

THE HOOSIER RESPONDER

DECEMBER 2022



RESHAPING DISASTER RESPONSE

LOCAL LEVEL ACTIONS BEFORE THE EVENT

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

- IDHS Logistical Support Facility Working Behind the Scenes for Statewide Responses
- LaPorte Fire Department Takes Advantage of the State's PFAS Foam Collection Program
- Massive Evansville Warehouse Fire Brings Local, State and Federal Resources
- State EMS Director Taking On Leadership Role in EMS Compact
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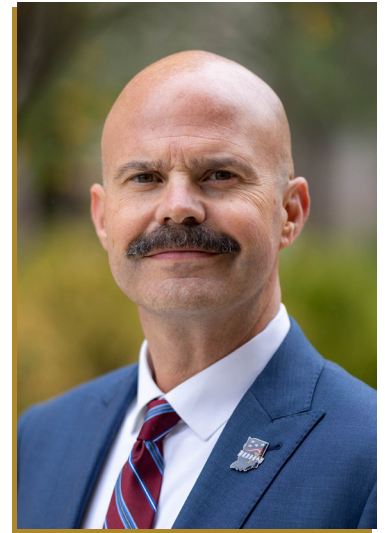
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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It has been an interesting year at IDHS.

What began as me getting settled as Indiana State Fire Marshal will end with me as the agency's executive director. I can tell you, emphatically, I have enjoyed every minute of it because of what our agency and our local partners have been able to accomplish in 2022.

I took over as executive director on June 24, the same day the Roe v. Wade decision was released. Immediately, talk of civil unrest and demonstrations sparked across Indiana. I quickly learned the importance of partnership and collaboration, and I continue to emphasize this approach as I travel the state to talk to emergency managers, local elected officials and other public safety personnel.



Here are a few things of note for 2022:

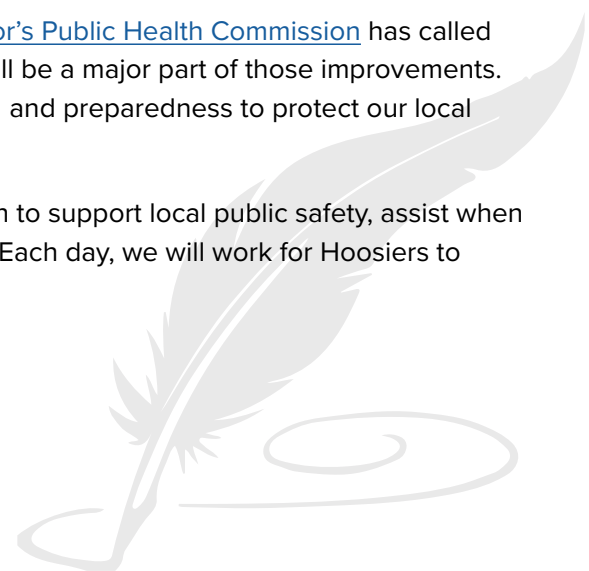
- IDHS guided county governments through two U.S. Small Business Administration disaster declarations as well as a state disaster declaration following flooding damage. Staff worked closely with people at the local, state and federal levels to get county governments the help they needed, when they needed it.
- IDHS awarded \$22 million in school safety grants to more than 400 schools as part of the Secured School Safety Grant program.
- The agency has led the promotion and collection efforts for nearly 30,000 gallons of cancer-causing PFAS foam from hundreds of fire departments across the state. This [free program is still available](#) to any Indiana fire department interested in protecting firefighter safety by properly disposing of these chemicals.
- Dozens of Mobile Integrated Health programs have now been established across Indiana thanks to the hard work and collaboration of our Indiana EMS Section. IDHS now has a [dashboard](#) to show the communities that have embraced this important trend in public health delivery.
- More than \$100 million has been returned to local governments through the hard work of the IDHS Recovery team in processing COVID-19 reimbursements.

The new year is upon us, and much work is left to be done. The [Governor's Public Health Commission](#) has called for transformational improvements in the state EMS system, and IDHS will be a major part of those improvements. Cybersecurity will continue to be a focus of the agency, as will mitigation and preparedness to protect our local partners from all hazards.

My pledge for 2023 is to ensure IDHS is focused squarely on the mission to support local public safety, assist when necessary and help communities prepare and respond to emergencies. Each day, we will work for Hoosiers to provide a safe, secure and resilient Indiana.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Thacker'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and 'T'.

Joel Thacker
Executive Director





IDHS LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FACILITY WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES FOR STATEWIDE RESPONSES

IDHS and county emergency management agencies keep a constant working relationship to be prepared for any type of event. When a major event is planned around the state or a disaster happens, IDHS is ready at a moment's notice to help counties with the response effort by moving commodities and resources across the state. To do this, IDHS utilizes a location that keeps vital resources within reach: the IDHS Logistical Support Facility at Five Points.

The Logistical Support Facility is in Indianapolis. It sits on 7 acres and is used to store and maintain agency vehicles, trailers, mobile command and specialty vehicles, various types of response equipment, supplies and materials used for disaster response, special events and exercises. The facility also can serve as an alternate State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during a disaster or if the State EOC is determined to be unsafe or crowded. It has been activated a handful of times for events like the 2012 Super Bowl.

This facility and its resources often are used for events like the Indianapolis 500, Indiana State Fair, Thunder Over Louisville and more. The facility provides items like concrete barriers, light towers, golf carts and command vehicles for these events each year. It also provides logistical support for exercises and events and stores fire training trailers and portable morgue trailers for local jurisdictions to use during mass causality events if the local morgue is overwhelmed.



“The capabilities and resources that the IDHS Logistical Support Facility provides to disaster and response operations cannot be duplicated or provided in any other way. It has the resources to support many different types of emergency and disaster situations, making it an invaluable asset to the agency and to the state,” said Response Director Brad Thatcher.

“A lot of what we do here is trying to be prepared for the next bad thing that is going to happen,” Thatcher said. At least once a month, his team tests equipment on the property and performs maintenance. “Our standard is everything has to work when we need it to work,” he said. They do this so when an emergency does occur, they are not finding out something is broken and will not be able to assist the victims or first responders.

“The facility has a lot of moving parts. Staff is in constant motion tracking what comes and goes from the property and cataloging inventory so it is ready to go whenever the phone rings,” said State Emergency Management and Preparedness Director Mary Moran. “It is so much more than a simple storage space. People have no idea how much this facility will affect them during a response.”

Thatcher also tasks IDHS teammates with thinking through unconventional emergencies and coming up with ways to prepare for them. This team has worked through scenarios like an electromagnetic pulse strike and a pandemic.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the facility underwent a major transformation to become a logistics staging area for hundreds of thousands of pieces

of personal protective equipment (PPE) and supplies destined for first responders and public safety agencies throughout the state.

Now, the time has come to upgrade the building to enhance the capabilities of the location. Phase one of construction almost is complete for a new building that will combine a secondary EOC, warehouse space, vehicle

maintenance bays, administrative offices, classroom space and a large multi-purpose room.

“We needed a new building because we are running out of room to store response equipment and vehicles,” Thatcher said.

This facility is a secured location and is only accessible by appointment.



THE HISTORY OF THE LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FACILITY

The Logistical Support Facility was built in the 1960s, before interchanges like I-465 were built. IDHS obtained the facility from the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) in 2007 because INDOT no longer needed the facility when it built a new site nearby. IDHS was searching for a place to store the then-new Mobile Command Center, which fit perfectly in the salt barn on the property.

The Mobile Command Center vehicle allows IDHS to visit the scene of a disaster and be the

headquarters for the on-site state response. The Mobile Command Center is in constant contact with the State Emergency Operations Center located in Indianapolis.

Initially, the facility was used by IDHS exclusively as a vehicle storage and maintenance facility. The facility transitioned to a full-service logistical support facility when the Indiana Department of Health, the Indiana State Excise Police and the Indiana State Police became tenants on the property in 2009.

EXERCISE EMPG REPORTING REQUIREMENT REMINDER

Earlier this year, IDHS changed the exercise requirement for personnel funded by the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG). As of May 27, 2022, EMPG-funded personnel must participate in one exercise that is HSEEP compliant or HSEEP consistent each fiscal year — Oct. 1 to Sept. 30.

If your position requires you to participate in one HSEEP exercise a year, it is your responsibility

to upload the required documentation to IntelliGrants. The IDHS Grants Section will reach out when it is time to upload this information.

You can get your credit by participating in various exercise roles like a planning team member, participant or player, or a controller or evaluator. Also, LEPC exercises are no longer required to be HSEEP compliant unless funded by federal grant funds.

The Exercise EMPG Reporting Requirement [Policy](#) is on the [IDHS Exercise webpage](#) under the Resources tab and is titled “HSEEP Compliance for Federal Grant-Funded Exercises Policy.” The policy also details the difference between HSEEP-compliant and HSEEP-consistent exercises.

Additional resources, such as the IDHS Exercise Guide or various HSEEP templates, can be found on the IDHS Exercise webpage.

UPCOMING DEADLINE FOR COVID-19 EVENT PROJECT APPLICATIONS

Dec. 31, 2022, is the deadline to request Public Assistance funding under the COVID-19 declaration. New project applications and amendments to existing project applications for emergency work performed between Jan. 1, 2020, and July 1, 2022, must be entered into the PA Grant Portal by Dec. 31, 2022. This interim deadline does not affect the funding eligibility for work completed after July 1, 2022, as long as the incident period remains open after that time. See FEMA’s [deadline guidance](#) for other deadline information, and contact FEMA-COVID-DR4515-IN@fema.dhs.gov with questions.

As the new year begins, it is important to look back at the previous year to prepare for the future. While COVID-19 does not have as big of a spotlight as it did in 2020, thousands of people still are losing their lives. According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#)

[and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), new omicron subvariants, BQ.1.1 and BQ.1, now are the most prevalent version of COVID-19 in the U.S. Together, the two make up around 44 percent of new COVID-19 infections, whereas subvariant BA.5 makes up just 30 percent. BA.5 became dominant in July, then consistently accounted for the majority of new COVID-19 infections until early November.

Even as new omicron strains take over, COVID-19 no longer drives crowds of patients into the hospital. COVID-related deaths and hospitalizations fell in recent months, despite the emergence of new subvariants that evade immunity from previous infections and vaccinations. The CDC and the [Indiana Department of Health](#) advise you to keep practicing safe hygiene and get vaccinated as natural immunities wane this winter.



PFAS FOAM COLLECTION

LAPORTE FIRE DEPARTMENT UTILIZES FREE PROGRAM

Fire departments across the state still have time to take advantage of a free program to remove toxic PFAS-containing foam, protecting firefighter health and Indiana’s groundwater from contamination.

Fire departments put the safety of their communities and firefighters first. IDHS and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) are offering another avenue to achieve both goals and save the departments money at the same time. Departments can work with a vendor to schedule a time to remove and dispose of cancer-causing PFAS foam. The program is free once departments respond to [a survey on the IDHS website](#).

The LaPorte Fire Department signed up for the initiative as soon as it learned about the program. The department had PFAS foam on its trucks for about five years, according to Chief Andy Snyder. When the department learned about the dangers of the foam, Snyder said they knew they needed to find another solution.

“Now that we have become aware of it, we are making it part of our training, part of our understanding that we need to move forward with getting rid of this safely and moving to an alternative,” Snyder said. “That is why we are excited to take care of this and move on to something that we can count on that is safe and efficient and get them back on the trucks to make sure we are there for the public’s safety.”

An additional benefit of signing up for this service is the cost savings.

“One thing we always deal with is budgetary items. Usually, something like (getting rid of PFAS foam) is pretty expensive. The State Fire Marshal’s Office taking care of disposing of it is an added bonus. It was such an efficient process to make this happen,” Snyder said.

Firefighter safety and cost savings are not the only benefits, according to IDEM. The environment is also at risk when PFAS foam is used.

“It is just remarkable that we are able to come and start collecting this foam to protect our firefighters and protect the environment,” said Bob Lugar, assistant commissioner of the IDEM Office of Program Support. “Being one of five states so far that has undertaken this type of program, we are hopeful that it brings more momentum for other states to collect this foam.”

“I really encourage fire departments to take part in this program. It does not cost the fire departments anything. It does not cost your community anything. We provide a means to pick it up for free and dispose of it. It helps ensure your firefighters have a safer work environment,” State Fire Marshal Steve Jones said.

As of Dec. 9, 2022, the PFAS Collection Initiative has collected more than 29,328 gallons of PFAS firefighting foam. Fire departments that have not signed up for collection can do so on the [IDHS Foam Collection Program webpage](#).



ALL RESOURCES ON HAND

MASSIVE EVANSVILLE WAREHOUSE FIRE BRINGS IN LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL RESOURCES

IDHS fire investigators are available to fire departments statewide to assist with determining the cause and origin of the fire and investigating the cause. On some calls, it takes a team of local, state and federal experts to respond, which was the case recently with an Evansville warehouse fire.

“We realized this was going to be a long incident with a need for additional crews in less than 30 minutes of it marked as a working fire,” said Evansville Fire Division Chief Mike Larson.

IDHS Arson Investigator Matt Wells says he could see a large column of smoke as far as 20 miles away from the scene. “I was driving around the building, and that is when I realized the true size of the building. It was three stories high with about 1 million

square feet of warehouse space and was sitting on about 15 acres of land. Most of the building was reduced to rubble on the ground with a few walls still standing.”

The warehouse had been burning all morning and was still burning when Wells pulled up to the scene. The federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) also was requested due to the size of the building.

The Evansville Fire Department was forced to take a defensive position to fight the fire due to the rapid spread and wind gusts over 30 miles per hour. The sheer size of the warehouse required the Evansville department to call in off-duty firefighters and a neighboring fire department. Wells described this as a rare move considering the size of the Evansville Fire Department. Firefighters remained on the scene for about five days spraying water on the building.



After that, unmanned streams were used around the clock.

“At some point, while the fire was being extinguished, every firefighter and every apparatus within the Evansville Fire Department’s arsenal participated in some way at this incident,” Larson said. To put that in perspective, the department has 252 suppression personnel and 21 support staff, 14 stations and 17 front-line apparatus.

The investigation required the group to divide into two sections, Wells said. One group processed the scene. The other group interviewed witnesses and gathered video and information. The collaborative effort with the Evansville Fire Department and the ATF sped up the investigation and used resources more efficiently to find answers.

“The ATF is a great resource for investigators to use during a large loss such as this one,” Wells said. “Our agency has a great working relationship with the Evansville Fire Department, Evansville Police Department and the ATF. Our agency works with ATF-certified fire investigators on a regular basis, making collaboration easy.”

“To put it in perspective on how big this fire was: Our investigation section has 14 investigators throughout the state. The ATF brought in double the people we have in our section to work at one incident,” he added.



Calling the ATF for large events can bring in different resources like a chemical engineer, electrical engineer, fire protection engineer, digital forensic experts and more.

The investigation into this warehouse fire is still playing out, and no information can be released about the cause. Still, Wells said the collaborative effort between this large group should be replicated at every scene.

“It’s not every day you can get more than 40 people working on one scene and it work efficiently.

This effort was organized and worked really well,” he said.

Larson echoed the same praise, “This obviously was a massive undertaking for our department alone. The assistance from the Indiana State Fire Marshal’s Office and the ATF National Response Team was invaluable. State Fire Marshal Investigator Matt Wells, along with a team of 30 ATF investigators, provided a number of additional resources, not to mention their overall expertise in multiple areas of investigative techniques.”



CREATING A NEW PATHWAY FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

WHAT COUNTIES CAN DO NOW TO COMBAT RISING DISASTER THRESHOLDS

IDHS preaches the *Get Prepared* campaign to all Hoosiers. Some people get the message and start creating an emergency plan and kit in their homes; some do not. But there is no worse feeling than being unprepared with no resources to turn to.

Now IDHS engages county leadership with the same message, *Get Prepared*. Changing formulas for disaster assistance mean counties may need to take a different approach to emergency preparation.

Every year the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) updates its disaster thresholds: the monetary amounts for damage that must be met before federal funding can be made available to assist in the recovery from a disaster.

In October, FEMA raised the threshold Indiana must meet from \$11,060,410.64 to \$12,010,382.56. A \$12 million threshold could be tough to meet, considering the types of disaster events in Indiana. The change could mean counties may be left to foot more of the recovery bill.

“We are going to have big events that fall below the federal threshold, so we may not

get any federal assistance,” said State Emergency Management and Preparedness Director Mary Moran. “It is getting harder and harder for the state to get federal disaster assistance.”

Adding to the concern of increasing disaster thresholds is that county budgets for the entire year rarely consider a recovery fund. This means if an event occurs, county leadership is going to be faced with tough decisions.

“We are going to have big events that fall below the federal threshold, so we may not get any federal assistance.”

State Emergency Management and Preparedness Director
Mary Moran

“Counties may be stuck in a position where their budget is spent on recovering from the disaster, and there is nothing left to fund other public safety functions after an event,” Moran said. Those public safety functions could include police and fire department funding and financing improvement projects in the county.

With thresholds increasing every year, county leaders need to consider finding non-grant-related funds to supplement the disaster bills that state and federal funds cannot cover by law at the county level.

In addition to setting aside a rainy day fund, FEMA emphasizes preparedness and mitigation on the county level. “Instead of planning for events that likely

will not qualify for FEMA assistance, communities should take steps to put in place programs and systems so they are not dependent on FEMA assistance regardless of the size of an incident,” said FEMA Regional Administrator Thomas Sivak. “As emergency managers, we talk about how disasters start and end locally. Our programs and budgets must reflect that.”

WAYS TO PREPARE BEFORE THE DISASTER

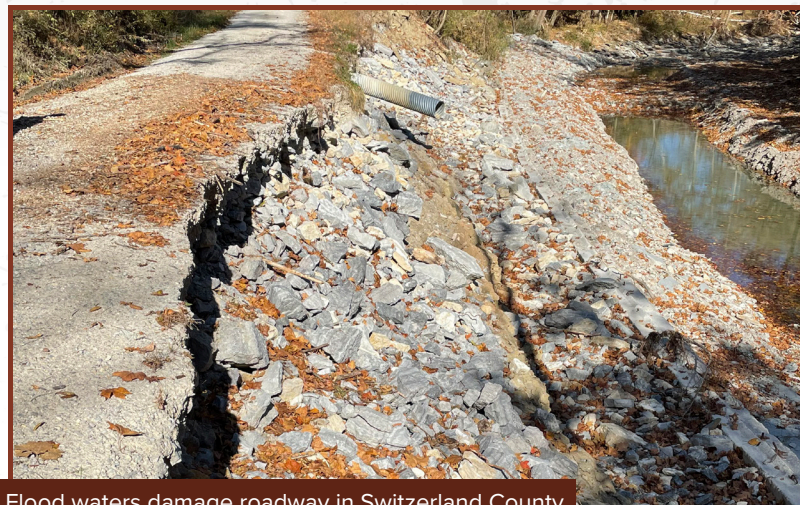
In addition to searching for disaster recovery funds at the county level, Moran suggests county leaders prepare now before an emergency occurs.

Damage Assessment Training and Workshops

IDHS hosts training and workshop sessions to update leadership on how to conduct a damage assessment after a disaster. Staying up to date on FEMA damage assessment guidance for Public Assistance and Individual Assistance will help the process go smoothly if a disaster occurs. FEMA updates the guidance regularly. Relying on old guidance will not create an efficient process after an emergency.

“Training. I cannot say enough about training,” said Elkhart County’s Director of Emergency Management Jennifer Tobey. Training people in your county to assess the damage after an event is critical when making your case to FEMA, she said.

“You cannot train about the different levels of damage after an event. You need to have those people trained before the event,” she said, adding that firefighters are great assessment training candidates due to their knowledge of the local community. “I am an office of three people, so we need all the help we can get,” Tobey said. “We



Flood waters damage roadway in Switzerland County

cannot get FEMA’s help, and we cannot recover financially if we do not do the FEMA assessment.”

“County and local leaders have tremendous opportunities during blue sky days to ensure both Public Assistance and Individual Assistance damage assessments progress quickly and accurately. I cannot stress enough how important thorough damage assessments are in the declaration process,” Sivak said.

County leadership interested in a damage assessment training can make the request through the IDHS Public Assistance and Individual Assistance teams at pa@dhs.in.gov or ia@dhs.in.gov.

Legal Authority for Repairs

Recovery time is lost when it is unclear whose legal authority it is to fix roads, bridges or rivers. Have this data documented and accessible. If you do not have legal documents, keep historical documents on who has done work in the past. This way you can show historical proof of responsibility.

Local Capacity and Maintenance Records

Keep a record of repairs and maintenance on local structures. If a jurisdiction repairs a bridge, keep proof of that repair. FEMA will want that proof to show any damage after a disaster is directly related to the event and was not there beforehand.

Procurement Contracts

One common problem FEMA sees is improper procurement contracts in the aftermath of an emergency.

“Many officials believe that just because it is a disaster or because the federal government is paying the bills that the normal rules of competition, fairness or reasonable cost do not apply,” Sivak said. This is an area where FEMA may be forced to disallow costs, cancel contracts or not fund or reimburse projects through the Public Assistance program. “This can be an area where

we can be more inclusive and ensure historically underrepresented businesses have opportunities to compete.”

Negotiating contracts before a disaster strikes can help avoid this problem.

“Our staff is happy to share FEMA references that are available to offer suggestions on how to avoid issues of improper procurement,” Sivak added.

Be sure to document all information regarding procurements for future reference.

Agreements/Mutual Aid

Create a file detailing agreements counties have with contractors, or mutual aid agreements with other counties. Moran encourages border counties to continue to build robust mutual aid agreements, which are critical after a disaster.

“Talk to your surrounding partner counties and understand the resources they may be able to bring to your counties if you are impacted and vice versa,” Moran said.

Nonprofits

If nonprofits will play a critical role in your county’s recovery efforts, keep the nonprofit’s 501(c)(3) on hand. IDHS will need it when the time comes.



Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)

Tobey organized a COAD after three major events in her county. Tobey described how nonprofit organizations (NGOs) and volunteers would come in after events and leave in a few months: “I drew the line and explained where we are making a mistake as a county. People help and go away. We need a permanent solution.”

STATE ASSISTANCE

IDHS has options to assist local counties when the impact of the disaster overwhelms county resources.

IDHS Employees

If available, IDHS employees can assist in the damage assessment process. After the recent flooding event in Switzerland, Jefferson and Ohio counties in September, IDHS employees were on the scene helping local officials assess the damage and take drone footage. This effort sped up the process for a state disaster declaration, which allowed the damage assessment to be sent to FEMA.

Moran said in this case IDHS could send employees down to help capture the drone footage, but she added counties should consider adding those kinds of resources to the county’s skill set. If a major disaster affects multiple counties across the state, IDHS employees will be challenged to make it to every county in a speedy time frame.

She gave the example of the 2008 flood event. Disasters were declared in 78 counties for the same event. It took months for IDHS to get across the state to view the damage.

A COAD is similar to the Indiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster but on a local community level. Since creating the COAD, Tobey said the groups are better coordinated after an event because they already have a relationship started. This group meets monthly to keep volunteers and NGOs in touch so everyone is on the same page when they need to respond.



September flood in Switzerland County damages culvert and roadway

State Disaster Relief Fund

Indiana is one of the few states to have a State Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF), which may be available to assist in disaster recovery. It is only available to individuals and local governments that are not eligible for federal disaster loans but meet the state’s criteria for disaster relief.

There are limitations by law on how much money can be dispersed from the SDRF for each event, which means it is not likely to cover the entire costs of the disaster.

“The way the SDRF was designed, it was never meant to be a replacement for full federal disaster recovery funding,” Moran said. “The state program likely will never be able to get counties back to pre-disaster functions.”

Conversations are ongoing to try and determine a more resilient and continuing funding source at the state level.

THE GLOBAL TOLL OF DISASTERS

200 MILLION people impacted each year by natural disasters



1.23 MILLION lives claimed worldwide since the start of the 21st Century

An estimated



\$3 TRILLION in economic losses over the past 20 years

75% INCREASE in natural disasters during 2000-2019 compared to the previous 20 years

Data sourced from the UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction

THE ROAD AHEAD

Adjusting to the yearly changes when it comes to disaster threshold levels will come down to a few key points, according to Moran. “We are really looking at knowing the disaster assessment process, having local level discussions about obligating funding to disaster recovery and returning to the robust mutual aid agreements of the past,” Moran said.

When an event happens in her county, Tobey uses the response to get in front of the public and make sure community members know about their county’s emergency management agency.

“In our world, people do not know about us until something happens. Then we are in the public’s eye. I take advantage of being in the spotlight, because we are helping in an emergency,” she said.

Tobey said the new attention on her agency has been one benefit of the COVID-19 pandemic. More people know about Elkhart County’s emergency management agency and are knocking on her door to help. “It takes politicians and the citizens to help with community response,” Tobey added.

Moran says Indiana has a double-edged sword when it comes to the types of emergencies that happen in the state.

“Luckily, Indiana does not have catastrophic events like Florida’s hurricanes or California’s wildfires. But it also is unlucky because limited funds are available when we experience a catastrophe, so we need to work together to come up with Plan B,” she said.

SEPTEMBER FLOODS IN SOUTHERN INDIANA

One disaster event working its way through the damage assessment process is the September floods that occurred in Switzerland, Jefferson and Ohio counties.

A powerful storm rolled through the area, dropping 10 inches of rain in a short period of time.

“It fell quickly and in a concentrated spot,” said State Emergency Management and Preparedness Director Mary Moran. It was an unusual event, Moran added, because the storm did not meet the criteria to be called a severe weather event.

The rain inundated the flood plain, causing downhill water flow to hit Ohio and Jefferson counties. This event resulted in one death from the floodwaters. Afterward, there was a 7.1-mile stretch of river debris in Switzerland County. Roads and bridges were damaged across all three counties.

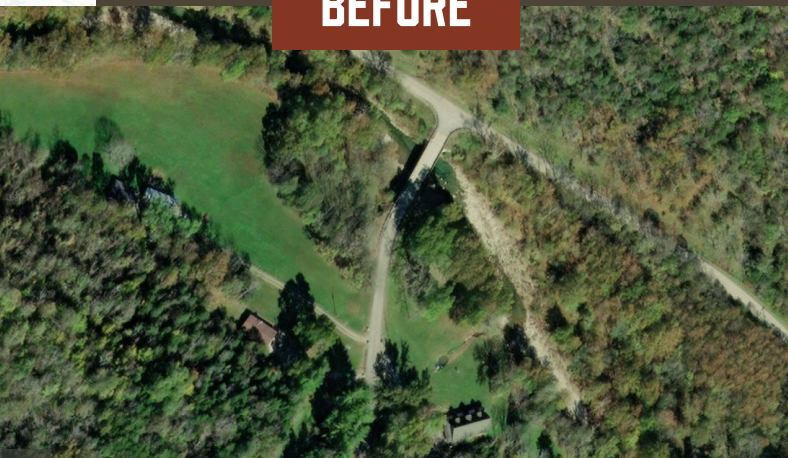
Governor Holcomb issued a state disaster declaration due to the amount of damage left behind.

Flooding is one of the most common natural disasters that occur in the U.S. Many Hoosier homeowners do not realize they are at risk, but protection is available. IDHS encourages all Hoosier homeowners and renters to purchase flood insurance protection. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) is one option available. It may seem costly, but the NFIP can help provide affordable flood insurance coverage based on the area they live in.

There are more than 2.5 million households in Indiana, but only 17,382 insurance policies in effect, per FEMA.

If you are unsure of your flood risk, FEMA put together a breakdown of the historical flood risk and costs for each county.

BEFORE



AFTER



Before and after pictures of the flood damage surrounding a Switzerland County river.

HOLIDAY FIRE SAFETY TIPS

- Both artificial and real trees can catch fire, so they should be placed at least three feet away from any heat source.
- Add water to the stand daily to prevent a real tree from drying out and catching fire.
- Use battery-powered candles instead of real candles.
- Remove trees from the property when the needles begin falling.
- Lights need to be turned off before going to bed or leaving home.
- Check product instructions or descriptions for proper use. Some lights specify the safe locations for use.
- Consider using an electronic kinara, advent wreath, menorah or other religious candleholder to lower the chances of a fire.
- If candles are used in decorations, place them on a flat surface to prevent tipping, and extinguish them before going to bed or leaving the home.
- Candles should never be used to decorate a tree because it could catch fire.



GRANTS UPDATE: ILBC APPLICATION CLOSING SOON!

Act quickly! Applications for the Indiana Local Body Camera Grant (ILBC), managed by the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, are due by 4 p.m. ET on Dec. 15, 2022.

The ILBC program provides matching grants to city, town and county law enforcement agencies to support the purchase of body-worn cameras. The matching grant funds may be used only for the purchase of body-worn cameras and may not be used to purchase video storage equipment or services. Only one ILBC grant application will be allowed from each law enforcement agency.

All applicants must be registered with the IntelliGrants system before applying. Visit the [IDHS Grants Management](#) webpage for complete information and instructions on registering with IntelliGrants.





WINTER WEATHER

Indiana already has seen hints of winter weather this season. Now is a good time to begin reminding people in your jurisdictions about getting prepared for winter weather.

IDHS has a [Get Prepared webpage](#) highlighting ways people can get ready for the cold and brutal weather. It includes tips on how to dress properly for the cold, a vehicle emergency kit checklist and more.

County EMAs also need to double-check their WebEOC login to make sure they can update their county travel status. That information feeds into the [County Travel Status Map](#) on the IDHS website.

IDHS STATE EMS DIRECTOR TAKING ON LEADERSHIP ROLE IN EMS COMPACT

State EMS Director Kraig Kinney was appointed vice chair of the National EMS Compact. The EMS Compact is a multistate agreement that recognizes EMS certification across state lines for member states. EMS personnel, including EMTs and paramedics licensed in a compact member state, are granted a “Privilege to Practice” in the other member states.

As vice chairperson, Kinney will be involved in advancing the EMS Compact and ensuring it is operational so member states can utilize the compact efficiently. Kinney also serves

as chairperson of the compact’s Rules & Bylaws Committee.

Kinney said he is proud to continue the hard work of EMS Compact. “One of the executive committee goals for 2023 is creating more illustrative information for member states and all EMS personnel of member states to explain how the EMS Compact operates and how it impacts the individual EMS professional.”

Indiana was the 20th state to pass EMS Compact legislation in March 2020. The compact currently has 22 member states. Indiana is

active in the EMS Compact but not fully integrated yet. To assist in the integration process, Indiana EMS will begin collecting social security numbers from certified personnel in 2023.



CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS AND SMOKE ALARMS

SMALL DEVICES

BIG IMPACT

Carbon monoxide poisoning can occur by ingesting either a large amount of the invisible, odorless gas over a short amount of time or a small amount of the gas over a long time period. Infants, pregnant women and those whose bodies use oxygen to a more limited degree due to conditions like asthma, heart disease and emphysema are more susceptible to poisoning (National Fire Protection Association).



Properly installed and working carbon monoxide alarms are the **only way to be alerted** of unsafe levels of the otherwise-undetectable gas and can prompt occupants to fix dangerous conditions, such as malfunctioning heating equipment.

To protect Hoosiers, the [2020 Indiana Residential Code](#) requires dwellings to have carbon monoxide detectors for specified types of new construction and renovation conditions, and some Indiana municipalities have additional local ordinances requiring these life saving devices.

Fires grow quickly, so fast there may be as little as two minutes to escape to safety after a smoke alarm sounds the warning. When fires happen in homes with working smoke alarms, they are **half as likely to lead to death** (National Fire Protection Association).

Their importance is underscored in [Indiana Code 22-11-18](#), which requires all hotels, motels and dwellings to have working smoke alarms. Smoke alarms must be tested at least once every six months to ensure they continue to work. Landlords and their agents are responsible for installing smoke alarms and repairing or replacing them within seven working days after notice is given of the defective alarms.

Checking for working smoke alarms is part of the normal inspection process for IDHS Code Enforcement inspectors, and IDHS works with local fire departments to get Hoosiers alarms.

Visit GetAlarmed.in.gov for smoke and carbon monoxide alarm tips.



SHARE THE GOOD



TELLING FIRST RESPONDER STORIES FROM 2022

Life on the front lines of emergency response is demanding, but often it can be rewarding. You meet the victim of an accident you helped with and learn about the person's recovery. Your team coordinates a successful rescue or assists another agency in a joint operation. A community member or group recognizes you or a teammate for saving a life or property, or guiding a 911 caller through a challenging circumstance.

These are stories that are meant to be shared.

First responders are unsung heroes. Frequently, their stories are known only by those at the scene of an incident, but IDHS wants to share them throughout the year with the first responder community and the public. Hoosiers yearn for feel-good stories, and your tales of going beyond the call of duty help build respect for the public safety field and could inspire people to seek a career in first response. Good stories may even remind fellow responders why they do what they do, and to keep going.

Share a specific story or two about an individual or group in your agency by filling out the IDHS [Share the Good story submission form](#). IDHS is building a collection of stories about 911 telecommunicators, emergency managers, EMS workers, firefighters and law enforcement to highlight their great work all year round. If you have a story from 2022, please complete the form now. Also, bookmark the page so you can submit again whenever you have a story to share.

Your stories and photos may be shared in the *Hoosier Responder*, the IDHS website or IDHS social media channels. For examples, visit the [Telecommunicators](#) webpage and the [EMS Week](#) page.



MESSAGE FROM THE EMS MEDICAL DIRECTOR

A running joke about Indiana's EMS system describes it as being treated like the plumbing of the state's healthcare system. Nobody understands exactly how it works, and nobody wants to spend any money on it. And, when things go wrong, it is an ugly, expensive mess.

Post-pandemic, Indiana has begun to look at the state's healthcare delivery under a microscope. The American College of Surgeons evaluated the state's trauma system, and the Indiana Behavioral Health Commission released a report on mental health care in Indiana. In what may be the most extensive study yet, the [Governor's Public Health Commission \(GPHC\)](#) released its report providing an intense overview of the public health system in our state. All these studies have a common theme: A strong, high-quality EMS system is critical in Indiana for improvements in all areas of public health.



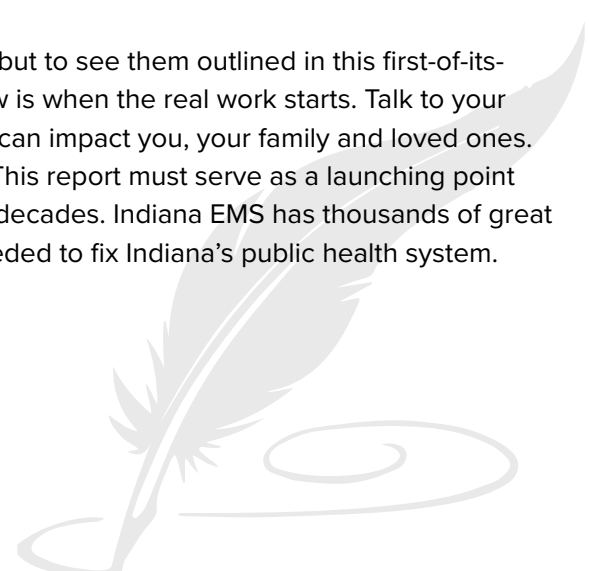
The GPHC report provides an outstanding summary of the needs in Indiana's healthcare delivery. In past years, EMS might have been an afterthought or an asterisk. With the role of EMS emphasized at the height of the pandemic, the public saw firsthand the central role EMS plays in the care of our citizens. The report starts with providing first-rate, evidence-based care for time-critical emergency conditions like heart attacks and strokes, but it impacts so much more. The report acknowledges the role EMS plays in the mental health and substance use crises facing Indiana. It highlights the developing community paramedicine field that can provide essential public health services to some of our most vulnerable citizens — an initiative that has the potential to serve as a model for other states. It also dives into the fundamental needs of the EMS system to continue providing lifesaving care when it matters the most.

The most prominent issue facing the EMS system is the workforce. Indiana is at a critical level of EMS workforce, especially in many rural areas. The GPHC calls to establish long-term promotional and retention plans for EMS personnel, as well as ensure funding and prioritized recruitment to address the shortage. To help fill the gaps in some of our more remote areas, the commission recommends exploring mechanisms for cost-sharing related to larger equipment purchases. Education is another area of focus, especially developing higher levels of EMS training with support for on-the-job training and geographical equity in training opportunities. Also significant is the emphasis on the continued expansion of community paramedicine programs to serve as a delivery mechanism for many of the services essential to the public health system.

Many of these shortfalls come as no surprise to Indiana EMS personnel, but to see them outlined in this first-of-its-kind report speaks to the newfound importance of finding solutions. Now is when the real work starts. Talk to your community and elected leaders about the report and understand how it can impact you, your family and loved ones. This is a community issue that will require a whole-community solution. This report must serve as a launching point for the funding and actionable initiatives lacking in the EMS network for decades. Indiana EMS has thousands of great minds and passionate providers, and it is time to give them the tools needed to fix Indiana's public health system.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Yazel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Dr. Eric Yazel
Indiana State EMS Medical Director



TORNADOES
FLOODING
EARTHQUAKES
HOUSE FIRES
DISASTERS
FOLLOW
NO SCHEDULE





NATURAL GAS EDUCATION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

AGENCIES ENCOURAGED TO TAKE TRAINING

Fire departments nationwide safely respond to about 125,000 natural gas or propane leaks that do not cause fires each year. Although these gas leaks are a common run for many departments and typically do not result in harm, the risk of a dangerous explosion always exists. More than 4,000 house and apartment fires are caused each year by ignited natural gas leaks in the United States, [killing an average of 40 people per year](#).

“Most natural gas incidents end very mundane, even if they are long, so it is easy for fire departments to get complacent and a firefighter may say to himself, ‘Eh, it is probably nothing,’ but we stress not to be complacent,” said Mike Miller, public safety trainer for NIPSCO, the northern Indiana utility company that provides

natural gas service to nearly a third of the state’s counties.

Miller and Herbie Cruz are retired firefighters from Fort Wayne and East Chicago, respectively. They travel throughout NIPSCO’s Indiana territory to train firefighters how to make informed decisions on gas emergencies as part of the NIPSCO Public Safety Program. They share a story about a [2002 incident in Lafayette](#) where what started as a routine natural gas run turned out to be anything but, with four houses exploding while firefighters were on the scene: “The potential is incredible,” noted Miller.

The Columbia City Fire Department responded to a fatal natural gas explosion in 2021. Columbia City training officer Kyle Francis said the NIPSCO training over the years helps his department stay vigilant for calls like the explosion.



“Being a combination fire department, we have a lot of new volunteer firefighters that come in and benefit from being educated not just from a book but from a live training by the industry,” said Francis. “The training helps us to stay out of the complacency zone, and we try to do it annually for that reason.”

[Federal regulations](#) for gas pipelines require operators to have written emergency response plans and to connect with local fire, police and other public officials to learn their responsibilities and resources for a coordinated response. While there are a few major natural gas utilities in Indiana (Citizens, NIPSCO and CenterPoint), there are many smaller ones. IDHS Fire and Public Safety Training Academy Director Wade Walling recommends fire departments reach out to build relationships and ensure they are training with their local utilities so everyone knows their roles on a natural gas emergency scene.

“It is very important because you do not want firefighters showing up and they do not know that they cannot take their portable radio, or other equipment, on the scene that could ignite a fire. Most departments have safe equipment that could go with them, but there needs to be continued local effort to train to support these types of incidents,” Walling said.

The NIPSCO program has taught nearly 6,000 Hoosier firefighters across more than 200 fire departments since it began in 2018. The trainings cover gas distribution systems, characteristics of natural gas, good response tactics, evacuations and even experiments. Miller and Cruz light small quantities of flammable gas to illustrate the behaviors of natural gas, compared to propane.

Among their [key points](#) to firefighters: “If it is leaking, let it leak, and if it is burning, let it burn.”

“If it is burning, that may not be good, but at least it is predictable and you can see how far it is spreading and can help contain it,” Miller said, “but if you put the fire out and raw gas is going into the atmosphere, it becomes unpredictable on where it is and what can happen.”

Locating and accurately measuring the amount of gas present can mean the difference between life and death. A [safety advisory](#) issued in August by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) recommended all firefighters responding to natural gas and propane incidents be trained on multigas detectors. The advisory cited a 2018 case in Wisconsin where two firefighters were injured and one killed when the building they were leaving exploded. The crew entered the building, which had already been evacuated, to try to turn off the utilities in the basement but left when their gas monitor alarmed them.

“By knowing where on the range the gas is, firefighters can make more educated decisions,” Miller said.

Fire departments can find maps of pipelines near them by using the [National Pipeline Mapping](#)



[System Public Viewer](#). It shows gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines in each county, as well as pipeline incidents since 2002.

Utility companies, like NIPSCO, have trained teams that respond to pipeline incidents. Dispatchers should be familiar with the [emergency phone numbers](#) for their local gas utilities to inform them of leaks, especially if there are evacuations, because the companies are required to report those to the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission.

“When we come to an incident, we are like a hazmat team and take care of the leak itself, but we need the fire department to do incident command, secure the scene and the like. And no one does it better than fire departments,” Miller said.



the state during January and February. [Twenty sessions](#) are planned for early 2023, last two hours and can fulfill continuing education requirements (HSEEP compliant). For those who cannot

INPAA website maintains a virtual training center for on-demand lessons.

“We encourage any and all who would like to attend to sign up to liaise with their local gas and pipeline operators. Doing this gives them updated contact information and opens up a two-way dialogue on how to respond to an emergency,” said INPAA Program Manager Madison McCaughey.

NATURAL GAS INCIDENT PREPARATION TIPS

- Be Aware of Local Pipelines
- Know Your Gas Detection Equipment
- Train With Your Local Utility

Trainings that allow all first responders to connect with their local utilities and practice coordinated responses are hosted annually by the Indiana Pipeline Awareness Association (INPAA) at locations across



make the in-person meetings, two additional sessions will be online-only in late March, and the

Although there are many factors to consider during every response, for underground natural gas leaks, Walling emphasized that firefighters should leave fixing those to their utility’s responders. The confined spaces of sewers or vaults could be very dangerous, and a piece of firefighting equipment accidentally could create a spark. Similarly, Miller says firefighters should not attempt to turn off the utility company’s valves other

than the above-ground shutoff valve before a service meter, and they should not “squeeze off” leaking gas lines underground. Even his gas company no longer does that because it can put personnel within the flammable range of the gas.

“Frankly, it is a gamble,” Miller said.

Additional resources, including videos for dispatchers and emergency managers, can be found on the [Pipeline Association for Public Awareness website](#). NIPSCO also has an [online training tool](#) to prepare first responders for natural gas incidents, and its [Natural Gas Pipeline Safety webpage](#) has an extensive offering of natural gas information, including how it is distributed and tips for incident response.



STRONGER TOGETHER

Columbia City Fire Department, in Whitley County, has its firefighters trained each year about natural gas by their local utility NIPSCO. The training is more effective than simply reading procedures, helps prevent complacency and has led to a close working relationship, according to Columbia City training officer Kyle Francis.

The department’s full-time officers have direct phone numbers for the natural gas technicians that would respond to incidents with them, and some of those are even known to spend time at the fire station. The fire department also regularly communicates with the utility on potential leaks at abandoned buildings or old, unmapped gas line locations.

“The big thing the last several years is that on any call for gas and odor readings, we are calling NIPSCO and working with them. It is their expertise, not ours, so we are not afraid to call them,” Francis said, adding that their collaboration has helped put residents’ minds at ease, especially following a fatal natural gas explosion in 2021 that led to skyrocketing phone calls about possible leaks.

The two recently conducted a joint exercise for a large natural gas incident, where they practiced what would happen if a car accident were to damage a gas pipeline distribution point across from the local schools. They evacuated a school and extricated crash victims while an industrial air compressor simulated a leak spewing gas.

Francis said it was great to work with the gas company in the exercise because their personnel are subject matter experts and need to play a large part in incident management.

“The relationship we have makes everything work so smoothly,” Francis said.

FEBRUARY TRAINING HOSTED BY SUPPORTING HEROES

Class: Honor, Benefits and First Steps

Time: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Date: Thursday, Feb. 9, 2023

Location: MADE@Plainfield
1610 Reeves Road
Plainfield, IN 46168

When an active first responder dies, leaders must take multiple important steps in a short period of time. Each step has a significant impact on the family, agency and community. These first steps must be taken to properly, respectfully and efficiently notify the family, initiate the rendering of appropriate immediate honors and much more. This procedure especially is important if the death occurred as a result of duty.

The topics of the training will cover how the honor of a “line-of-duty death” is determined, how benefits are affected by a line-of-duty death, the steps to take and more.

There is limited availability for this class. If you are interested, [register here](#) as soon as possible.

EMS UPDATES

IDHS is remodeling its offices, which means the process for the public to come into the building is changing.

The main entrance to IDHS has moved. It now is located by the east escalators on the second floor of the same building. The main entrance is keeping its address of **302 W. Washington St. Room E208, Indianapolis, IN 46204**. Signs are up, directing you where to go.

Due to the remodel, the EMS Section requests that you schedule an appointment before you visit to conduct business with IDHS. You can schedule a time [online](#) or call 317-234-7322 to set up an appointment over the phone.



More than two thirds of fatal fires occur in homes with no working smoke alarms. Let's change that and **GET ALARMED.**

GetAlarmed.in.gov

MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE MARSHAL

It is that time of the season when things become a little more challenging for firefighters.

Despite the holiday cheer and family gatherings, now also is the time of increased accidental fires (and even deaths) due to alternative heating sources in homes during winter. Space heaters alone account for more than 40 percent of home heating fires, and about 80 percent of the deaths and injuries in home fires are caused by heating equipment. Additionally, nearly half of the home heating fires during this period occur during the winter months of December, January and February. Many of these stem from chimney fires, either due to a lack of an inspection of the fireplace or the need to clean the flues, which should be done every year. It is important to use a [certified chimney sweep](#) so you know they have the training it takes to do it properly.



Indiana has had some tragic incidents already this year and more are possible as families struggle to keep up with rising costs and utilities. As community servants, the firefighting community regularly updates people on [safe ways to use space heaters](#), fireplaces and other alternative heating sources. IDHS and the Indianapolis Fire Department recently produced a [safety video](#) designed to educate people and provide additional safety tips.

It also is important for the public safety community to connect people to services to help them prepare and withstand the increased costs of the heating season. Help is out there for people, and some of those services are listed below. Please check with your utility company for additional resources.

- [Indiana Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program](#)
- [Indy EAP](#)
- [Indiana 211 Partnership](#)
- [Salvation Army](#)
- [Catholic Charities](#)
- [Indiana Community Action Association](#)

Firefighters take on risk every day, but they also take on great responsibility to make sure they keep you away from harm's way. They feel the loss in their communities with every deadly fire that could have been prevented. Maybe one more discussion about fire safety or one extra smoke detector installed could have made a difference. The Indiana State Fire Marshal staff is committed to expanding these public education efforts in the coming years, ensuring IDHS has done everything possible to prepare people and save additional Hoosier lives.

If you have questions about fire safety or how to properly use an alternative heating source in your home, visit your local fire station. Meet the men and women committed to this type of education and community risk reduction. Also, look out for one another: your family, your loved ones and neighbors. Check on someone who may be at risk this winter and offer the same Hoosier Hospitality you may need one day.

As your Indiana State Fire Marshal, know that you are important, and we deeply care about you and your family.

Happy Holidays and have a wonderful New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen Jones
Indiana State Fire Marshal



UPCOMING TRAININGS

DECEMBER/JANUARY

DEC 26 - JAN 7	Fire - Hazmat First Responder Awareness - District 10	ODON
JAN 9 - FEB 19	Hazmat First Responder Operations	NEWBURGH
JAN 10-26	Fire - Officer Strategy and Tactics	DYER
JAN 11	Fire - Non-Traditional Courses - Advanced Body Language	LAPEL
JAN 14-15	National Fire Academy - Exercising Leadership Ethically	PLAINFIELD
JAN 24-26	Fire - Public Safety Leadership Development 100	NOBLESVILLE
JAN 24-26	Fire - Public Safety Leadership Development 300	RICHMOND

FEBRUARY

FEB 3-5	Fire - Public Safety Leadership Development 200	GREENSBURG
FEB 6	Fire - Academy (HMA, HMO, FFI, FF2) - District 1	VALPARAISO
FEB 14	Community Preparedness for Cyber Incidents (MGT 384)	SCOTTSBURG

INTERNATIONAL SHARPS INJURY PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH DECEMBER

Every year in December, International Sharps Injury Prevention Awareness Month serves as a reminder to follow safety protocols where needles and other medical sharps are concerned. Needle sticks alone account for 400,000 sharps injuries per year. During the month, sharps injury prevention is the focus.



NATIONAL FLASHLIGHT DAY DECEMBER 21

Coinciding with the winter solstice, National Flashlight Day is a great day to check on the flashlights in your home and emergency preparedness kit. Do the batteries need to be changed or does the flashlight need to be completely replaced? This day is a reminder that in emergency situations something as simple as a flashlight can brighten the way.

NATIONAL RADON ACTION MONTH JANUARY

January is National Radon Action Month. The aim of National Radon Action Month is to increase the public's awareness of radon, promote radon testing and mitigation, and advance the use of radon-resistant new construction practices.

NATIONAL
RADON ACTION
MONTH

*The Indiana Department of Homeland Security works 24/7
to protect the people, property and prosperity of Indiana.*



Indiana Department of Homeland Security
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The Hoosier Responder is a publication of The Indiana Department of Homeland Security.
Please direct any questions or comments to the IDHS Office of Public Affairs at 317.234.6713 or pio@dhs.in.gov