

FEMA Region 1 Hosts Multi-State Winter Disaster Response Exercise

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FEMA Region 1 simulated a two-day, multi-state disaster March 1-2, which required wide-spread federal, state, and private sector disaster response coordination.

The purpose of the simulated ice storm exercise, called “Frosty Force,” was to bring together federal, state, and other disaster response capabilities in the New England region in a coordinated response. It was designed to test emergency workers in a long-duration power outage scenario — across multiple states.

The exercise primarily took place at FEMA’s Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) in Maynard, Mass. In addition, a small contingent of FEMA workers on the region’s Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) deployed to the Vermont state Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Other New England states were simulated players during the exercise, with Vermont actively participating. Lessons learned will be shared broadly amongst the New England emergency response community.

IMAT Team Leader Terence Hermans said the state EOC in Vermont was bustling with federal and state emergency responders working side by side. The end result: “By the afternoon, we helped the state [Vermont] lock down a temporary power plan, and commodity and refueling plans,” he said.

Exercise Director Kimberly Heredia said the broad goal of the simulated multi-state event was to train state and federal emergency responders to work in lockstep — should a disaster strike the New England region. She said the only way to obtain that level of preparedness is through planning and training for likely regional disasters.

“Essentially, the goal of the exercise was to get new FEMA employees and state partners in our region acclimated to responding to the RRCC for an emergency — and to creating a coordinated emergency response.” Heredia added that the



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exercise sought to foster innovation and collaboration ahead of regional emergencies, such as hurricanes, floods, blizzards, or pandemics. “We can find the gaps now — in this large-scale training ahead of a potential disaster — and make sure to improve on whatever we’ve found.”

For Heredia, one of the biggest take-aways of the exercise was highlighted by more of an accomplishment than a challenge: “I was amazed at how natural it was for FEMA and our partners, which included multiple federal and state agencies, to come together to execute our training exercise... and to accomplish key goals of the disaster response within one day,” she said, listing goals such as helping states institute plans of action, and effectively simulating the steps necessary to potentially save lives.

“Our partners not only performed well on the day of the training event, but they also helped us plan the training, which made it almost feel effortless,” [Heredia](#) said.

Jarrett Devine, FEMA Region 1 Response Division Director, applauded the efforts of each participating person and agency partner, adding the observation: “I saw amazing discussions and engagement from all” who participated in the exercise.

Lori Ehrlich, Region 1 Administrator, said the success of the exercise comes from working through a disaster simulation with our state and federal partners. “Numerous federal agencies were involved, and state partners either participated or have expressed an interest in reviewing the plans and data we share as a result of the exercise,” Ehrlich said.

