensive risk-based emergency preparedness program.

It is our commitment to help residents in our county to be prepared for any emergency situation that may impact our daily life.

EMPOWER with knowledge and resources



The hub of the wheel

Responders, elected officials, cities, rural communities, the state, and private partners are the spokes. Planning, response, recovery, coordination, and mitigation are the rim. EMA is the hub that holds it together.

Think of a conductor

An emergency manager is like the conductor of an orchestra. We don't play every instrument; firefighters, police, EMS, public health, utilities, public works, and volunteers do. We make sure everyone starts on the same beat, stays in sync, and keeps moving together until the crisis is over.

Plan. React. Adapt.



Planning for a tornado path, one pretzel at a time.

We PLAN for resiliency.

This is our agency's goal. A resilient community takes a hit, keeps essential services running, and bounces back faster.

We help you REACT to adversity.

Sudden disaster is what families and businesses fear most. Good planning turns panic into a known next step.



Eddyville Volunteer Fire Department and mutual aid at a night fire.



Crews working overnight to restore essential services.

We help you ADAPT to uncertainty.

Not knowing what comes next is what causes most people anxiety. **This is Recovery**, the longest and least visible part of any disaster.

The Readiness Cycle

Planning, training, exercising, and equipping aren't four separate jobs. They're one loop, and each part makes the others stronger.



A plan no one has trained on is just paper. Training that has never been exercised is untested. An exercise that changes nothing is a missed opportunity.



It starts with risk

The national preparedness system begins by identifying and assessing threats and hazards. That's why hazard assessments come first.

Congressional Research Service, 2021

From "what if" to "here's how."

Other agencies' rules land on our desk.

These requirements are placed on schools, facilities, utilities, and local governments, but meeting them depends on your emergency management agency.

Who	Requirement	What it asks
Schools	Iowa Code § 280.30	High-quality emergency operations plans for every district and building, developed in consultation with local emergency management, updated yearly, with an annual drill.
Healthcare facilities	CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule (2016)	Medicare- and Medicaid-participating providers (17 provider types) must plan, collaborate with local emergency preparedness officials, and train and exercise.
Health care coalitions	ASPR Hospital Preparedness Program	Since 2017, every coalition must include emergency management as one of four core members, with hospitals, EMS, and public health.
Child care	45 CFR § 98.41	Federally funded providers must maintain emergency preparedness and response plans; many turn to their county EMA for help.
Drinking water systems	America's Water Infrastructure Act (2018)	Systems serving more than 3,300 people must complete risk assessments and emergency response plans, coordinating with the LEPC where possible.
Chemical facilities	EPCRA (42 U.S.C. § § 11003, 11022); EPA RMP	Hazmat emergency plans, annual Tier II chemical inventory reports to the LEPC and fire department, and coordination and exercises with local responders.
Mitigation grants	44 CFR 201.6; Iowa HSEMD	Communities need a FEMA-approved Hazard Mitigation Plan, renewed every five years, to receive Hazard Mitigation Assistance.
Federal preparedness grants	NIMS	Jurisdictions adopt the National Incident Management System; some NIMS training may be required to obtain federal assistance.



Training school staff, one of many partners whose requirements depend on EMA.

PROVIDES TRAINING

The power to save a life lives in all of us.



Hazardous-materials protective equipment training.



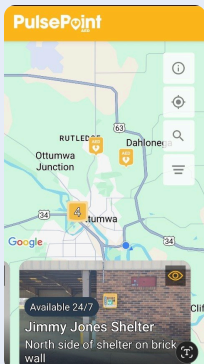
Stop the Bleed training for all Eddyville-Blakesburg-Fremont school staff, with our partners at Mahaska County EMA.



Young residents practicing Stop the Bleed at a community event.

Training for responders, officials, partners, and the public.

- Incident Command System
- CPR, AED & First Aid
- Stop the Bleed
- Standard Response Protocol (The “I Love U Guys” Foundation)
- Fire service courses with the Iowa Fire Service Training Bureau
- EMS training support at Indian Hills Community College
- Emergency Vehicle Operations
- Storm spotter training with the National Weather Service
- Hazardous materials & responder safety
- WALRUS Search & Rescue



Public AED Program

Our Public AED Program places lifesaving automated external defibrillators in public locations. In a cardiac emergency, call 911 for the access code to open the cabinet.

Find public AEDs near you in the free PulsePoint AED app.



Local officials and partners launching a Public AED Program cabinet.

Free training is available at wapelloready.org or on the Wapello Life app.



Firefighters after a rail and industrial tabletop exercise, complete with model trains.

TESTS CAPABILITIES

Find the gaps on a calm Tuesday, not during a disaster.

BEST PRACTICE

We follow the national Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP), which uses two families of exercises.

Talk it through

Seminar – orients people to new or updated plans

Workshop – builds a product, such as a draft plan

Tabletop – key people discuss a simulated scenario

Game – teams play out a situation using rules and data

Do it for real

Drill – tests one specific operation or function

Functional – tests coordination between centers like the EOC

Full-Scale – many agencies, real people and equipment in the field



Hazmat exercise, Southeast Iowa Response Group.

Exercise definitions: GlobalSecurity.org, n.d.; NACCHO, n.d.

Serious practice doesn't have to be boring

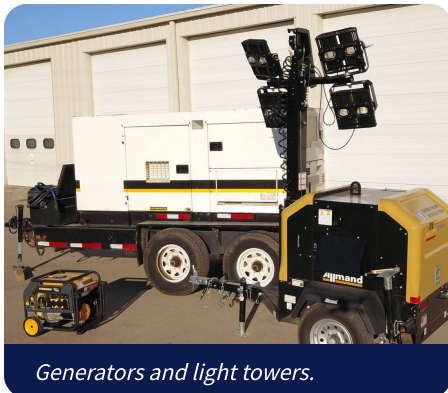
Model trains, toy fire trucks, and even candy tornadoes help responders see a scenario unfold and spot problems before they happen for real.

Shared tools for the whole county.

Some equipment is too costly or too rarely used for every department to own. WCEMA hosts it, maintains it, and deploys it where it's needed.



Reunification & Community Events trailer with barricades, traffic control, tables, and power, staged and ready.



Generators and light towers.



WALRUS Search & Rescue trailer on scene.



Message board warning drivers of a crash.

- **Reunification & community events trailer**
- **Barricades, cones, and traffic control**
- **Generators and light towers** for power and night operations
- **Animal emergency rescue & shelter unit**
- **Message boards** to warn drivers



Meet WALRUS

A specialized, developing regional Search & Rescue team: Water, Air, Land/Woodland, Rescue teams, Urban Search, and Safety. The emergency management directors of Wapello, Jefferson, and Henry counties serve as its incident management experts and trainers.

What we deliver, every year.

Deliverables, not abstractions. Here is the full range of services Wapello County Emergency Management provides.

Planning, Guidance & Compliance

- Countywide Emergency Operations Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, and Disaster Recovery Plan
- Plan help for schools, businesses, and government bodies (continuity, debris, sheltering, reunification)
- Hazard vulnerability and risk assessments
- Hazardous materials coordination as a member of the regional LEPC
- Process improvement consultation

Operational Coordination & Incident Support

- Emergency Operations Center activations for major incidents and planned events
- Unified situational awareness across agencies
- Public warning, alerts, and emergency messaging
- Resource management, logistics, and response support equipment

Training, Exercises & Education

- Core capability and Incident Command training
- Tabletop, functional, and full-scale exercises for responders, officials, schools, businesses, and agencies
- Search & rescue education and capability development
- Security and threat-preparedness training
- Community preparedness outreach

Mitigation, Recovery & Administration

- Technical support for mitigation projects
- Damage assessment and recovery coordination
- Business continuity and industrial risk planning
- Grant administration and reporting
- After-action reviews and improvement plans



COVID-19 personal protective equipment staged for distribution to local partners.

One office. Every partner.

Emergency management makes every partner more effective, acting as the single coordinating hub for fire, EMS, law enforcement, public health, public works, schools, hospitals, utilities, and businesses.

**We're not the first on scene.
We make sure the first on scene gets
what it needs.**

When local resources run short, we move help up the ladder:

1 • Local resources

County and city departments, businesses, and volunteers

▼ *when local resources run short*

2 • Mutual aid

Neighboring counties and emergency management agencies

▼ *when regional help is not enough*

3 • State of Iowa

State resources, and through the state, federal help



Local officials and partners launching a Public AED Program cabinet.

RESOURCE PLANNING IN ONE LINE

**NEED – HAVE =
ACQUIRE**



One coordinating office: **one common plan, one common picture, one common resource list.**

**We coordinate.
We don't take over.**

By law, the Emergency Management Director (the “coordinator” in Iowa Code) provides coordination and assistance to the governing officials of the cities and the county during an emergency. Your elected officials stay in charge; we make sure they have what they need. *(Iowa Code § 29C.10)*

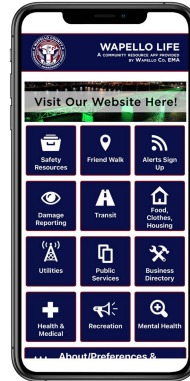
Three jobs. Every incident.

1

Manage Information

We gather what's happening, verify it, and get it to decision-makers and the public, including the damage data that state and federal authorities require for disaster declarations and assistance.

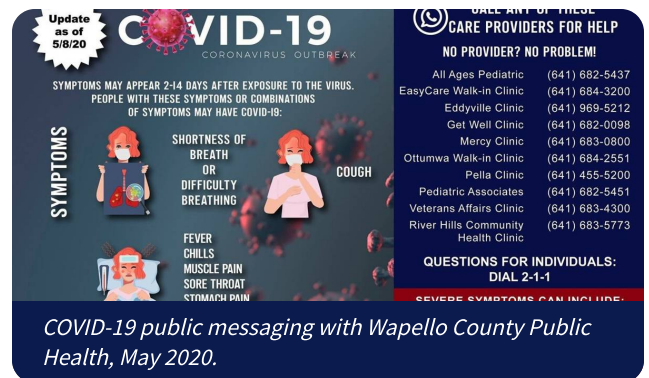
Iowa Code § 29C.9



2

Manage Expectations

We tell residents, officials, and partners honestly what help is coming, when, and what they need to do in the meantime.



COVID-19 public messaging with Wapello County Public Health, May 2020.

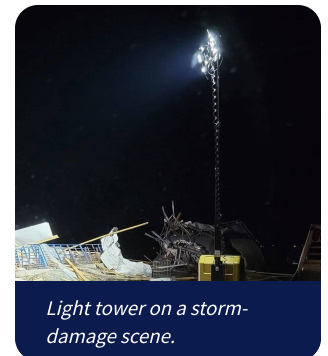
3

Manage Resources

We find, request, track, and deploy people and supplies through mutual aid, the state, and federal partners.



Animal emergency shelter, set up with Henry County EMA.



Light tower on a storm-damage scene.



Your report counts

After a disaster, EMA posts a link for residents to report damage, like this request after a storm in Ottumwa. Your photos and reports help the county request state assistance.

Each disaster gets a new link; the old link is blurred.

Two ways to get alerts: Wapello Ready Alerts, part of Alert Iowa, sends warnings for your home or business address. The free **Wapello Life app** brings alerts to your phone wherever you are. Sign up for both at wapelloready.org.

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

After the storm

Recovery steps for your household

Wapello County tornado damage, March 31, 2023.

BEFORE: Get the alerts. Wapello Ready Alerts (Alert Iowa) warns your home or business address; the free Wapello Life app alerts your phone wherever you are. Sign up at wapelloready.org.

DURING: Follow official information. Tune in to local and county news, websites, and social media, including Wapello County EMA, for updates and critical information.

After: eight steps

1


STAY SAFE

Watch for washed-out roads, gas leaks, downed power lines, broken glass, and damaged wiring. Don't go home until local officials say it's safe.

2


CHECK UTILITIES

Check for gas leaks, downed lines, and water damage. If you smell gas, stay out and report it.

3


TAKE PHOTOS

Document your damage before you clean up: take photos and make a list.

4


CALL YOUR INSURANCE

If you have insurance, contact your agent to file a claim.

5


REPORT DAMAGE

Report to EMA through the Wapello Life app or the link EMA posts. **Your report counts:** residents' photos and reports help the county request state assistance.

6


KEEP RECEIPTS

Save every receipt for repairs and cleanup.

7


FOLLOW CLEANUP GUIDANCE

Follow local guidelines for safe cleanup and disposal.

8


SEEK ASSISTANCE

State programs may open after a Governor's disaster proclamation. EMA will post who qualifies and how to apply.

Immediate needs? Local officials and voluntary organizations are usually the best help for food and shelter. The latest state recovery information is at disasterrecovery.iowa.gov.

Watch for scams. Guard your personal and financial information. The government will not contact you on social media about owing money or receiving payments.



STAY INFORMED • STAY PREPARED

Sources: Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Department [Iowa HSEMD], 2025b, 2025c, 2026b.

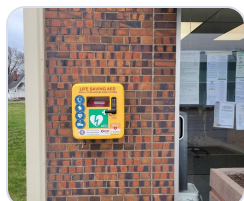
Across every stage of a disaster.

Emergency management doesn't start when the sirens go off. We work in all five national mission areas.



Prevention

Prevent, avoid, or stop an imminent, threatened, or actual act of terrorism. *Locally: working hand in hand with the Wapello County Sheriff's Office and law enforcement partners.*



Protection

Protect residents, visitors, and assets against the greatest threats and hazards. *Locally: our Public AED Program.*



Mitigation

Reduce loss of life and property by lessening the impact of future disasters. *Locally: the Wapello Life app and our weather radio program give residents earlier warning, so they have more time to get to safety.*



Response

Respond quickly to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs. *Locally: coordinating from the EOC or on scene, and stabilizing community lifelines.*



Recovery

Help the community rebuild stronger. *Locally: cleanup supplies for Eldon residents after flooding, damage assessment, and our Disaster Recovery Plan.*

Wait, where's "Preparedness"?

If you learned the four phases of emergency management (mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery), you'll notice preparedness isn't listed. That's because preparedness now covers everything: the national goal is a nation able to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats that pose the greatest risk. **Being prepared means being ready for all five.**

FEMA, n.d.-b; National Academies, 2024

WHAT WE PROTECT

The 8 Community Lifelines

A lifeline keeps critical government and business functions running and is essential to human health, safety, or economic security. When lifelines are stable, everything else can recover. (FEMA, n.d.-a)



Safety & Security

Law enforcement, fire, search & rescue, government services



Food, Hydration, Shelter

Food, water, shelter, agriculture



Health & Medical

Medical care, public health, patient movement



Energy

Power grid and fuel



Communications

Alerts and warnings, 911 and dispatch, responder radio



Transportation

Roads, rail, transit, aviation



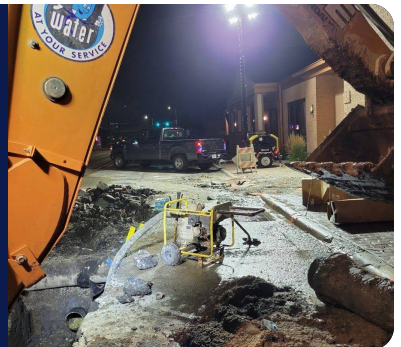
Hazardous Materials

Facilities, HAZMAT, pollutants, contaminants



Water Systems

Drinking water and wastewater



Lifeline icons: FEMA Community Lifelines Implementation Toolkit, Version 2.1 (2023). Water Systems became the eighth lifeline on August 1, 2023 (ASDWA, 2023).

ON THE WALL

Emergency management is on the wall.

Like a watchman on the city wall, we stay vigilant so our communities can go about their lives. Every day, we are watching:



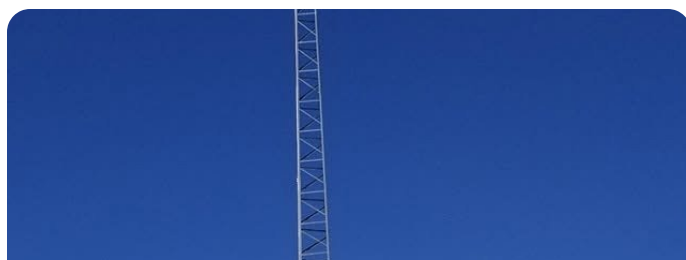
We're watching the weather



We're watching the rivers



We're watching hazmat facilities



We're watching critical infrastructure



We're watching our first responders



We're watching our communities



We're watching security threats



We're watching the next public health crisis

...so that when something comes over the horizon, Wapello County is already moving.

Recovery takes months to years.

Short-term recovery restores vital services and meets basic needs. Long-term recovery rebuilds the community, and is the best time to build in mitigation.

How recovery unfolds



Six Recovery Support Functions

Our Disaster Recovery Plan uses the national framework's six coordinating structures:

- Community Assistance
- Economic
- Health & Social Services
- Housing
- Infrastructure Systems
- Natural & Cultural Resources

Your part in recovery

- Report damage, document it, and keep receipts: see the eight steps on page 14
- Recovery is gradual; take care of yourself and your family
- Watch for EMA posts on assistance programs and how to apply

Iowa HSEMD, 2025b, 2026b



Cleanup supplies for Eldon residents after flooding.



Ottumwa Water Works crews repairing a water main break.

Eleven duties. Every county.

Under 605 IAC 7.3(4), every Iowa emergency management commission carries the same minimum duties, and delegates them to its Director (the “coordinator” in Iowa Code) and agency.

- 1 Administration & finance**
Establish the agency, set its mission, adopt a budget, and appoint a qualified coordinator
- 2 Hazard & risk assessment**
Identify credible hazards, analyze their impact, and assess readiness
- 3 Resource management**
Identify, acquire, distribute, and track resources; conduct mutual aid
- 4 Planning**
Maintain a comprehensive, multihazard emergency plan
- 5 Direction, control & coordination**
Coordinate response and recovery; support the Incident Command System
- 6 Damage assessment**
Keep a trained damage assessment capability
- 7 Communications & warning**
Warn the public and officials; keep primary and backup communications
- 8 Operations & procedures**
Encourage agencies to maintain procedures that support the plan
- 9 Training**
Train officials, responders, volunteers, and staff
- 10 Exercises**
Conduct exercises every year
- 11 Public education & information**
Keep a public information capability, including for people with access and functional needs

Plans and disaster funding are linked

State participation in disaster financial assistance depends on the commission having a state-approved comprehensive emergency plan on file. Failing to provide timely, accurate damage assessment information may jeopardize or eliminate eligibility for state and federal assistance.

605 IAC 7.3(4)“d”(10); 7.6(5)

Accountability is built in

The state may withhold or recover Emergency Management Performance Grant funds from a commission that fails to appoint a qualified Director (coordinator), keep continuing education current, or adopt a plan that meets current standards.

605 IAC 7.7(4)

Plans that stay current

The countywide plan is fully reviewed every five years, with the hazardous materials portion and at least 20 percent of the rest reviewed every year. Exercises are held annually on a progressive five-year plan.

605 IAC 7.3(4)

Source: Iowa Administrative Code 605—7.3(4), Local Emergency Management (IAC 10/29/25).

Invest before the storm.

\$6

saved, on average, for every \$1 of federal mitigation grants invested nationally

National Institute of Building Sciences, 2019

Keep the county eligible

Local hazard mitigation plans must be FEMA-approved within the last five years for communities to receive Hazard Mitigation Assistance. Every jurisdiction seeking approval under the countywide plan must participate in the planning process.

Iowa HSEMD, 2024

The cheapest disaster is the one we prevent.

- **Mitigation grants require a current Hazard Mitigation Plan.** We maintain the county's plan and update it every five years so our communities stay eligible.
- **Disaster aid depends on damage data.** Timely, accurate damage assessment protects the county's eligibility for state and federal assistance.
- **Recovery money depends on records.** We know what documentation reimbursement requires, before the disaster.
- **Coordination avoids waste:** less duplication, less overtime, and fewer small problems growing into costly ones.

Three kinds of hazards

Our Hazard Mitigation Plan focuses on the natural hazards that most threaten the county. Our Emergency Operations Plan prepares for all three.

Natural *Acts of nature*

Severe winter storms; thunderstorms, lightning & hail; river & flash flooding; tornadoes & windstorms; drought & extreme heat; sinkholes, landslides & earthquakes; expansive soils; disease outbreaks & pandemics

Technological *Accidents and system failures*

Hazardous materials releases; transportation & rail incidents; dam & levee failure; power & utility failures; communications & 911 outages; computer & IT system failures; major structure fires

Human-caused *Intentional acts*

Terrorism; cyberattacks; active threats & violence; bomb threats; civil disturbance; mass-casualty incidents

Hazard categories: FEMA, 2013.

Your part

Champion risk reduction: participate in the plan update, support mitigation projects, and back hazard-resistant building and land-use decisions.



The March 31, 2023 tornadic storm, the same storm shown on the cover, crossing open farmland.



Rebuilding a damaged road and culvert: mitigation in action.

It started with a neighbor.

“But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him... Go, and do thou likewise.”

King James Bible, 1769/2017, Luke 10:33, 37

Long before any agency existed, the first responder was a neighbor who stopped to help. Emergency management still rests on that idea.

1802–03

The first federal relief

After fire destroyed much of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Congress suspended merchants' bond payments for several months, the first federal disaster relief law. For the next century, Congress acted case by case.

1916

Council of National Defense

States were asked to form local defense councils, the first federal-state-local preparedness structure.

1941

Office of Civilian Defense

Air-raid drills, blackouts, and sandbag stockpiles, with local defense councils in communities nationwide.

1947

Civil defense is local

The Bull Report concluded civil defense is a civilian responsibility, best carried out locally.

1950

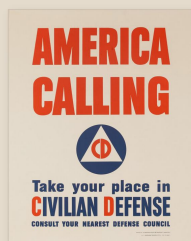
Federal Civil Defense Act

Most of the burden went to states and localities, with a federal administration to guide them. *Duck and Cover* reached millions of schoolchildren.

1961

“Insurance we trust will never be needed”

President Kennedy called civil defense “insurance we trust will never be needed – but insurance which we could never forgive ourselves for foregoing in the event of catastrophe.”



“America Calling” civil defense poster, 1941.



U.S. Civil Defense insignia



Home shelter with radio and supplies, civil defense era.

From civil defense to all hazards.

1969–74

All-hazards begins

After Hurricane Camille, the Disaster Relief Acts drew states and localities into natural-disaster preparedness, and civil defense funds could be shared for natural disasters.

1979

FEMA is created

Executive Order 12148 made FEMA the lead agency for federal disaster relief, spurred in part by Three Mile Island.

1988

The Stafford Act

Defined the disaster declaration process and federal assistance.

1994

Civil defense becomes emergency management

The Civil Defense Act was repealed and its authorities moved into the Stafford Act.

2002–03

Homeland security

The Department of Homeland Security absorbed FEMA; Ready.gov launched.

2006–18

Lessons from catastrophe

Post-Katrina reforms (2006), the National Preparedness Goal (2011), the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act (2013), and the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (2018), which expanded investment in mitigation.

Iowa's story

1965 Gov. Harold Hughes creates the State Civil Defense Agency, 10 staff focused on nuclear war

1970s Office of Disaster Services: a focus on natural disasters

1980s All-hazards, including radiological and hazardous materials

1992 Emergency Management Division, Dept. of Public Defense

2003 Renamed Homeland Security and Emergency Management

2013 Becomes a stand-alone state department

Iowa HSEMD, 2014

Wapello County has been there

Presidential declarations: winter storms (2007); severe storms and flooding (2007, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2019); COVID-19 (2020); and the Great Flood of 1993.

Governor's proclamations: at least 14 named Wapello County from 2008 to 2026, in 2008, 2010, 2013 (2), 2015, 2019 (2), 2021 (2), 2023 (2), 2024, and 2026 (2), plus the statewide COVID-19 emergency.

Wapello County, 2021; Iowa HSEMD, 2026a

From civil defense to emergency management



1950s

Civil Defense



1960s

Fallout shelters



1979

FEMA created



1980s–90s

All-hazards



Today

Emergency
Management

Civil defense began with the desire to involve Americans in protecting their fellow citizens. It still does.

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- Local mitigation plans, 44 C.F.R. § 201.6.
- Child Care and Development Fund, 45 C.F.R. § 98.41.

A full reference list with links is available from WCEMA.



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WAPELLO COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

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SEPTEMBER 2026