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Governor | Wes Moore Lt. Governor | Aruna Miller Secretary | Russell J. Strickland

Governor's Emergency Management Advisory Council

2025 Report

§14-105(a) of the Public Safety Article

December 31, 2025

Executive Summary

In accordance with the Annotated Code of Maryland, Public Safety Article, § 14-105 (a) and (d), the Governor's Emergency Management Advisory Council (GEMAC) is authorized to advise the Governor on all matters that relate to emergency management in Maryland. Staffed by the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM), the GEMAC continues to provide value to the Maryland State Executive Branch, and the residents of Maryland, by offering an independent, non-partisan, and holistic perspective for a diverse host of emergency management topics. The depth and breadth of experience the GEMAC contains, across many different emergency-management-relevant disciplines, is impressive and a credit to the State. As always, the GEMAC strives to remain agile and pertinent in its ability to advise the Governor, his office, and his designated homeland security/emergency management representatives.

Through robust conversations with subject matter experts, GEMAC identified the following recommendations over the course of 2025:

Recommendation 1: Maryland should standardize emergency response protocols for all school districts, and specifically standardize terminology and actions for evacuation, hold, shelter, secure, and lockdown.

The Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) presented at the May 2025 meeting of GEMAC to discuss the mission and capabilities of the Center and legislative actions from the 2025 Maryland General Assembly session. GEMAC members discussed the need to standardize emergency protocols for school systems, applying emergency management principles of common terminology to the school safety sector.

Recommendation 2: The Governor should direct the Department of Emergency Management to study the impact of changing federal funding landscape and its impact on Maryland's core emergency management capabilities and overall resilience.

GEMAC is concerned with the changes in federal funding for preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts, including the cancellation of federal pre-disaster mitigation grants and the denial of Maryland's request for federal disaster aid in the wake of the Western Maryland flooding. GEMAC is also concerned with the changes to federal preparedness grants, including new requirements for priority spending areas, changes to performance periods, and changes to terms and conditions of award and how these changes may impact both State and local emergency management efforts. GEMAC recommends the Governor direct MDEM to, in consultation with governmental, nonprofit, private sector and academic stakeholders, study the impacts of these changes to Maryland's core emergency management capabilities and overall resilience. GEMAC recommends the report be completed and submitted to the Governor by December 31, 2026.

Purpose, Mission, and Scope of Work

The GEMAC is authorized by statute and is charged with advising the Governor on all matters that relate to emergency management in Maryland.¹ In addition, Executive Order 01.01.1987.11 designates the GEMAC as Maryland's State Emergency Response Commission² (SERC) in accordance with Title III of the Federal Superfund Amendments.

A primary focus of the State's overarching emergency management strategy is a whole-community approach, working not only with government stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels, but also with non-governmental organizations, private sector partners, communities, and individuals throughout the emergency management system. In keeping with this whole-community approach, the GEMAC brings together subject matter experts from a wide range of disciplines, backgrounds, and geographic areas to discuss and develop specific recommendations for further study or investigation. As an independent advisory body, GEMAC members are given the opportunity to provide input and comment on the State's activities in moving Maryland forward and developing a comprehensive emergency management program.

Representation

By law, the GEMAC must include fair and reasonable representation from local government; representation from organizations that represent volunteer firefighters and rescue squads; and representation from manufacturing, utilities, and communications industries. There is no size limit or minimum membership requirement for the GEMAC; individuals appointed to the GEMAC serve two-year terms.

The Chairman of the GEMAC is Ronald Gill, Deputy Fire Chief, Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department. The Chair of the State Emergency Response Commission, SERC, is Doug Brown, Deputy Director of Public Works for Carroll County. For a complete list of memberships for the 2025 GEMAC, see Appendix A.

The Chair would like to recognize and thank members of the Governor's Emergency Management Advisory Council whose terms ended in 2025. Your service and commitment to enhancing Maryland's emergency management system is sincerely appreciated. This includes:

- Michael Berna
- Robert Poole
- Adrian Grieve
- David Willenborg

¹ Maryland Code Annotated, Public Safety Article, §§ 14-105 (a) and (d)

² Code of Maryland Regulations 01.01.1987.11

The Chair also welcomes four new members to the GEMAC, and is looking forward to continued dialogue in the coming year with addition of your voices:

- Preeti Emrick
- Sue Greentree
- Joey Henderson
- Denise Hill

Summary of 2025 Meetings

The GEMAC met four times in 2025 as required by the Council's charter.

February 24, 2025, Meeting

The first meeting of the year for the GEMAC included the following agenda items:

- Presidential Transition & 2025 Session and Budget Briefing
- Maryland Department of Emergency Management Whole Community Integration/BEOC
- Private Sector Emergency Management Spotlight with Verizon
- Private Sector Emergency Management Spotlight with Walmart
- State Emergency Response Commission updates

MDEM Executive Office provided updates regarding Governor Moore's appointment to the Council of Governors, in addition to the [National Governors Association](#) and [NACo Disaster Reform Task Force](#) launching Emergency Management efforts nationally. The MDEM internal task force activities related to the Federal Actions for grants were reviewed. Finally, a legislative and departmental budget briefing focused on bills impacting the Emergency Management community was provided to the council. Council members were invited to attend the MDEM weekly legislative briefings, which are scheduled discussions with the Emergency Management Community on impactful legislation during session. GEMAC members discussed and offered opportunities for submitting comments related to FEMA Reform to the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) Government Affairs Committee. The Council made no specific recommendations for action.

MDEM Whole Community integration (WCI) Branch Manager provided a briefing on Whole Community Integration programs roles during preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. During this briefing the definition of the whole community in context of Maryland's Emergency Management community was reviewed, in addition to the WCI branch purpose, collaboration, and coordination efforts. In keeping with the topics related to Maryland's integration of the whole community into the emergency management system, private sector partners, Walmart and Verizon, offered a high-level review on business continuity, event management operations, preparedness and emergency readiness operations/capacity from a global emergency management perspective.

Finally, with no updates or announcements related to the Statewide Emergency Response Commission, MDEM staff reviewed the proposed 2025 GEMAC meeting schedule and associated topics. GEMAC members identified and requested an additional topic for the following meeting which was a legislative briefing on considerations impacting the emergency management community post the 2025 session.

May 13, 2025, Meeting

May's meeting agenda included:

- Statewide Emergency Response Commission
- Maryland Center for School Safety (MCSS) Briefing
- Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program (REPP) Briefing
- Legislative & Budget Session

May's quarterly meeting agenda centered on topics related to the emergency management system's response capabilities with various subsets of the emergency services system in Maryland. The initial start of the meeting was led by the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) Chair in reference to Charles County Department of Emergency Services Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) appointment request. SERC reached unanimous approval for the request at which notification of the appointment was issued subsequently.

Maryland Center for School Safety

Executive Director Kate Bryan of the Maryland Center for School Safety briefed the GEMAC on updates on major agency initiatives. Pointed information on current programs offered within the agency, and legislation impacting the agency were discussed, specifically:

- House Bill 472 (2024) Education – School Mapping Data Program -Established
- House Bill 782 (2025) - Study on Detecting Deadly Weapons in Public Middle and High Schools

Council members offered considerations regarding the 508 compliance and how it falls within House Bill 782 as there are many schools with hearing impaired students, as well as the indication of standardized emergency operation plans for Maryland schools.

Radiological Emergency Preparedness Program

MDEM staff, within the Consequence Management Directorate, in conjunction with Constellation, a private sector partner presented an overview on the radiological emergency preparedness program, fixed nuclear power plants emergency plans, and conducting exercises per requirements from a private sector perspective. GEMAC members inquired about regulatory requirements as it related to exercise for nuclear power plants, onsite radioactive storage facilities, and risk assessment of high-level radioactive waste at nuclear power plants.

Members discussed the challenges and limitations posed by the federal series, and particularly the lack of realism in the out of sequence events. Fixed nuclear power plant exercises are regulated by the federal government through the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. The NRC issues the NUREG, a series of regulations which govern exercise requirements for the utilities. These exercises are supported by State and local governments, FEMA, and other key entities. Maryland participates in two fixed nuclear power plant exercises: Peach Bottom, located in Pennsylvania, and Calvert Cliffs, located in Calvert County, MD.

Legislative Update

MDEM staff, within the Strategy and External Affairs Office, briefed on current legislative and budget considerations post the 2025 session, particularly those related to federal activities impacting grants and emergency management operations nationally. Bills passed that directly impact MDEM presented are:

- SB 138 / HB 423 Public Safety - Maryland 9-1-1 Board and Maryland Department of Emergency Management - Regulatory Authority
- HB 865 (SB 564) - Catastrophic Event Account - Transfer of Funds - State Disaster Recovery Fund
- SB 244 / HB 235 - State Government - Information Technology - Cybersecurity Revisions
- SB 871 (HB 1062) - Department of the Environment - Community Water and Sewerage Systems - Cybersecurity Planning and Assessments
- HB 1473 - State Government - Equal Access to Public Services for Individuals with Limited English Proficiency and Individuals with Disabilities

GEMAC members expressed interest in [house bill 1080 Local Government – Local Personnel – Leave with Pay](#); which establishes that governmental units may provide disaster services with pay. Additionally, the bill allows employees of a governmental unit of a county or municipality in the State to be entitled to disaster service leave with pay under certain circumstances.

August 27, 2025, Meeting

August's meeting agenda includes:

- Maryland Mesonet Update
- Maryland Office of Resilience Updates
- Federal Actions Update

The final routine quarterly meeting of 2025 was shortened due to the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center for an emergency incident. The meeting focused on resilience and recovery efforts within and beyond the state of Maryland. MDEM executive office provided updates for the Maryland Mesonet Program which is a joint effort between MDEM and University of Maryland. The program was developed because of Maryland's diverse state on multiple fronts. A mesonet (MESOScale Network) is a network of automated weather observing stations that take

frequent and reliable atmospheric measurements. The briefing update since the initial introduction in 2024 focused on station installation, future utilization for the states, and training opportunities. GEMAC members discussed examples of current Mesonet Program data utilization within local jurisdictions.

MDEM Deputy Chief Resilience Officer reiterated background information related to the Maryland Office of Resilience (MOR). The briefing honed in on the Statewide Resilience Strategy development and uptake, available resources developed within the office, and initiatives. Finally, the meeting concluded with an update on federal activities and impacts on the Emergency Management community. MDEM Executive Office staff specifically focused on Western Maryland flood recovery efforts, FEMA Review Council, Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC), Preparedness Grants (e.g., Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG), Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI), and Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP)), Nation Guard, and Federal Funding oversight. The Maryland National Guard (MDNG) delivered an update regarding the Executive Order signed by President Trump, which mandates the Secretary of Defense to establish specialized public order units. Council members inquired about grant award methods considering advance payment versus reimbursement within grant operations.

November 12, 2025, Meeting

November's meeting agenda includes:

- 2025 Annual Report Review & Voting
- Statewide Emergency Response Commission
- 2026 GEAMC Priorities & Strategic Planning

The November meeting agenda covered updates including newly appointed GEMAC members and the Appointments Office status in finalizing appointments for remaining GEMAC seats. MDEM Deputy Secretary briefed on Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Review Council activities and the impact of a recent Executive Order on Resilience and Infrastructure preparedness. Discussions included concerns about the basis for Federal Disaster Declarations, potential reduction in emergency program management funding, and the need to address the State Disaster Fund budget. GEMAC members reviewed the 2025 Annual Report and initially identified recommendations. GEMAC members were invited to offer additional policy recommendations. Members discussed enhancing the State Disaster Recovery Fund and improving funding models, which aligns with discussions on the State Disaster Recovery Fund representing an initial step, and the utilization of Catastrophic Event Account (CEA) funding.

Robust discussion continued related to the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) funding allocations for personnel. GEMAC members indicated the need for more funding dedicated to Emergency Management, citing the substantial reliance on Federal funding for emergency management operations at both the State and local levels. GEMAC members heavily supported incorporating a recommendation related to shifting funding, given the historical scarcity of federal funding.

Recommendation 2: The Governor should direct the Department of Emergency Management to study the impact of changing federal funding landscape and its impact on Maryland's core emergency management capabilities and overall resilience.

The November GEMAC meeting ended with discussion on 2026 priorities and strategic planning for 2031. MDEM executive office staff presented the Secretary's priorities in the context of the Moore Miller State Plan, THIRA, and the stakeholder preparedness dashboard. GEMAC members proposed enhancements to a defined emergency management system and a reevaluation of the existing pathway. Members emphasized the importance of addressing the coordination of housing and socioeconomic disparities that influence jurisdictional recovery, along with the establishment and strengthening of partnerships. The establishment of clear thresholds and defined responsibilities within the emergency management system/pathway, and essential role individual preparedness efforts were highlighted by members as consistent priorities in strategic planning for 2031.

Appendix A: 2025 GEMAC Members

Name	Position Title	Designation
Ronald "Ronnie" Gill	Deputy Fire Chief, Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department	Chairperson
Clay Stamp	County Manager, Talbot County	Member
Preeti Emrick	Director, Anne Arundel County, Office of Emergency Management	Member
Douglas Brown	Deputy Director, Carroll County Department of Public Works	Member
Sue Greentree	9-1-1 Specialist, Ret., Anne Arundel County	Member
Jasper Jones	Budget Analyst, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Member
Jennifer Martin	Deputy Commissioner, Population Health and Disease Prevention, Baltimore City Health Department	Member
Jonathan Bratt	Assistant Vice President, Enterprise Resilience, University of Maryland	Member
Jonathan Dayton	Volunteer Firefighter/EMT, Allegany County, President, Alleghany County Volunteer Fire Rescue Association	Member
Jonathan Favorite	Strategic Partnerships & Mid-Atlantic Acting Technical Services Director, Mobile Communications America	Member
Joseph LaFleur	Crisis & Emergency Management/Business Continuity/IT Disaster Recovery Consultant	Member
Kevin Simmons	Director, Office of Emergency Management, City of Annapolis	Member
Ryan Miller	Edwards Performance Solutions, Director, Organizational Resilience	Member
Thomas Moran	Executive Director, All Hazards Consortium	Member
Denise Hill	Public Health Emergency Planner Cecil County Health Department	Member
Joey Henderson	Director, Office of Emergency Management, Baltimore City	Member
Ex-Officio & Support Staff		
Russell Strickland	Secretary, MDEM	Ex-officio
MG Janeen L. Birckhead	The Adjutant General, Maryland National Guard	Ex-officio
BG Adam Flasch, (USA), Ret.	Deputy Chief of Staff to Governor Moore / Maryland Homeland Security Advisor	Ex- officio
Anna Sierra	Assistant Secretary, Strategy & External Affairs	Senior Staff Support
Brittany Cook	Executive Associate to Secretary Strickland	Staff Support