Department of Job & Family Services

MASS CARE MONITOR

ESF-6
Emergency Support Function - 6

2.2.February.2026

Dear ESF-6 Partners and Stakeholders:

I hope everyone has managed to dig out from late-January’s record-breaking snow event! January may have started with record high temps at the beginning of the month, but it ended with record snowfall (and an extended cold snap) that, for many of us, harkened back to the winters of our youth. Despite these records, Ohio’s infrastructure held up fairly well: most water and power outages were limited in nature and, fortunately, not significant enough to prompt ESF-6 engagement.

The current forecast is still showing a weak La Niña through February before a potential transition to ENSO-Neutral conditions. That means that we might still have some winter left, especially since NWS Climate Prediction Center is indicating Ohio is trending likely below normal temps and roughly equal chances of normal precipitation for February. If you’re looking for other predictions, depending on your marmot of choice, Buckeye Chuck says spring will be early this year while his colleague Punxsutawney Phil is saying more winter. Do you have any guesses on which rodent meteorologist in the US has been most accurate over the past couple decades? The answer is in this month’s closing thoughts.

One item that often comes up as we’re discussing Access / Functional Needs and Household Pets / Service Animals is “what are the different types of animals and what are the rights of those with them?” Well, our friends over at the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center recently shared a helpful guide to answer that! You can find the article from Guide Dogs for the Blind: “Guide Dog, Service Dog, Working Dog, Therapy Dog, Emotional Support Animal: Know the Differences” here: https://www.guidedogs.com/blog/know-the-difference.

On Tuesday, March 3, 2026, the Northeast ADA Center will be hosting a webinar “Is that a Service Animal? What Rights Apply Where.” that will further explore this topic. Information and a registration link can be found on the Pacific ADA Center’s website here: https://www.adapacific.org/event/service-animal-what-rights-apply-where/.

- Josh D. Vittie

Current Events:

Some items of note since our last newsletter include:

- Friday, January 16, 2026 - Attended EMAO NC Sector Meeting (Crawford County)
- Tuesday, January 20, 2026 - Participated in a Kickoff Meeting w/ Delaware County for their Family Assistance Center plan review
- Tuesday January 20, 2026 - Attended The Salvation Army’s webinar The Intersection of Anti-Human Trafficking and Emergency Disaster Services
- Sunday, February 8, 2026 - Supported the State Defense Force’s Get Connected COMEX
- Thursday February, 12, 2026 - Attended ESF-8’s Biannual P&S Meeting

Awareness Campaigns:

FEMA released the Ready.Gov 2026 Preparedness Calendar on 12/22/25. You can find the monthly awareness campaign breakdown and links to resources here: https://www.ready.gov/calendar

January 2026:

- #WinterReady (https://www.ready.gov/winter-ready)

February 2026:

- National Canned Food Month
- #WinterReady (https://www.ready.gov/winter-ready)

March 2026:

- Spring and Flood Safety (https://www.ready.gov/floods)
- National Tsunami Awareness Week (https://www.ready.gov/tsunamis)

April 2026:

- Severe Weather Safety (https://www.ready.gov/severe-weather)

Resource Updates:

National Weather Service Spotter Training:

It is time for Weather Spotter Training from our friends at NWS! Trainings offered by the five WFOs that serve Ohio can be found here:

- ILN (Wilmington, Ohio: SW / Central Ohio):
  - https://www.weather.gov/iln/spottertrainingschedule
  - Includes a Virtual Basic Course on H19FEB26 at 1800
- IWX (Northern Indiana: NW Ohio)
  - https://www.weather.gov/iwx/Spotter_Event_List
  - The offering in Ft. Wayne, IN is probably the closest to NW Ohio
- CLE (Cleveland, Ohio: NE / North-Central Ohio)
  - https://www.weather.gov/cle/SKYWARN_schedule
  - A lot of opportunities available!
- PBZ (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: East-Central Ohio)
  - https://www.weather.gov/pbz/skywarn
  - Schedule is still showing Winter Spotter Training, check back for updates
- RLX (Charleston, West Virginia: SE Ohio):
  - https://www.weather.gov/rlx/weather-spotter
  - Currently, only 2x offerings listed

Federal Training Update

There were no new IS Courses added in January or February (as of 2/10/26), according to FEMA's IS website.

Consortium provider Texas A&M TEEX has been offering more of their in-person Cybersecurity Curriculum classes across the region. TEEX course offerings can be found on their website at: https://teex.org/course-calendar/ (Top Tip: Check surrounding states as well!)

Ohio EMA Training

Ohio EMA will be hosting a pilot offering of their new OH-500 course: COOP (Continuity of Operations) Planning for Public Sector Agencies course at Ohio EMA (2855 West Dublin-Granville Road, Columbus, Ohio 43235) on Wednesday, April 29, 2026.

Mass Care Fundamentals Part II:
"National Response Framework" and "Whole Community"

Welcome back to the second part of our Mass Care Fundamentals Series! This month we're going to look at how the National Response Framework (NRF) sets the stage for response, including establishing the ESFs and the concept of Whole Community.

The current, fourth edition of the NRF was published in October 2019 and builds on several concepts from the National Incident Management System (NIMS). The text of the NRF 4th edition can be found here: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/NRF_FINALApproved_2011028.pdf and the 2017 3rd edition of NIMS can be found here: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_nims_doctrine-2017.pdf, which includes ICS and EOC principles as well. (ICS doctrine can be found at the FEMA ICS Resource Center: https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/, start by checking out Reference Documents tab and the Links tab.)

The NRF is one of several interconnected frameworks used in Emergency Management (though we will not be covering the other frameworks here) that provide guidance and outline the national standards for the entire Emergency Management system we operate in. The 2019 revision of the NRF includes updates such as the Community Lifelines concept, doctrinal changes to give the private sector (infrastructure owners, specifically) a larger role in lifeline stabilization, and changed ESF-14 at the Federal-level to "Cross-Sector Business and Infrastructure". (FEMA ESF-14 Annex: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_ESF_14_Business-Infrastructure.pdf) This is an important addition and is a major reason why the Ohio Public-Private Partnership (OP3) is a major stakeholder for ESF-6, as it is often necessary for us to connect NGO partners and survivors with business community members that have significant resource capacities.

"The NRF is composed of a base document, ESF annexes, and support annexes. These annexes provide detailed information to assist with the implementation of the NRF." (FEMA. 2019. Pg. 3). Hopefully, throughout this year's discussion, the concept that the entire EM enterprise is essentially a "system of plans" will make sense. The NRF uses principles from NIMS and ICS and is strengthened by plans from the three other pre-incident Frameworks (Protection, Prevention, and Mitigation) before the incident transitions into guidance from the post-incident National Disaster Recovery Framework. In addition, a tiered response of local, regional, state, (national) region, and federal plans are all interconnected and work together. While doctrine is not always the most exciting topic, several components of doctrine need to be read, understood, and taken together to effectively execute a comprehensive response and recovery that resolves the disruptions within a community.

Across various doctrine guidance, the recurring theme of tiered response is seen. This tiered response begins (right, wrong, or indifferent) with "Communities" including Individuals, Families, and Households; Private Sector; and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) before escalating to Local Government; up to State, Tribal, Territorial, and Insular Area Governments; and finally, up to the Federal Government. The "Whole Community" concept is rooted in this concept of tiered response: everyone from a 'community' needs to work together. Plans require both horizontal and vertical integration. The interests of all segments of the community must be represented in our planning, response, and recovery operations (and other activities).

To quote FEMA directly from the December 2011 "A Whole Community Approach to Emergency Management: Principles, Themes, and Pathways for Action": "A Whole Community approach attempts to engage the full capacity of the private and nonprofit sectors, including businesses, faith-based and disability organizations, and the general public, in conjunction with the participation of local, tribal, state, territorial, and Federal governmental partners." And importantly, "This engagement means different things to different groups." (FEMA. 2011. Pg. 3). The Whole Community document can be found here: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/whole_community_dec2011__2.pdf

Mass Care Fundamentals Part II: (Continued)

Considering the Whole Community means that we need to have an expansive table of representatives that are not always present for our planning and other activities. Too often, we have the STP: Same Ten People (ed.: see v1.4 April 2025) at the table and large swaths of our community members are disenfranchised from participating in most phases of Emergency Management. The problem then becomes one of 'we plan for ourselves' as 'we' are what we know; we often lack diverse life experience and have a hard time planning for the response and recovery of an incident for those with different needs, resources, and capabilities than ourselves. This is why we seek representatives from and/or advocates for marginalized communities such as Persons with a Disability or other Access and Function Need, persons with mobility issues or a transportation-dependency, unhoused individuals, those from a lower socio-economic status, and persons with caregivers or those that are care givers, as a few examples.

Our outreach to these Whole Community members requires casting a wide net. We must offer invitations to numerous social service agencies; community leaders from various ethnic minority, immigrant, and refugee communities; advocacy groups; Faith-Based and Community Organizations, including NGO and VOAD partners, as well as service providers; and importantly: those with lived experience. We often don't know who we don't know and, as a result, may overlook communities that need to be a part of our discussions. Much like networking, meeting with partners should end with a question like "who else should we be meeting with?" or "who else should be here that's not?" to elicit a snowball sample and steadily expand the network to new partners that we may be unaware of.

These individual members from the Whole Community may all have different needs and perspectives on how we provide the Mass Care and Emergency Assistance Activities outlined in doctrine and those additional tasks required within our specific plans.

Next month, we'll begin the discussion on individual Mass Care and Emergency Assistance Activities.

- Josh D. Vittie

Getting to Know: Summit County's Shelter & Mass Care Sub-Committee:

This month we want to highlight the work of Jennifer Smith, Emergency Preparedness Supervisor at Summit County Public Health, for sharing the best practices of the work of Summit County's longstanding Shelter / Mass Care Sub-Committee, which was established in 1999. Its primary role is to recommend policies, training, equipment guidelines, and purchases for the DPSC, making it a key player in mass care planning.

The group meets quarterly and includes local subject matter experts from organizations such as:

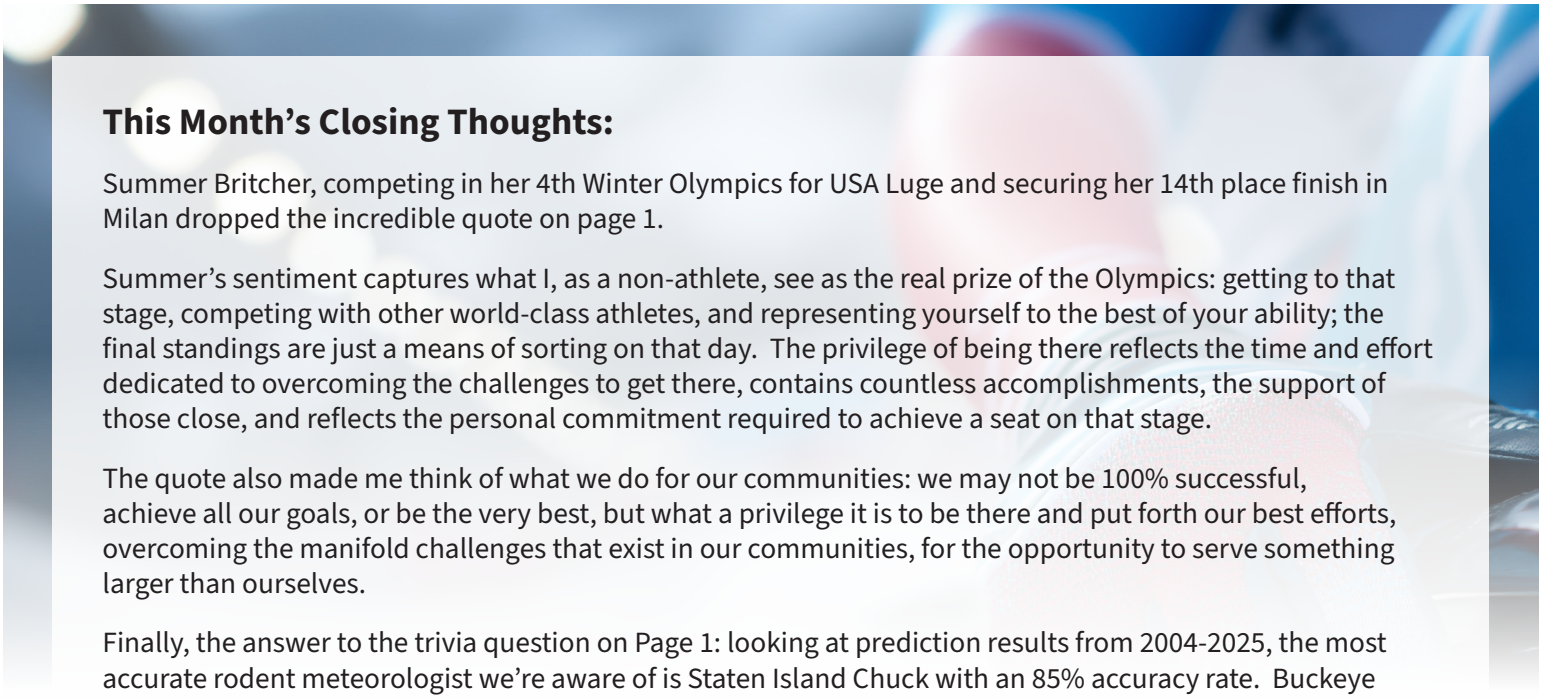
- American Red Cross of Greater Akron and Mahoning Valley Chapter
- Summit County EMA
- United Way of Summit & Medina
- Summit County Board of Developmental Disabilities
- Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank
- Greenleaf Family Center
- Summit County Public Health
- City of Akron

While the sub-committee's traditional focus has been sheltering, Jennifer emphasized the importance of bringing together diverse expertise to address all aspects of emergency mass care. For example:

- Specialists advise on providing services for individuals with access and functional needs.
- Experts guide commodity distribution, including clean-up kits, food, and water.

Summit County's Shelter / Mass Care Sub-Committee is a strong example of collaboration in emergency planning—a model other communities can follow to strengthen their own mass care strategies.

If you would like to discuss developing a mass care committee, reach out to me at william.sturgeon@jfs.ohio.gov.



This Month's Closing Thoughts:

Summer Britcher, competing in her 4th Winter Olympics for USA Luge and securing her 14th place finish in Milan dropped the incredible quote on page 1.

Summer's sentiment captures what I, as a non-athlete, see as the real prize of the Olympics: getting to that stage, competing with other world-class athletes, and representing yourself to the best of your ability; the final standings are just a means of sorting on that day. The privilege of being there reflects the time and effort dedicated to overcoming the challenges to get there, contains countless accomplishments, the support of those close, and reflects the personal commitment required to achieve a seat on that stage.

The quote also made me think of what we do for our communities: we may not be 100% successful, achieve all our goals, or be the very best, but what a privilege it is to be there and put forth our best efforts, overcoming the manifold challenges that exist in our communities, for the opportunity to serve something larger than ourselves.

Finally, the answer to the trivia question on Page 1: looking at prediction results from 2004-2025, the most accurate rodent meteorologist we're aware of is Staten Island Chuck with an 85% accuracy rate. Buckeye Chuck comes in just above chance with a 55% accuracy rate and the more famous Punxsutawney Phil disappoints us with just 35% accuracy over that same period.

- Josh D. Vittie

DATE(S)	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT/REGISTRATION
2/24/26 - 2/26/26	0800 - 1700	OH-230 Introduction to Emergency Management in Ohio	Ohio EMA / State EOC	Register at Public Safety Training Campus https://learning.dps.ohio.gov/PSTC
3/3/26	1000 - 1100	Is That a Service Animal? What Rights Apply Where?	Virtual	https://events.yangtaninstitute.org/e/11377/register
3/3/26 - 3/4/26	1300 - 1700	AWR-331 Winter Weather Hazards: Science and Preparedness (NDPTC)	Virtual	https://ndptc.hawaii.edu/training/delivery/4233/
3/6/26 - 3/8/26	Varies	Ohio State Defense Force (SDF), Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), Auxiliary Communications (AUXC), Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), and Ohio VOAD Joint Training & Exercise Event	Columbus, Ohio (Haubrich Armory)	gary.lehman@sdf.ohio.gov
3/10/26 - 3/11/26	TBD	"Pacific ADA Center 2026 Virtual Conference Beyond Compliance: Equity, Access, and the ADA!"	Virtual	https://www.adapacific.org/annual-conferences/
3/11/26 - 3/13/26	0800 - 1700	OSC26: Ohio Bureau of Worker's Compensation Ohio Safety Congress	Columbus, Ohio (Convention Center)	2025 information still posted, 2026 information forthcoming: https://www.ohiosafetycongress.com/register.cfm
3/12/26	0800 - 1700	AWR-326 Tornado Awareness	Ohio EMA / State EOC	Register at Public Safety Training Campus https://learning.dps.ohio.gov/PSTC
3/12/26	TBD	Emergency Shelter Fundamentals (Kentucky / CVG focus)	Highland Heights, Kentucky	https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGzF9oS-jWiZH5vjRTOuU9LZU1ib5kSt3373LwOXgFnzjwupg/viewform
3/16/26 - 3/20/26	1000 - 1500	K-289 State Volunteer and Donations Management	Virtual (FEMA EMI)	https://training.fema.gov/emicourses/schedules.aspx (Search K0289 for offering dates then register through EMI)
3/18/26	0900 - 1200	WebEOC Training	Ohio EMA / State EOC	Mike Staff (Ohio EMA)
3/19/26	0900 - 1530	EMAO Spring Conference	Byxbe Center (Delaware, Ohio)	Emergency Management Association of Ohio
3/25/26	0900 - 1200	Annual ESF-6 Partners & Stakeholders Virtual Meeting	Virtual (MS Teams)	Matt Sturgeon (ODJFS)
3/25/26 - 3/26/26	1300 - 1700	AWR-356 Community Planning for Disaster Recovery	Virtual (NDPTC)	https://ndptc.hawaii.edu/training/delivery/4168/
3/30/26 - 4/2/26	Varies	National Hurricane Conference	Orlando, Florida	https://hurricanemeeting.com/upcoming-conferences/
3/31/26 - 4/1/26	1400 - 1800	AWR-326 Tornado Awareness (NDPTC)	Virtual	https://ndptc.hawaii.edu/training/delivery/4169/
4/7/26 - 4/9/26	Varies	2026 Colorado Access and Functional Needs Conference	Colorado Springs, Colorado Virtual Option (T07-W08 ONLY)	https://dhsem.colorado.gov/AFNConference
4/8/26	0800 - 1200	State EOC Orientation	Ohio EMA / State EOC	Mike Staff (Ohio EMA)

DATE(S)	TIME	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT/REGISTRATION
4/8/26 - 4/10/26	0800 - 1700	OH-139 Exercise Design and Evaluation	Montgomery County, Ohio	Register at Public Safety Training Campus https://learning.dps.ohio.gov/PSTC
4/20/26 - 4/21/26	Varies	COHHIO Housing in Ohio Conference	Hyatt Regency (Columbus, Ohio)	https://cohhio.org/conference/
4/21/26	0800 - 1600	State EOC Non-Radiological Exercise 2026	Ohio EMA / State EOC	Colin Cambell (Ohio EMA) | Josh Vittie (ODJFS)
4/23/26	0900 - 1500	Ohio EMA 2026 Spring Conference	Virtual (MS Teams)	David Nunley (Ohio EMA)
4/28/26	1300 - 1500	State EOC Partners / Stakeholders	TBD	Mike Staff (Ohio EMA)
5/4/26 - 5/7/26	Varies	National VOAD 2026 Conference	Reno, Nevada	https://www.nvoad.org/future-conferences/
5/4/26 - 5/21/26	Varies	K-705 Fundamentals of Grants Management (Irregular Schedule)	Virtual	https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_gmta-fy26-ek0705-course-schedule.pdf
6/2/26 - 6/3/26	Varies	Ohio School Safety Summit	Kalahari (Sandusky, Ohio)	https://ohioschoolsafetycenter.ohio.gov/school-safety-summit
6/24/26	0900 - 1200	WebEOC Training	Ohio EMA / State EOC	Mike Staff (Ohio EMA)
7/18/26	TBD	Closed Circuit Communications Exercise (COMEX)	Haubrich Armory (Columbus, Ohio)	CW2 (OH) C. M. Curtin (charles.curtin@sdf.ohio.gov)
7/19/26 - 7/22/26	Varies	National ADA Symposium	"Phoenix, Arizona Virtual Option"	https://web.cvent.com/event/04ffdce4-eae8-4a9b-93a1-16efdff6fb76/summary
7/28/26	1300 - 1500	State EOC Partners / Stakeholders	TBD	Mike Staff (Ohio EMA)