PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Opportunities to Improve Washington's Preparedness Efforts in Emergency Management

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Executive Summary

Background (page 7)

In 2014, a landslide near Oso, Washington, killed 43 people. This landslide, one of the deadliest in state history, called for a large-scale response from emergency personnel from local, state and federal agencies, private organizations and volunteers. It revealed that even a disaster affecting only a limited area can be challenging to manage. Washington is also at risk for a variety of other natural disasters that could severely affect the state and its residents. Being well prepared can minimize the effects disasters have on the state.

Emergency response is primarily handled at the local level where local authorities direct and coordinate initial response efforts. This is true in Washington where local governments respond first and maintain control over incidents. If a local government becomes overwhelmed, it is also responsible for escalating requests for help to other branches of government.

Although response is initiated locally, every level of government plays a part, from local to state and federal agencies. Incident response is complex because it involves multiple stakeholders and various levels of government. The role of the state's Emergency Management Division (EMD) is to implement a statewide emergency management plan and coordinate with those responsible for responding.

Given the significance of EMD's role in disaster response, we selected this audit topic in order to follow up on two recommendations issued after the Oso landslide by the SR 530 Landslide Commission. We wanted to determine whether roles and responsibilities have been further defined and if the resource management process could be further improved. The audit also assessed whether there were additional improvements EMD could make to strengthen communication and collaboration efforts with local partners.

Timeline of events mentioned in this report

Oso landslide – March 2014

SR 530 Landslide Commission report issued – December 2014

Cascadia Rising exercise – June 2016

Cascadia Rising After Action Report issued – January 2017

Amtrak derailment, WSDOT After Action Report issued – December 2017

Do state and local emergency management personnel have clearly defined responsibilities and roles when responding to disasters? (page 13)

The SR 530 Landslide Commission recommended state, county and incident management teams (IMTs) work together to establish expectations before an incident occurs. The guidance on roles and responsibilities that the Commission recommended has not yet been developed. However, regional training sessions

led by IMTs can help educate local partners on their role. EMD can assist IMTs by helping coordinate the regional training sessions and sending an EMD representative to each one to answer questions about the state's operations.

In addition, some local partners are uncertain about the role an EMD liaison performs at an incident scene. EMD can establish a clearer understanding of the EMD liaison's role by publishing guidance for its local partners.

What improvements can EMD make to request, track and mobilize resources more effectively during disasters? (page 17)

Leading practices suggest establishing a standardized process for requesting resources and for credentialing personnel. EMD has established a standardized process for local authorities to request resources from the state. However, Washington does not have a statewide credentialing program. The benefits of a statewide credentialing program are that personnel are better prepared and more easily identified when an emergency does occur. EMD faces statutory and funding obstacles to implementing such a program. Working with local partners, EMD can determine what is needed to establish a statewide credentialing program. It can also benefit from a national system to manage credentialed personnel that is currently being piloted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

What improvements to communication can EMD make to strengthen collaboration with local partners? (page 22)

Effective communication and collaboration before a disaster strikes are essential to the success of emergency response. The absence of these factors can affect the ability of EMD and local emergency managers to work successfully together. National standards state that establishing effective communication before an incident occurs paves the way for a more successful response.

Although EMD provides several opportunities for engagement, some local emergency managers said these strategies do not promote effective communication or help build necessary relationships. They suggested ways EMD could improve its communication with them. However, EMD's multiple stakeholders, competing priorities, and limited funding restrict its ability to give local authorities the attention they desire.

State Auditor's Conclusions (page 26)

Washington is susceptible to a variety of natural disasters including fires, earthquakes, floods and landslides. Depending on the scope and magnitude of the incident, the emergency response may involve numerous local, state and federal agencies. The agencies have to work together to form an effective response. A key factor in successful coordination during a disaster is to establish expectations for how coordination will work before the disaster ever strikes. This requires a common understanding of each agency's role and responsibilities, as well as clear protocols for accessing additional resources when the scope of a disaster exceeds a local government's capacity to handle.

Under state law, the Emergency Management Division (EMD) within the Washington Military Department is responsible for coordinating the state's emergency response efforts. With response efforts primarily handled by local authorities, and EMD's limited ability to impose mandates, this is not an easy charge. In the absence of strong legal authority, effective coordination requires EMD to build strong relationships with local emergency management personnel and involve them in the planning process, and give them clear and actionable guidance.

The results of this audit show that while EMD has taken some steps to provide guidance and training, and to communicate effectively with local emergency management personnel, there is still a lot of work to do. Local authorities still need clear guidance on roles and responsibilities, especially regarding the role of the EMD liaison during an emergency. It also appears EMD could have more open, effective lines of communication with local authorities.

Recommendations (page 27)

We made a series of recommendations to the Emergency Management Division to increase clarity around roles and responsibilities in disaster response, to improve the state's current resource management system, and to strengthen communication and collaboration with local partners.

Next steps

Our performance audits of state programs and services are reviewed by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) and/or by other legislative committees whose members wish to consider findings and recommendations on specific topics. Representatives of the Office of the State Auditor will review this audit with JLARC's Initiative 900 Subcommittee in Olympia. The public will have the opportunity to comment at this hearing. Please check the JLARC website for the exact date, time, and location (www.leg.wa.gov/JLARC). The Office conducts periodic follow-up evaluations to assess the status of recommendations and may conduct follow-up audits at its discretion. See **Appendix A**, which addresses the I-900 areas covered in the audit. **Appendix B** contains information about our methodology.

Background

Washington is at risk for a variety of natural disasters that could severely affect the state and its residents

In 2018, Washington was ranked fourth in the nation for the number of federally declared disasters. This is because the state is susceptible to fires, landslides, floods, earthquakes and more.

In 2014, a landslide near Oso, Washington, killed 43 people. This landslide, one of the deadliest in state history, called for a large-scale response from emergency personnel from local, state, and federal agencies, private organizations and volunteers. It revealed that even a disaster affecting only a limited area could be challenging to manage.

In the wake of the landslide, Governor Jay Inslee and Snohomish County Executive John Lovick assembled the SR 530 Landslide Commission, asking emergency management professionals and community leaders to review the collective response efforts. The Commission's 49-page report identified lessons learned and offered recommendations to strengthen the state's emergency response system in preparation for future disasters.

In 2016, the state led an exercise, known as Cascadia Rising, simulating a large magnitude earthquake to test the state's collective emergency response system. The exercise demonstrated that the system would be overwhelmed immediately and the state would need significant outside help to supplement response efforts. It demonstrated that there is still work to be done to improve the state's preparedness.

Emergencies are unpredictable and unavoidable, and yet every Washington resident expects that when a disaster or emergency strikes, the state will be ready to respond. The Oso Landslide Commission made significant recommendations to the state to help ensure it is able to deliver on that expectation.

Emergency management can minimize the effects disasters have on the state

Emergency management consists of actions taken to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from disasters. FEMA recognizes these phases as the five mission areas that make up their National Preparedness Goal, illustrated in **Exhibit 1**.

Exhibit 1 – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) identifies five mission areas in its National Preparedness Goal

Emergency response is primarily handled at the local level where local authorities direct, control, and coordinate initial response efforts

In Washington, local governments respond first and retain command over incidents

When a disaster occurs, local government is the initial provider of emergency response services such as fire, law enforcement, or emergency medical services. Depending upon the scale of the incident, the affected locality may activate its own emergency operations plan and coordinate response efforts with other public and private organizations. It may also activate its local emergency operations center to provide additional support. Emergency operations centers bring together the various organizations involved in the response, enable information sharing, and deploy resources efficiently. Throughout the process, the affected local government remains in charge.

If the local government becomes overwhelmed, it will first seek help from its neighbors

The affected locality is responsible for escalating requests for help to other branches of government as illustrated in **Exhibit 2**.

First, it may call on already established direct mutual aid agreements with one or more adjoining communities. Second, it may turn to the Washington Mutual Aid System to request assistance. This system was established in 2011 to allow local governments to share resources with neighboring communities under RCW 38.56.020. Every town, city and county in the state belongs to this system. Tribes may choose to participate as member jurisdictions, while special purpose districts and state agencies are not part of this system.

Third, after assistance from neighboring local governments is exhausted, the locality may then request help from the state. Depending on the nature of the incident, the state may activate its own emergency operations center for further support. Fourth, and finally, if the incident becomes too large even for the state's resources, then the Governor must request a presidential disaster declaration, which triggers federal assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

Exhibit 2 – From first responders to FEMA, many participants may be involved in emergency response

Local government responds to an incident (EMS, fire, police)

Local government requests help from neighboring communities

When neighboring resources are exhausted, the local government can request help from the county

County

When county resources are exhausted, either county or local government can request help from the state

State

Governor must request and receive a presidential declaration of emergency to receive help from federal agencies

Federal

Incident management teams, which are organized at the local level, are key participants in disaster response

Incident management teams (IMTs) are groups of trained professionals with extensive experience in managing large scale or complex incidents. Their roles range from supporting an existing command structure to assuming command of an incident if the affected local government gives them that authority. IMTs bring expertise in planning, logistics and fiscal activities, operational management as well as public information and safety issues.

There are different types of incident management teams. Type 1 and Type 2 IMTs were originally formed to help fight wildfires, but can also respond to a wide array of national and international emergencies. These are national- and state-level IMTs. Type 3 'all-hazards' teams, developed at the regional level over the last decade,

deal with all other types of emergencies. A Type 3 team may provide initial management of a complex incident, transitioning command to a state or national team later depending upon the severity of the incident. During the Oso landslide, a Type 3 team responded initially, but transferred command to a Type 2 team due to the complexities of the incident.

While single agency Type 3 teams exist, teams are commonly created through interlocal agreements between local agencies. Although these Type 3 'all-hazards' teams interact closely with local and state emergency managers, they are independently established and organized in Washington. For example, Pierce County's Type 3 all-hazards incident management team consists of 50 or more people drawn from local agencies that include fire, police, emergency management, communications and school districts. Each team member's home agency signs a Memorandum of Agreement where it agrees to provide a team member for deployment for a set number of hours for any incident within the team's boundaries. Teams may also be deployed to large incidents across the state. In such cases, team member time is typically paid for directly by the requesting organization through the Washington Mutual Aid System.

The state's Emergency Management Division (EMD) helps coordinate and support local response efforts

Incident response is complex because it involves multiple stakeholders and every level of government plays a part, from local to state and federal agencies. With a population of more than 7.5 million, Washington includes 39 counties, 29 federally recognized tribes, and more than 200 cities and towns, all of which may be involved in responding to a disaster.

One example of a complex incident is the 2017 derailment of an Amtrak Cascades passenger train. The train, on its maiden run from Seattle to Portland, derailed at an overpass crossing southbound Interstate-5. Three people died and 62 were injured. Several rail cars fell to the highway, blocking the interstate for 57 hours on a major route in the weeks before the holiday season. More than two dozen stakeholders were involved in the response efforts, including five federal agencies, four state agencies, 10 local governments, and five private sector organizations (see **Appendix C** for a visual representation of those who participated in the response).

Effective coordination of all responders is a critical component of successful disaster response. The Emergency Management Division (EMD) of the state's Military Department is responsible for coordinating emergency management efforts in the state with the entire emergency response community, including

local governments, state agencies and tribal nations as well as private industry, institutions and organizations. Severe emergencies or disasters may also require EMD to work with the federal government and other states.

EMD develops and implements the comprehensive statewide emergency management program and plan

State law requires EMD to implement the state's emergency management program, which must include preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation. EMD must also develop and maintain a comprehensive emergency management plan for the state. The plan must include procedures EMD will use to coordinate resources provided by all state and local government organizations, and how multiple jurisdictions and agencies should work together during an incident.

EMD administers federal grant funding through administrative regions. Washington is divided into nine regions, illustrated in the map in **Exhibit 3**. Each region hosts regular meetings for local emergency managers in its area. The audit team used these meetings as venues to conduct focus groups with emergency management personnel.

Exhibit 3 – Washington's nine regions

Source: Emergency Management Division.

EMD serves as the single point of contact for authorizing state resources or actions in response to disasters

The state's role in emergency response is to help coordinate assistance and resource sharing statewide to support the affected community. This is often done through the state's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which EMD is required by law to manage. The EOC serves as a single point of contact for local governments to request state resources or state actions in response to and recovery from emergencies or disasters.

EMD further supports local emergency efforts by providing financial assistance through federal and state funds

The majority of federal and state funds EMD receives is passed on to local governments to enhance their emergency preparedness and response programs as well as to pay for federal disaster relief. In 2018, of the $70 million EMD spent, $57.3 million (82 percent) was given to local governments, state agencies, tribal

governments and others, such as private organizations. The remaining $12.7 million funded EMD's operations. **Exhibit 4** shows the emergency management expenditures for fiscal years 2016 through 2018.

Exhibit 4 – EMD's emergency management expenditures

Fiscal years 2016 through 2018; Dollars in millions

Pass-through expenditures	2016	2017	2018
Paid to local governments[1]	$38.4	$44.2	$41.7
Paid to state agencies[2]	$7.7	$8.8	$9.4
Paid to tribal governments	$0.2	$0.3	$1.3
Paid to others	$3.2	$0.8	$4.9
Subtotal pass-through expenditures	**$49.5**	**$54.1**	**$57.3**
EMD operations[3]	$10.0	$9.0	$12.7
EMD total expenditures[3]	**$59.5**	**$63.1**	**$70.0**

Notes: 1. Since 2016, the average amount paid to local governments for emergency preparedness is 65% of the total expenditures for each year. 2. This category includes payments to higher education institutions. 3. Total EMD expenditures do not include 911 or activation-related expenditures.

Source: Agency Financial Reporting System (AFRS).

This audit examined progress made by EMD in addressing two SR 530 Landslide Commission recommendations, and potential improvements to the state's preparedness efforts

We selected this audit topic in order to follow up on two recommendations issued in the SR 530 Landslide Commission Report to determine whether roles and responsibilities have been further defined and if the resource management process could be further improved. The audit also assessed whether there were additional improvements EMD could make to strengthen communication and collaboration efforts with local partners.

Given the significance of EMD's role in disaster response, the audit asked the following questions:

1. **Do state and local emergency management personnel have clearly defined roles and responsibilities when responding to disasters?**

2. **What improvements can EMD make to request, track and mobilize resources more effectively during disasters?**

3. **What improvements to communication can EMD make to strengthen collaboration with local partners?**

Audit Results

Do state and local emergency management personnel have clearly defined roles and responsibilities when responding to disasters?

Answer in brief

The SR 530 Landslide Commission recommended state, county and incident management teams (IMTs) work together to establish expectations before an incident occurs. The guidance on roles and responsibilities that the Commission recommended has not yet been developed. However, regional training sessions led by IMTs can help educate local partners on their role. EMD can assist IMTs by helping coordinate the regional training sessions and sending an EMD representative to each one to answer questions about the state's operations.

In addition, some local partners are uncertain about the role an EMD liaison performs at an incident scene. EMD can establish a clearer understanding of the EMD liaison's role by publishing guidance for its local partners.

The SR 530 Landslide Commission recommended state, county and incident management teams work together to establish expectations before an incident occurs

After the Oso landslide occurred, the SR 530 Landslide Commission reported that roles and responsibilities between the Snohomish County Emergency Management Department and the all-hazards IMT were initially unclear. The Commission's report states "This confusion carried over to the roles and responsibilities of the elected officials and other local leaders."

The Commission's report also acknowledged that the challenge with any large incident is establishing which organization is in charge as quickly as possible – ideally within the first hours – so they can set out an operational framework for how the response will be accomplished. To facilitate this, the Commission recommended the state and county emergency management organizations work with IMT personnel to develop guidelines and processes.

Timeline of events mentioned in this report

Oso landslide – March 2014

SR 530 Landslide Commission report issued – December 2014

Cascadia Rising exercise – June 2016

Cascadia Rising After Action Report issued – January 2017

Amtrak derailment, WSDOT After Action Report issued – December 2017

The Commission's recommendation is underscored by the *State Emergency Management Director Handbook*, produced by the National Emergency Management Association. It indicates the state plays an important role in "working among levels of government…to ensure that all understand their roles and responsibilities during a disaster."

The guidance on roles and responsibilities that the Commission recommended has not yet been developed

EMD officials said they have not worked specifically with county emergency managers and IMT personnel to develop additional guidance to clarify roles and responsibilities. State law gives EMD the authority to coordinate the activities of all emergency management organizations within the state, and does not prohibit it from providing guidance. However, it does not explicitly give EMD the authority to oversee IMTs or compel the actions of local jurisdictions. For this reason, EMD says it has not yet worked with county emergency managers and IMT personnel to develop additional guidance.

EMD has taken initial steps to start clarifying roles and responsibilities, but more can be done to help prepare local partners

EMD took some steps after the Oso landslide to help clarify roles and responsibilities. In September 2015, 2016 and 2017, EMD staff conducted presentations on various portions of the emergency logistics and response operations at the Washington State Emergency Management Association Conference. EMD managers also said the Emergency Management Advisory Group has identified experienced members of other emergency management organizations within the state who might be able to step in and support smaller emergency operations centers when an incident does occur. This group advises the EMD director and Emergency Management Council on local and statewide emergency management matters. Although these efforts are a starting point, IMTs suggest more can be done to prepare local partners, and have offered to provide additional training themselves.

The recent 2017 Amtrak derailment (discussed briefly in the Background) highlights that the lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities persists. This response required the involvement of multiple agencies at the local, state and federal level and numerous organizations from the private sector. An IMT and two county emergency management organizations participated in this response. A representative from the IMT involved said that changes in personnel at one of the county emergency management organizations resulted in some confusion because

they were unfamiliar with working with IMTs. The representative said these county emergency management personnel would have benefited from training on the role of the IMT.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) After Action Report also noted further challenges with roles and responsibilities, indicating that there was no clear owner of the incident. This internal report stated that WSDOT representatives from multiple sections did not know where they stood in the incident command structure, who they reported to, or how to request resources and support. While responders accomplished the work needed, the overall response and situational awareness would have benefited from bringing together key decision-makers from each organization to ensure all were aware of the actions being taken by others. WSDOT's report indicated this would have allowed for a more seamless and coordinated response. The illustration in Appendix C shows the complexity of managing an incident of this size with multiple responders from different organizations. This illustrates why clear roles and responsibilities are so important.

Regional training sessions led by IMTs can help educate local partners on their role

Five of six IMTs interviewed identified training for their local partners as a way to address the challenges that IMTs and county emergency management organizations experience at an incident scene. The other IMT said it had already conducted a series of training workshops, but added that it saw a need for standardized guidance to prevent lapses in understanding when personnel and elected officials change. IMT personnel stated they are willing to present regional training sessions, led by their Incident Commanders or Section Chiefs. They recognized the value in preparing in advance of an incident and believe this would help overall response efforts.

EMD can assist IMTs by helping coordinate the regional training sessions and sending an EMD representative to each one to answer questions about the state's operations

IMTs saw a role for EMD to help coordinate the regional training sessions. Two IMTs also recommended that EMD be directly involved with the trainings to provide insight into the state's operations. However, EMD management is uncertain it can help coordinate and send personnel to the training sessions because of its limited resources and competing priorities.

While IMTs would conduct the training sessions within the regions they serve, IMTs and EMD can explore other options, such as using information technology, to make the training more widely accessible. EMD's State Emergency Operations Center already has communication tools, used in emergency response, that could be considered to bring everyone together to develop training materials and conduct trainings. The goal is to ensure all parties gain a clearer understanding of who is responsible for what during an incident so they are able to work better together.

Some local partners are uncertain about the role an EMD liaison performs at an incident scene

In interviews with local emergency managers, representatives from two of nine regions said they were uncertain about the roles and responsibilities of the EMD liaison sent to assist at an incident scene. They did not know what to expect and how the liaison should be working with them in their response efforts. Without clear job descriptions, local authorities may try to assign the liaison tasks or roles other than that envisioned by EMD. EMD managers confirmed this, saying that some of the confusion exists because EMD liaisons have previously stepped in during incidents to take on different roles for the affected jurisdiction. This leaves others at the incident scene uncertain about what to expect from the EMD liaison.

EMD can establish a clearer understanding of the EMD liaison's role by publishing guidance for its local partners

EMD management said that having published guidance would help to establish clear expectations on the role of the EMD liaison. According to an unpublished section of the State Emergency Operations Center Procedures Manual, intended only for internal agency use, EMD liaisons serve "primarily as the eyes and ears for the state of Washington, proactively sharing information between the deployed organization and the [Center]." From EMD's perspective, the liaison's job is to improve communication by facilitating the flow of information, remaining flexible and adapting to the needs of the deployed organization as well as the state. Liaisons who are too directly involved in incident-management activities, are limited in their ability to step back and assess the overall situation. This is why EMD restricts the liaison's roles at the incident scene. However, EMD has not published a description of the liaison's role on EMD's external website. It is only offered to local authorities upon request. EMD management acknowledged there is no published guidance available for local jurisdictions.

What improvements can EMD make to request, track and mobilize resources more effectively during disasters?

Answer in brief

Leading practices suggest establishing a standardized process for requesting resources and for credentialing personnel. EMD has established a standardized process for local authorities to request resources from the state. However, Washington does not have a statewide credentialing program. The benefits of a statewide credentialing program are that personnel are better prepared and more easily identified when an emergency does occur. EMD faces statutory and funding obstacles to implementing such a program. Working with local partners, EMD can determine what is needed to establish a statewide credentialing program. It can also benefit from a national system to manage credentialed personnel that is currently being piloted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Leading practices suggest establishing a standardized process for requesting resources and for credentialing personnel

When a disaster strikes, communities may not have all the personnel and equipment they need to respond to an incident. They have to request it from other neighboring communities, state agencies or other states depending upon the magnitude of the event. Once a request is elevated to the state, EMD plays a critical role in facilitating access to resources. It works with state and local partners to identify who has the necessary resources to provide assistance to the affected community.

National Incident Management System guidance states that a standardized process to identify, request and manage resources before and during an emergency is essential for multiple jurisdictions to work together during an incident. Few municipalities own or maintain all the resources – including personnel, equipment, supplies and facilities – necessary to address the various threats and hazards an incident might pose.

Just as important is the credentialing of personnel. National Incident Management System guidance for credentialing states that having established credentialing standards allows the community to plan for, request, and have confidence in personnel deployed from other jurisdictions. Emergency personnel are considered credentialed when they have documentation that proves they are trained,

experienced and vetted for a specific position. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring emergency personnel meet the minimum qualifications – training, experience, physical and medical fitness, and capability – to fill specific positions. They then certify the individual has met the qualifications. These two steps must occur before an individual can be credentialed.
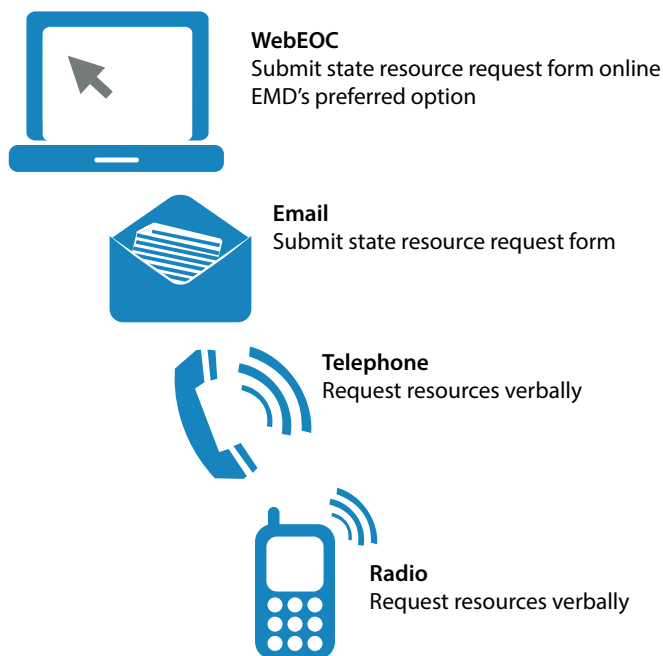
EMD has set a standardized process for local authorities to request resources from the state

The SR 530 Landslide Commission specifically recommended that the state "develop a standardized process for requesting, tracking, mobilizing, and demobilizing resources," and EMD has since standardized the resource request form and process. The process, illustrated in **Exhibit 5**, gives local authorities four ways to submit a request: if one form of communication is not available, they have several alternative ways to request help and share information. EMD managers report that counties and cities across the state have received training from its Logistics Team on this standardized form and process.

Exhibit 5 – EMD offers local authorities four ways to request state assistance

WebEOC
Submit state resource request form online
EMD's preferred option

Email
Submit state resource request form

Telephone
Request resources verbally

Radio
Request resources verbally

Although EMD encourages the use of WebEOC to submit resource requests, local authorities are challenged by software issues and lack of familiarity

The standardized request form appears within WebEOC, which is the state's preferred format for receiving resource requests. WebEOC is a secure web-based platform used by local, state and federal emergency operations centers to share real-time details of an incident. Although the state does not mandate the use of WebEOC, EMD strongly encourages it and employs a WebEOC administrator, who provides guidance and training on how to use the system. Some participants in regional discussions acknowledged that the WebEOC administrator is quick to respond to their questions. EMD cites multiple benefits of using WebEOC: all those responding to an incident can see the current status of resource requests, track deliveries or fulfillment and gain situational awareness about the incident scene. The ability to share and coordinate this information when multiple jurisdictions and organizations are involved is critical to an effective response effort.

Many local authorities access WebEOC under the state license, which is provided free of charge. Some have purchased a separate license that enables them to customize the program for their needs, although they then need additional software to connect to the state's WebEOC.

Local authorities described challenges using WebEOC, citing software issues and lack of familiarity with the program. In one region, local emergency management personnel reported they have encountered difficulties viewing and sharing information through the secondary software meant to help them establish the WebEOC connection. This limits their ability to see and share information with the state's Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Representatives from three other regions report they use WebEOC on such a limited basis that they find it difficult to remember how to use it. To increase staff familiarity, one region said it practices using WebEOC during its exercises. In our interviews with other states, emergency management personnel from Alabama and Idaho told us they encountered similar challenges, and make an effort to use WebEOC daily so local organizations become more familiar with using it.

Washington does not have a statewide credentialing program

Washington lacks a statewide program for credentialing both all-hazards incident management teams (IMTs) and emergency operations center personnel to ensure they receive formal training to the same standards. Nor is there a mechanism in place to identify IMT and emergency operations center personnel and their qualifications wherever they work in the state. When EMD receives a request for incident response personnel, it must send a statewide email to all local emergency managers describing the need, then wait for a response. Furthermore, once personnel have been deployed to an incident scene, there is no statewide process for local authorities to verify their qualifications short of reaching out to the community they were deployed from.

The benefits of a statewide credentialing program are that personnel are better prepared and more easily identified when an emergency does occur

A key benefit of a statewide credentialing program is that communities requesting help receive qualified teams or personnel trained to the same standards who are well prepared to assume the necessary job duties at an incident scene or in an EOC. Once credentialed, a statewide database of IMT and EOC credentialed personnel could allow local jurisdictions, tribal governments and the state to identify teams and individuals with specific skill sets and verify their qualifications. A subcommittee of the state's Emergency Management Advisory Group is currently

researching what it would take to establish a statewide credentialing program in Washington for emergency operations center personnel. This subcommittee is composed of representatives from local authorities, state agencies and a tribal government, including EMD's Training Manager.

EMD faces statutory and funding obstacles to implementing such a program

EMD managers said they recognize the benefits of having a statewide credentialing program, but offered two main reasons why developing one is not currently feasible.

1. **State laws do not give EMD the necessary authority.** Existing laws do not give EMD the authority to establish a statewide credentialing program overseen by the state. Any change to the law would need to explicitly state whether it is an enforceable or a voluntary standard. That decision also drives the amount of resources required to sustain the program.

2. **Limited funding.** Existing resources may not be sufficient to administer such a program at the state and local level. EMD managers report that their current funding levels are only sufficient to sustain current programs and do not allow them to develop new programs or expand existing programs. Further analysis is required to determine whether existing resources can be redirected or additional resources are needed.

Working with local partners, EMD can determine what is needed to establish a statewide credentialing program. It can also benefit from a national system to manage credentialed personnel that is currently being piloted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Both EMD management and local authorities said that only a few counties in the state have sufficient resources to implement their own credentialing program at the local level. Local emergency managers in four out of nine regions expressed their support for EMD establishing and overseeing a statewide credentialing program that would establish standardization across the state. Further, four of the six IMT representatives said they would like EMD to take on credentialing all-hazards IMTs as well.

EMD's Training Manager is participating in a FEMA pilot project using a system called OneResponder. FEMA states that, in addition to managing resources in real time, this web-based application is designed to give communities and organizations the ability to:

- Share qualification data with selected partners

- Assign roles, establish partnerships, and set privacy levels and data accessibility for their members

- Provide portability of qualification if the person changes jobs

Using this centralized system to identify people with specific skill sets and verify their credentials can help local authorities and the state find and deploy personnel to affected areas more rapidly.

Although FEMA offers access to OneResponder free of charge to track credentialed personnel, EMD's Training Manager said that the state would still need to develop its own framework for a statewide credentialing program for EOC personnel. Two important steps in the program's development are creating statewide baseline standards for EOC positions and establishing a qualification review board. Implementing a statewide credentialing program for all-hazards IMTs will require less effort because the state can adopt baseline standards from existing national qualifications systems. However, EMD will still need to establish an IMT qualification review board.

The challenges and costs of setting up a statewide credentialing program in Washington will need to be identified and a plan outlined before EMD can request funding from the Legislature. Local emergency managers told us they want to collaborate with EMD to discuss both challenges and possible solutions. EMD can continue to work with its local partners to move this part of the process forward.

What improvements to communication can EMD make to strengthen collaboration with local partners?

Answer in brief

Effective communication and collaboration before a disaster strikes are essential to the success of emergency response. The absence of these factors can affect the ability of EMD and local emergency managers to work successfully together. National standards state that establishing effective communication before an incident occurs paves the way for a more successful response.

Although EMD provides several opportunities for engagement, some local emergency managers said these strategies do not promote effective communication or help build necessary relationships. They suggested ways EMD could improve its communication with them. However, EMD's multiple stakeholders, competing priorities, and limited funding restrict its ability to give local authorities the attention they desire.

Effective communication and collaboration before a disaster strikes are essential to the success of emergency response

The absence of effective communication and collaboration between EMD and local emergency managers can affect their ability to work successfully together

Improvements to the emergency response system may be inadequate unless local emergency managers and EMD work together to develop and maintain an open and collaborative relationship. Representatives from two out of nine regions said they prefer working with each other because they lack confidence in the state. Two others said that they prefer to work only with neighboring jurisdictions in disaster response. However, EMD managers said their current attempts at collaboration fall short because local emergency managers do not always engage with them.

National standards state that establishing effective communication before an incident occurs promotes the collaboration and preparation that is critical to successful emergency response

FEMA and the National Emergency Management Association both describe effective communication as a critical element of emergency management and essential if organizations are to prepare for successful disaster response. To be most productive, communication should be an open and transparent dialogue.

As previously explained, incident response is complex and involves numerous stakeholders and multiple levels of government. For these reasons, FEMA states, "the one factor that is consistently credited with improving the performance of a community during a disaster is the degree to which there is an open and collaborative relationship among responders." The importance of effective collaboration is also recognized in Washington state law, which requires all emergency management functions of the state and its political subdivisions to be coordinated as much as possible.

To achieve such collaboration, national guidance states that emergency managers should prioritize relationship building with all potential responders and furthermore recognizes the importance of the relationship between state and local emergency managers. It recommends state emergency management directors prioritize this relationship and ensure transparent communication with local emergency managers.

Improving collaboration through effective communication is also recognized in FEMA's Principles of Emergency Management, which define collaboration as containing two important communication elements:

- Continuous work with all potential responders to maintain and sustain the communication necessary for the response system to be effective in a disaster
- The involvement of all responders must be based on a sincere desire to listen to and incorporate their concerns and ideas

To improve collaboration efforts, national guidelines recommend emergency management programs establish a continuous process for two-way engagement with all potential partners.

Although EMD provides several opportunities for engagement, some local emergency managers said these strategies do not promote effective communication or build necessary relationships

EMD employs several methods to communicate with local emergency managers

EMD uses several strategies to solicit feedback and engagement from local emergency managers. These include quarterly meetings, hosted by EMD and open to all emergency managers in the state, and the semiannual statewide emergency management conference. Additionally, EMD sent out a survey in 2017 to local emergency managers that included a question seeking feedback on how EMD could support them. Some programs within EMD also conduct their own outreach with local emergency managers. For example, training staff host workshops with local emergency managers to develop each year's training agenda.

Some local emergency managers believe EMD's methods do not effectively promote two-way communication

Local managers acknowledged many of EMD's efforts, but do not think those efforts are as effective as they could be. Instead, some local emergency managers said EMD's meetings are structured so that the state reports out what it is doing, leaving little opportunity for feedback from attendees. Although EMD has said that a phone-in option exists for those who cannot travel to the meeting location, some local emergency managers interviewed said that EMD does not provide an online option. Finally, some said they are unaware of when the meetings occur or what was discussed at meetings.

Representatives from four out of nine regions also said they experience challenges trying to communicate with EMD. For instance, some local emergency managers said they have difficulty reaching EMD staff over the phone or through email while others cited a lack of consistent answers from EMD. One representative also said the region does not have a way to share concerns with EMD and talk through issues.

Local emergency managers suggested ways EMD could improve its communication with them

Auditors asked local emergency managers for their suggestions on how EMD could improve the way it communicates with them, with the goal of ultimately improving collaboration between state and local emergency managers.

To make EMD's meetings more effective venues for two-way communication, locals suggested:

- Send meeting appointments to ensure local authorities are aware of scheduled meetings

- Follow up by sending related meeting minutes to everyone invited to the meeting even if they could not attend

- Provide other ways people can attend meetings and forums, such as using Skype

- Allow additional time so that attendees can raise concerns and discuss them

Local emergency managers also suggested methods to make the semiannual, statewide emergency management conference more effective at soliciting their engagement:

- Hold feedback opportunities earlier in the event instead of the final session which is often poorly attended

- Hold standalone feedback meetings so they do not compete with other sessions

In addition, to better create and sustain the necessary relationships for successful disaster response, many local emergency managers suggested the state institute a regional coordinators program, as has been done in several other states. Such a program would include EMD employees, living and working within a specific region, who could serve as EMD's ambassadors to local emergency managers. These EMD staff would be better able to build trust and maintain relationships with local emergency managers by being available in person and attending local meetings. We interviewed state-level emergency management personnel in Alabama, California, Florida, Idaho and Tennessee to learn about practices they use to build and maintain relationships with their local counterparts and found that all have state-level emergency management staff serving as regional coordinators.

EMD's multiple stakeholders, competing priorities, and limited funding restrict its ability to give local authorities the attention they desire

EMD stated it has multiple stakeholders at the federal, state and local level, among which it must balance its time. It also has legislative priorities it must fulfill, such as maintaining current programming and managing the state's EOC. EMD is also responsible for the stewardship of federal emergency management grant funding. EMD noted that limited staffing and funding also contribute to this issue. As a consequence, it acknowledges that local authorities may not get the attention they desire.

State Auditor's Conclusions

Washington is susceptible to a variety of natural disasters including fires, earthquakes, floods and landslides. Depending on the scope and magnitude of the incident, the emergency response may involve numerous local, state and federal agencies. The agencies have to work together to form an effective response. A key factor in successful coordination during a disaster is to establish expectations for how coordination will work before the disaster ever strikes. This requires a common understanding of each agency's role and responsibilities, as well as clear protocols for accessing additional resources when the scope of a disaster exceeds a local government's capacity to handle.

Under state law, the Emergency Management Division (EMD) within the Washington Military Department is responsible for coordinating the state's emergency response efforts. With response efforts primarily handled by local authorities, and EMD's limited ability to impose mandates, this is not an easy charge. In the absence of strong legal authority, effective coordination requires EMD to build strong relationships with local emergency management personnel, involve them in the planning process, and give them clear and actionable guidance.

The results of this audit show that while EMD has taken some steps to provide guidance and training, and to communicate effectively with local emergency management personnel, there is still a lot of work to do. Local authorities still need clear guidance on roles and responsibilities, especially regarding the role of the EMD liaison during an emergency. It also appears EMD could have more open, effective lines of communication with local authorities.

Recommendations

For the Emergency Management Division

To provide further clarity on roles and responsibilities, as described on pages 13-16, we recommend:

1. Provide guidance and training to local jurisdictions to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the EMD liaison, including how the liaison will work with local authorities in charge of an incident

2. Assist IMTs by coordinating regional training sessions with local partners to educate them on the role of the IMTs. EMD should also:

   a. Work with IMTs to ensure the training materials they develop are consistent across the state

   b. Send an EMD representative to each regional training session to answer questions about state operations

   c. Redirect existing resources or request additional resources as needed

To improve the resource request process, as described on pages 18-19, we recommend:

3. Continue to work with local jurisdictions to identify and resolve WebEOC software issues

4. Identify opportunities for EMD and local jurisdictions to use WebEOC more frequently as a way to increase familiarity with the system, such as conducting practice exercises

To address challenges with credentialing personnel, as described on pages 19-21, we recommend:

5. Develop and operate a statewide credentialing program to standardize requirements, identify and validate the expertise of incident management teams and emergency operations center personnel across the state. In developing the program, EMD should:

   a. Identify and request any statutory changes that would be needed for such a program

   b. Work with the Emergency Management Advisory Group subcommittee to identify the resources needed to develop and operate the program at the state and local level

   c. Redirect existing resources or request additional resources as needed to achieve these goals. Next steps might include a study to identify resources needed to implement a statewide credentialing program.

To strengthen communication and improve EMD's relationship with local partners, as described on pages 22-25, we recommend:

6. Work with local jurisdictions to develop ways to make EMD's meetings more effective opportunities for two-way communication. Some of the options to consider are:

    a. Sending out appointments to local emergency managers to make them aware of the meetings and related minutes afterwards

    b. Providing other ways to participate in meetings and forums when local emergency managers cannot attend in person

    c. Allowing additional discussion time so attendees can raise concerns and have them discussed

    d. During the semiannual, statewide emergency management conference:

        i. Hold meetings earlier in the event so they are not the final session which is poorly attended

        ii. Have feed-back meetings stand-alone so that they are not competing with other sessions

7. Establish a regional coordinators program or other mechanisms to develop and maintain the necessary relationships with local emergency managers for successful response. Redirect existing resources or request additional resources as needed.

Agency Response

STATE OF WASHINGTON

April 29, 2019

The Honorable Pat McCarthy
Washington State Auditor
P.O. Box 40021
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Dear Auditor McCarthy:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the State Auditor's Office performance audit report, "Opportunities to Improve Washington's Preparedness Efforts in Emergency Management." The Military Department's Emergency Management Division (EMD) and Office of Financial Management worked together to provide this response.

We appreciate the report's recognition that the Emergency Management Division has improved its process for local authorities to request resources from the state. EMD has spent considerable time standardizing its resource request form and process to ensure the state's response to a disaster is timely and effective. EMD will continue to work with local jurisdictions to address software issues and further streamline and improve this process.

We recognize the value of the SAO's recommendation to develop a statewide credentialing program. It is important to note, however, that we lack sufficient funding to implement this type of program across the state. Additionally, per guidance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), EMD lacks the authority to establish, communicate and administer the qualification and credentialing process for incident management teams. In the meantime, EMD is participating in a pilot program offered by FEMA that provides a centralized system to identify people with specific skill sets, as well as working on a credentialing program for those who work in the State Emergency Operations Center.

We also appreciate the SAO's recognition that the department has implemented strategies to promote two-way communication with our local partners and agree there is always room for improvement. We will continue to work with our stakeholders to develop additional strategies to keep the lines of communication open.

Additionally, we agree that roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined, and as indicated in the audit, EMD has taken steps to provide clarification to its local partners. EMD, and all emergency managers, follow guidance from the National Incident Management System and the National Response Framework, which spell out the roles and responsibilities of individuals, communities, the private sector, volunteer organizations, and local, tribal, state and federal governments. Furthermore, NIMS explains the responsibilities and guiding doctrine of incident management teams and emergency operations centers.
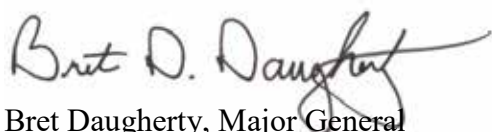
Finally, we want to address the report's suggestion to consider diverting existing resources or obtaining additional resources to address some of the recommendations. EMD's budget is made up

April 29, 2019
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of 12 fund sources, most of them federal, which have narrow stipulations and conditions for their use. This restricts the activities of employees maintained by those funds and limits our flexibility to repurpose FTEs to activities recommended by the auditor. Adding work or repurposing FTEs will result in an immediate impact to high priority activities such as planning for catastrophic events, providing exercise and training support to local jurisdictions, conducting public outreach and education, coordinating recovery planning, and/or maintaining the capability to provide 24/7 alert and warning for the state. We believe it would be prudent to submit a 2020 supplemental budget request to address gaps identified in the report, but recognize the funding decision will be at the discretion of the Legislature.

Please thank your staff for their collaborative approach throughout the audit process. The attached action plan addresses the areas for improvement identified in the report.

Sincerely,

Bret Daugherty, Major General
The Adjutant General
Military Department

David Schumacher
Director
Office of Financial Management

cc: David Postman, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
        Kelly Wicker, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
        Drew Shirk, Executive Director of Legislative Affairs, Office of the Governor
        Pat Lashway, Deputy Director, Office of Financial Management
        Scott Merriman, Legislative Liaison, Office of Financial Management
        Keith Phillips, Director of Policy, Office of the Governor
        Inger Brinck, Director, Results Washington, Office of the Governor
        Tammy Firkins, Performance Audit Liaison, Results Washington, Office of the Governor
        Scott Frank, Director of Performance Audit, Office of the Washington State Auditor

OFFICIAL STATE CABINET AGENCY RESPONSE TO PERFORMANCE AUDIT ON OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE WASHINGTON'S PREPAREDNESS EFFORTS IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT – APRIL 8, 2019

This management response to the State Auditor's Office performance audit report received on April 8, 2019, is provided by the Office of Financial Management and the Washington Military Department's Emergency Management Division.

SAO PERFORMANCE AUDIT OBJECTIVES:

The SAO designed the audit to answer:

1. Do state and local emergency management personnel have clearly defined roles and responsibilities when responding to disasters?

2. What improvements can EMD make to request, track and mobilize resources more effectively during disasters?

3. What improvements to communication can EMD make to strengthen collaboration with local partners?

SAO Recommendation 1: Provide guidance and training to local jurisdictions to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the EMD liaison, including how the liaison will work with local authorities in charge of an incident.

STATE RESPONSE: It is important to note that the audit reported that representatives from just two of nine regions said they were unfamiliar with the roles and responsibilities of the EMD liaison. Regardless, we acknowledge that our local partners need to understand the roles and limitations of this position, as they play a critical role during a disaster response, but are limited in their authority. The liaison is present to inform the responding agencies of the state's capabilities to support the incident and communicate local needs to the State Emergency Operations Center.

Action Steps and Time Frame:

» Replace the title "EMD liaison" with "EMD agency representative" to align closer with NIMS/ICS common terminology. *By July 1, 2019.*

» Develop a position description for the EMD agency representative along with associated duties and qualification requirements. *By July 1, 2019.*

» Modify current standard operating procedures pertaining to EMD agency representatives. *By June 30, 2021.*

» Develop education materials to be provided at regional meetings and state conferences to help local jurisdictions understand the role and duties of EMD agency representatives. *By June 30, 2021.*

» Increase participation of EMD agency representatives in local exercises. *By June 30, 2021.*

1

SAO Recommendation 2: Assist IMTs by coordinating regional training sessions with local partners to educate them on the role of the IMTs. EMD should also:

a) Work with IMTs to ensure the training materials they develop are consistent across the state

b) Send an EMD representative to each regional training session to answer questions about state operations

c) Redirect existing resources or request additional resources as needed

STATE RESPONSE: Unfortunately, there is not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to incident management teams (IMTs), as the role is dictated by the jurisdiction that employs the IMT as either incident command or augmenting jurisdictional staff in their EOC. In normal circumstances, the roles, responsibilities and authorities of the IMT are outlined in the delegation of authority by the jurisdiction's elected official. Moreover, there is no formal plan, agreement, or charter in the state that brings all IMTs together under one umbrella.

Additionally, regional training sessions sponsored, managed, and funded or co-funded by EMD would cause a significant risk to the department's budget and reduce the amount of staff time available to conduct current training program activities. Some factors to consider are:

- A NIMS all-hazards position specific course averages 30-40 hours in length and costs between $4,000 and $12,000 to conduct, depending on the type of course.

- Conducting four NIMS all-hazards position specific courses during the year with current resources would require EMD's training program to redirect more than 25 percent of its time and 100 percent of its budget.

Action Steps and Time Frame:

» Assess all IMT stakeholders' interest in participation in an education and training program. If there is no consensus, regional training sessions would not be an effective means to educate customers on the roles, responsibilities and capabilities of IMTs. *By October 1, 2019.*

» If there is consensus among IMTs, agree to standardized training materials and develop a concept for a training program. Because the conduct of IMTs is not currently regulated, legislation would be required to amend chapter 38.52 RCW. We would also need legislative support for additional funding to implement this program (one FTE and an increase of $20,000 in EMD's training budget). *By TBD.*

SAO Recommendations 3-4:

3. Continue to work with local jurisdictions to identify and resolve WebEOC software issues.

4. Identify opportunities for EMD and local jurisdictions to use WebEOC more frequently as a way to increase familiarity with the system, such as conducting practice exercises.

STATE RESPONSE: Training and improvements to WebEOC are continuous as software changes, capabilities are altered, and staff turnover at the local jurisdictional level necessitates ongoing training. Training on WebEOC is available at any time upon request, as well as through the State EOC Foundations course. It is also routinely used during state exercises for on-the-job training.

2

In early 2018, the WebEOC administrator partnered with Seattle Emergency Management to improve the Resource Tracking Board. To ensure as much collaboration from our stakeholders as possible, a workgroup made up of multiple local jurisdictions provided feedback. The updated resource tracker will be previewed at the April 2019 Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference where numerous stakeholders will be present. The current plan is to test the new resource tracking board, develop and deliver training, and then implement it later this year.

Numerous other improvements have been implemented with individual local jurisdictions and with state agencies. The WebEOC administrator has developed customizable boards to fit individual stakeholder needs and is guided by the customer during development. For instance, the administrator recently worked with the Red Cross to develop a status board that provides WebEOC users with the location of emergency shelters. The administrator has also worked with the state Department of Transportation to develop traffic maps that display local, county and state transportation routes, as well as boards that display the status of local airports. Additionally, EMD has successfully increased the number of exercises that incorporate scenarios that require the use of WebEOC to maintain situational awareness, request resources, and track resource requests to provide local partners more opportunities to practice and test their WebEOC skills.

And at least twice a year, EMD conducts drills involving at least five local jurisdictions and as many state agencies as possible to execute resource requests through the use of WebEOC software. Participants have gained a more in-depth knowledge of the WebEOC software, its capabilities and how to use the system.

Action Steps and Time Frame:

» Continue work with our stakeholders to identify opportunities for improvement with WebEOC and include them in the process. *This effort will be ongoing and does not have an expected completion date.*

» Include opportunities to practice the use of WebEOC during our yearly mandatory exercises and monthly SEOC workdays as much as possible. *This effort will be ongoing and does not have an expected completion date.*

» Increase the use of WebEOC by local jurisdictions when we fill Emergency Management Assistance Compact requests for personnel to deploy to disasters affecting other states and territories. These requests are limited and infrequent; however, when they occur, we offer local jurisdictions the opportunity to deploy and gain real-world experience. *We will continue to increase the use of WebEOC by local jurisdictions to fill EMAC requests as appropriate to the specific situation.*

SAO Recommendation 5: Develop and operate a statewide credentialing program to standardize requirements, identify and validate the expertise of incident management teams and emergency operations center personnel across the state. In developing the program, EMD should:

a) Identify and request any statutory changes that would be needed for such a program

b) Work with the Emergency Management Advisory Group subcommittee to identify the resources needed to develop and operate the program at the state and local level

c) Redirect existing resources or request additional resources as needed to achieve these goals. Next steps might include a study to identify resources needed to implement a statewide credentialing program.

3

STATE RESPONSE: While we agree there would be value in a statewide credentialing program, EMD does not currently have the funding or authority to manage the design, implementation or maintenance of a formal statewide credentialing plan as recommended. Additionally, EMD does not have the flexibility to redirect existing resources to achieve this goal without risking the success of other higher-priority programs. There is no current statutory requirement for the state to have such a plan, nor is there a requirement for local jurisdictions to follow such a plan. In the meantime, within available staff time, EMD is moving forward with a program to credential its own emergency operations center staff. We have offered to local emergency managers the same position task books and EOC skill set task books, so they can consider doing the same within each jurisdiction.

Action Steps and Time Frame:

» Conduct a study to determine the appropriate level of staffing and resourcing necessary to implement and maintain a statewide credentialing program. The study would need to review necessary changes to chapter 38.52 RCW and chapter 1-18 WAC to ensure EMD has the authority to carry out such a program. *To be conducted when funding is provided to perform the study.*

SAO Recommendation 6: Work with local jurisdictions to develop ways to make EMD's meetings more effective opportunities for two-way communication. Some of the options to consider are:

a) Sending out appointments to local emergency managers to make them aware of the meetings and related minutes afterwards

b) Providing other ways to participate in meetings and forums when local emergency managers cannot attend in person

c) Allowing additional discussion time so attendees can raise concerns and have them discussed

d) During the semiannual, statewide emergency management conference:

   1. Hold meetings earlier in the event so they are not the final session which is poorly attended

   2. Have feed-back meetings stand-alone so that they are not competing with other sessions.

STATE RESPONSE: We are committed to improving the quality of what, how, when and with whom we communicate across the emergency management community. We are committed to become more effective in our communication and work with our local partners and stakeholders to ensure effective two-way communication. We have already taken some steps to address this recommendation. For example, during the April 2019 Partners in Emergency Preparedness Conference, we moved the EMD director's meeting to the second day instead of the last day of the meeting and scheduled the meeting for a morning session versus an afternoon session. Additionally, we have routinely offered phone-in options for stakeholder meetings to include the Emergency Management Council, Emergency Management Advisory Group and the E911 Advisory Committee. Meeting minutes are provided for the majority of our recurring meetings.

Action Steps and Time Frame:

» Assess which current information sharing venues/meetings are not meeting stakeholder expectations, and, where feasible, shift our techniques appropriately to meet those expectations. *By October 1, 2019.*

4

» Be more consistent in sending out calendar invites and meeting minutes. *By October 1, 2019.*

» Set aside time during EMD-sponsored meetings to ensure our stakeholders have the ability to present issues or concerns. *By October 1, 2019.*

» Refrain from scheduling meetings at the end of conferences or major events and set aside time to potentially conduct listening sessions. *By October 1, 2019.*

SAO Recommendation 7: Establish a regional coordinators program or other mechanisms to develop and maintain the necessary relationships with local emergency managers for successful response. Redirect existing resources or request additional resources as needed.

STATE RESPONSE: Unfortunately, EMD does not currently have the funding to staff and resource a regional coordinator program. Redirecting resources would threaten the success and delivery of other high-priority services. Additionally, there is no legal requirement or authorization that supports this recommendation.

With that said, EMD delivers 30 programs across the state, providing many opportunities for local emergency managers to engage with EMD staff and receive technical support and assistance. Additionally, EMD staff located at Camp Murray routinely travel throughout the state to deliver specialized presentations and workshops, allowing for more interaction with our local partners (i.e., Tsunami Roadshow, Limited English Proficiency technical assistance, and various other training workshops).

While EMD has four staff members who are based throughout the state, they support specific activities related to hazardous materials planning and cannot be redirected to perform other regional coordinator activities based on the restrictive nature of the fund sources that support their positions.

EMD has assessed programs in other states and found that most do not have regional coordinators or field staff.

Action Steps and Time Frame:

» Engage stakeholders to determine with which specific EMD programs they need a more productive or proactive relationship. Identify any consistent trends and make necessary changes to improve those relationships. *By October 1, 2019.*

» Pursue additional funding from the Legislature to support an effective regional coordinators program. *As determined by agency legislative priorities.*

5

State Auditor's Response

We would like to clarify a comment made in the cover letter from the Military Department (EMD) and the Office of Financial Management. The third paragraph says:

> "….Per guidance from FEMA, EMD lacks the authority to establish, communicate and administer the qualification and credentialing process for incident management teams."

The federal guidance cited states the government body that has jurisdiction is responsible for the qualification, certification and credentialing process. Currently, under Washington law, this jurisdiction defaults to counties, cities and towns. In order for EMD to have the authority to establish a statewide credentialing program for all-hazards incident management teams at the local level, state law would need to be changed as specified on page 20 of this report.

Appendix A: Initiative 900 and Auditing Standards

Initiative 900 requirements

Initiative 900, approved by Washington voters in 2005 and enacted into state law in 2006, authorized the State Auditor's Office to conduct independent, comprehensive performance audits of state and local governments.

Specifically, the law directs the Auditor's Office to "review and analyze the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the policies, management, fiscal affairs, and operations of state and local governments, agencies, programs, and accounts." Performance audits are to be conducted according to U.S. Government Accountability Office government auditing standards.

In addition, the law identifies nine elements that are to be considered within the scope of each performance audit. The State Auditor's Office evaluates the relevance of all nine elements to each audit. The table below indicates which elements are addressed in the audit. Specific issues are discussed in the Results and Recommendations sections of this report.

I-900 element	Addressed in the audit
1. Identify cost savings	**No.** The audit focused on whether roles and responsibilities have been further defined and if the resource management process could be further improved. It does not identify cost savings.
2. Identify services that can be reduced or eliminated	**No.** The audit does not identify services to be reduced or eliminated.
3. Identify programs or services that can be transferred to the private sector	**No.** The emergency management programs and services are required by law to be overseen by the state and local jurisdictions.
4. Analyze gaps or overlaps in programs or services and provide recommendations to correct them	**Yes.** The audit compared Emergency Management Division's processes to national standards to identify gaps in the resource management process.
5. Assess feasibility of pooling information technology systems within the department	**No.** The audit does not focus on the feasibility of pooling systems.

I-900 element	Addressed in the audit
6. Analyze departmental roles and functions, and provide recommendations to change or eliminate them	**Yes.** The audit examined the Emergency Management Division's role during disasters and identified opportunities for improvement.
7. Provide recommendations for statutory or regulatory changes that may be necessary for the department to properly carry out its functions	**No.** The audit did not recommend statutory or regulatory changes.
8. Analyze departmental performance data, performance measures and self-assessment systems	**No.** The audit focused on whether roles and responsibilities have been further defined and if the resource management process could be further improved. It did not analyze performance data, measures or systems.
9. Identify relevant best practices	**Yes.** This audit highlights promising practices used by other states that strengthen their communication with local jurisdictions.

Compliance with generally accepted government auditing standards

We conducted this performance audit under the authority of state law (RCW 43.09.470), approved as Initiative 900 by Washington voters in 2005, and in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards as published in Government Auditing Standards (December 2011 revision) issued by the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

The mission of the Office of the Washington State Auditor

To provide citizens with independent and transparent examinations of how state and local governments use public funds, and develop strategies that make government more efficient and effective.

The results of our work are widely distributed through a variety of reports, which are available on our website and through our free, electronic subscription service. We take our role as partners in accountability seriously. We provide training and technical assistance to governments and have an extensive quality assurance program.

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Appendix B: Scope, Objectives and Methodology

Scope

This audit reviewed actions taken by the state's Emergency Management Division (EMD) to address or implement recommendations issued in the SR 530 Landslide Commission Report. The audit also assessed whether there were additional improvements EMD could make to strengthen communication and collaboration efforts with local partners.

This audit followed up on two recommendations issued in the SR 530 Landslide Commission Report and directed to the state's EMD. Both are essential to successful emergency response. The recommendations are:

- The state and county emergency management organizations should work with incident management team (IMT) personnel to develop guidelines and processes that define delegation of authority, resource allocation, and expectations for all-hazard responses between IMTs and counties during non-fire emergencies.
- The state should develop a standardized process for requesting, tracking, mobilizing and demobilizing resources.

However, we did not look at the demobilization process in this audit.

Objectives

To determine where EMD has made progress and what further improvements can be made, we asked the following questions:

1. Do state and local emergency management personnel have clearly defined roles and responsibilities when responding to disasters?

2. What improvements can EMD make to request, track and mobilize resources more effectively during disasters?

3. What improvements to communication can EMD make to strengthen collaboration with local partners?

Methodology

To determine where EMD has made progress and what further improvements can be made, we identified national emergency management standards, reviewed EMD policies and procedures, interviewed EMD and other state agency personnel, conducted focus groups with local emergency managers and tribal governments, interviewed personnel from IMTs in Washington, and interviewed emergency management personnel in other states.

Identified national emergency management standards

We reviewed national emergency management criteria that addresses the standards for identifying roles and responsibilities and for requesting, tracking and mobilizing resources. Material consulted included:

- The National Incident Management System, a framework developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that standardizes processes and procedures for disaster response

- The National Incident Management System Guideline for the Credentialing of Personnel, a framework developed by FEMA that provides guidance about national credentialing standards

- The Emergency Management Standard, a benchmark developed by emergency management professionals and certified by the American National Standards Institute

- The State Emergency Management Director Handbook, developed by the National Emergency Management Association, which provides leadership and expertise in comprehensive emergency management

Reviewed EMD policies and procedures and interviewed EMD personnel

We reviewed policies and procedures provided by EMD to learn how roles and responsibilities are currently defined and communicated to state and local emergency managers. We also reviewed EMD documentation to learn about how the state currently describes the process for requesting, tracking and mobilizing resources and conducts it. We then compared EMD's process to national standards to identify gaps.

We asked EMD managers about the actions they had taken to address the two recommendations from the SR 530 Landslide Commission's report and identified challenges they experienced and the likely causes related to both. We also spoke with key personnel assigned to help local authorities with resource requests.

Conducted focus groups

To identify areas for improvement, we conducted focus groups with emergency managers in all of Washington's regions (see Exhibit 3 on page 11). Washington is divided into nine regions for the purpose of administering Homeland Security grant funds. Each region hosts regular meetings for the local emergency managers in its area. We used these meetings as venues to conduct focus groups with emergency management personnel across the state. This allowed auditors to bring together in a roundtable group setting multiple levels of emergency managers from counties and cities, law enforcement officials such as sheriffs, and others in the emergency management community. In certain instances, tribal representatives also attended the focus group discussions. In addition, tribes were given the opportunity to schedule individual meetings with the audit team to provide their input. Finally, the team conducted interviews with state agencies designated as primary or coordinating partners with EMD in the state's comprehensive emergency management plan. Overall, the team received input from the following (see **Figure 1**):

- 32 of Washington's 39 counties

- 15 cities

- 8 of Washington's 29 federally recognized tribes

- 11 state agencies

Figure 1 – Complete list of Washington organizations contributing to this audit

Counties		Cities	Tribes	State agencies
				Departments of:
Adams	Lewis	Auburn	Colville	Agriculture
Asotin	Okanogan	Bellingham	Cowlitz	Archeology and Historical Preservation
Benton	Pacific	Black Diamond	Jamestown S'Klallam	Commerce
Chelan	Pend Orielle	Des Moines	Nooksack	Enterprise Services
Clallam	Pierce	Everett	Shoalwater Bay	Health
Clark	Skagit	Federal Way	Snoqualmie	Natural Resources
Columbia	Skamania	Issaquah	Spokane	Social and Health Services
Cowlitz	Snohomish	Kent	Swinomish	Transportation
Douglas	Spokane	Lakewood		Utilities and Transportation Commission
Franklin	Stevens	Marysville		Washington State Patrol
Grant	Thurston	Newcastle		WaTech
Island	Wahkiakum	Puyallup		
Jefferson	Walla Walla	Redmond		
King	Whatcom	SeaTac		
Kitsap	Whitman	Seattle		
Kittitas	Yakima			

Interviewed Type 3 All-Hazard Incident Management Team personnel

We interviewed personnel from six all-hazard incident management teams located across the state to determine how the challenges experienced in the Oso landslide between the teams and county emergency management organizations could be addressed.

Interviewed emergency management personnel from other states

To learn about promising practices in use in other states, the team interviewed officials at five selected states. Throughout the audit, stakeholders suggested multiple states as leaders in emergency management. The team documented these suggestions and, after further research to determine which would be the most beneficial to talk with, selected Alabama, California, Florida, Idaho and Tennessee. We then interviewed or received written responses from these states to better understand practices that could benefit Washington.

Appendix C: Illustration of a Complex Incident: Participants in the Amtrak Cascades Train Derailment

First responders
Pierce County EMS, fire, police
Thurston County EMS, fire, police

Local authorities
The cities of DuPont, Lakewood, McKenna, Roy, Yelm
Pierce County Incident Management Team
Pierce County Emergency Operations Center
Thurston County Emergency Operations Center

Washington state agencies
Emergency Management Division
Department of Ecology
Washington State Patrol
Department of Transportation

Federal agencies
Department of Homeland Security
Federal Highways Administration
Federal Railroad Administration
Joint Base Lewis McChord
National Transportation Safety Board

Private sector
Amtrak
OXBO, Inc.
Siemens Locomotive
Sound Transit
Talgo

"Our vision is to increase **trust** in government. We are the public's window into how tax money is spent."

– Pat McCarthy, State Auditor

Office of the Washington State Auditor