



## VIRGINIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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The **Virginia Emergency Management Association (VEMA)** is a statewide organization that represents the Commonwealth's professional emergency managers.

**Mission:** To promote, support and advocate for Emergency Management in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Vision:** The recognized expert and advocate for excellence in the management of emergency preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### **What do our Members Do?**

When your constituents dial 9-1-1, they expect their call will be answered, and first responders will be dispatched to their emergency. But what do your first responders do when the nature or severity of that emergency exceeds their resources? Typically, they call their emergency manager.

Virginia's emergency managers play a crucial role in disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. These professionals are responsible for conducting risk assessments, coordinating emergency response efforts, managing resources, and collaborating with various stakeholders. Emergency managers also play a key role in educating the community about disaster preparedness, organizing drills and exercises, and ensuring that response plans are in place to address a wide range of potential crises, from natural disasters like flooding and severe weather to human-caused hazards such as acts of violence or public health incidents. Our goal is to safeguard our communities during times of crises while enhancing resilience against future threats.

VEMA's membership is made up of emergency management professionals from local, state, and federal government agencies; institutes of higher education, tribes, the military; private, non-profit, and volunteer organizations; and individuals interested in emergency management. VEMA's Legislative Committee works alongside the Executive Team to explain the role of emergency management in our communities, advocate for sufficient resourcing of emergency management needs at the state and local level and work collectively to support our vision of a resilient Commonwealth.

### **2024 Legislative Priorities**

#### **1. Permanently fund the VDEM Logistics Support and Coordination Center (LSCC)**

The Governor's proposed budget for the 2024 - 2026 Biennium included non-recurring funding for the LSCC. While the Association appreciates the consideration of this initiative, **we believe this facility needs to be permanently funded**, as most localities do not have the financial means or physical space to maintain their own disaster supplies. Uncertainty of long-term funding, and thus storage space, limits VDEM's ability to effectively develop commodity rotation and equipment replacement cycles for these critical emergency supplies.

#### **2. Fully fund all VDEM budget requests for the 2024 - 2026 Biennium**

The Governor's proposed budget included funding for just one of nine agency budget requests submitted by VDEM, the LSCC in item one above. The Association respectfully requests that the General Assembly fully fund the eight remaining agency budget requests from VDEM. Unfortunately, several core agency functions that support the Commonwealth rely on **federal homeland security grant funding** – a diminishing funding stream that is further constrained by the environment of continuing resolutions vs. full-year funding legislation in the U.S. Congress. **VDEM's role coordinating disaster response and recovery – as directed by the General Assembly in § 44-146.18 Va. Code Ann. (2023) – should be supported by Commonwealth funding sources.**

**Of particular concern to the Association**, the *EOC Readiness and Technology* budget package requested by VDEM would provide general fund support of **core operational capabilities** required for VDEM to comply with § 44-146.18 Va. Code Ann. (2023). In turn, these critical disaster response and recovery capabilities are used by VDEM to support political subdivisions as they comply with § 44-146.19 Va. Code Ann. (2023). As professional emergency managers, we believe these budget requests are necessary to ensure that the basic human needs of disaster survivors can be met in a timely manner.

### 3. Enhance funding for emergency management at the local level

*Emergencies are locally managed, state coordinated, and federally supported in the most catastrophic situations.* Despite this **many localities are not able to financially support a full-time emergency manager** whose responsibilities include planning for, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating against the threat or impact of all natural, technological, and human-caused hazards. The Local Capabilities Assessment for Readiness (LCAR) 2022 Staffing and Vulnerability Analysis provides the following data:<sup>1</sup>

#### Staffing Profiles

Emergency management programs in Virginia can exist as independent agencies within a locality or as part of the administration, Fire/EMS, law enforcement, or PSAP/911 agencies. While many of the designated local emergency management officials are full time employees, the emergency management function is only one of many assigned responsibilities. Of the EM program managers completing the 2022 LCAR survey:

- **61%** are **emergency managers** by **primary discipline**
- **53%** are employed **full time** and invest at least 75% of time EM program
- **47%** of emergency management programs report **sufficient staffing** levels

**Only 25%** of jurisdictions report **all three of the following conditions**:

- **Emergency manager**, by discipline, managing the program
- **Full-time** and invest 75% or more of time in EM functions
- **Sufficient staffing** to maintain essential EM program functions

By funding the *EOC Readiness and Technology* budget package requested by VDEM in the 2024 - 2026 Biennium, we expect that VDEM should be able to increase the pass-thru of Federal Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) funding to assist localities with enhancing their emergency management capabilities.

### 4. Enhance resilience from natural hazards by:

- Recognizing that *flooding is a statewide hazard*, affecting both inland and coastal communities. As such, legislative efforts to address the impact of increasing flood hazards should be equitably applied to both inland and coastal communities.
- Including **VEMA** and **professional emergency managers** in legislatively proposed or mandated groups engaged in **hazard mitigation or resilience planning** (i.e., Virginia / Coastal Virginia Resiliency Authority, Community Flood Preparedness, etc.).
- Requiring **coordination among state agencies** (DCR, DEQ, VDOT, VDEM), **localities**, and the **US National Weather Service** on flood and weather data sensing, data sharing, and public alerts and warning of imminent flooding, dam failures, and other weather phenomena.

### 5. As a standing priority, the Association strongly believes that any new mandates imposed on local emergency management programs should include adequate funding from the Commonwealth to offset the impact.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Department of Emergency Management and Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Simulation Center of Old Dominion University, *Local Capabilities Assessment for Readiness (LCAR) 2022 Staffing and Vulnerability Analysis* (Richmond, VA: Virginia Department of Emergency Management, 2022), 3.