



VOLUME 20, ISSUE 1

# BEAVER COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mid-year, 2025 Newsletter

## INSIDE THE STORM: LIFE AS AN EMERGENCY MANAGER

*Madysen Knox-Bennett, Emergency Management Planner / Trainer*

When most people are heading away from danger, emergency managers are heading straight into it—metaphorically, and sometimes literally. Behind every well-executed crisis response lies a quiet army of planners, coordinators, and decision-makers. At the center of that storm is the Emergency Manager: a role that combines leadership, strategy, and calm in the face of chaos.

### More Than Sirens and Spreadsheets

The job of an emergency manager isn't just about reacting to disasters—it's about being prepared for them long before they happen. Whether it's a chemical spill, a major fire, a cyberattack, or a hurricane, the emergency manager is responsible for developing response plans, conducting drills, and ensuring every team member knows their role when the unthinkable occurs.

"Preparation is 90% of the job," says one veteran manager. "If we've done our work right, the response feels like a plan unfolding—not a scramble."

### A Day in the Life

No two days are alike. Some days are filled with risk assessments and coordination meetings. Others are spent running full-scale simulations or reviewing after-action reports from recent incidents. And when a real crisis hits? Days and nights blur as the emergency operations center comes alive.

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## INSIDE THE STORM, cont

"In an active emergency, it's not about titles—it's about trust, communication, and execution," explains another manager. "Everyone's working under pressure, but the training kicks in. You focus, you lead, and you adapt."

### The Human Factor

Emergency management is as much about people as it is about plans. Ensuring the safety of employees, the public, and the environment often means making tough calls under stress. Empathy, clarity, and resilience are as vital as any technical skill.

"You're often dealing with communities at their most vulnerable," one manager notes. "Sometimes, being present, listening, and communicating honestly can be just as important as deploying resources."

### Why They Do It

So why choose a career that revolves around disaster?

For many, it's a calling. The opportunity to protect lives, support communities, and be part of something larger than themselves brings deep meaning. There's also the reward of working with a dedicated team that comes together when it matters most.

"You're part of a mission," says one manager. "When a crisis hits and people look to you for direction—you stand up, not because it's easy, but because someone has to. That's what we do."

## HAZARDOUS MATERIALS FLOW STUDY UNDERWAY

*Kathryn Schotsch, Emergency Management Specialist*

Beaver County is currently conducting a Commodity Flow Study (CFS) to better understand how hazardous materials are transported through the region. This effort will help improve emergency response, public safety, and environmental protection.

The study tracks the types and routes of hazardous materials moving by road, rail, and other means. With increased industrial and energy activity in the area, up-to-date data is essential for first responders and emergency planners.

Data collection will continue over the next few months through field observations and coordination with transportation partners. The results will inform the County's Emergency Operations Plan and help ensure proper training, equipment, and response strategies are in place.

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Eric Brewer, Emergency Services Director

### Special Event Planning

Does your agency or municipality do pre-event planning for events in your area? History shows us that something is more likely to occur at a holiday parade or community music event than a large sporting event. In the coming months, we'll see communities and non-profit organizations sponsor carnivals, fairs, light up nights and parades, but what should your organization do to make it safe to attend these events? Do you have contingency plans in the case of severe weather? Do your plans address the possibility of a vehicle ramming incident or the possibility of someone wanting to cause havoc to an event? Do you know the sponsoring agency is liable?

The purpose of having a pre-event plan in place is to reduce response times and better enable agencies to improvise because they have discussed contingencies beforehand. A pre-event plan defines roles and responsibilities in advance and creates ownership of potential problems for agencies that are involved in the process.

In some instances, advanced assessment of and planning for these events failed to occur, or when they did, they failed to identify the potential for disaster, or mitigating or coping strategies for a major incident. Simple planning events such as command level meetings or tabletop exercises are no cost and low involvement planning activities.

**PRE-EVENT PLANS REDUCE  
RESPONSE TIMES & HELP TO  
DEFINE ROLES AND  
RESPONSIBILITIES FOR  
RESPONSE AGENCIES**

Several of our EMA staff are FEMA trained at the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) level. We have participated in School exercises and plans, Courthouse exercises and plans, Chemical facility planning, Radiological Emergency Plans, Presidential and dignitary event plans and numerous other planning events. If you need assistance in planning or setting up an exercise, feel free to contact our office.

*...continued on next page*

## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Eric Brewer, Emergency Services Director



### Other News and Notes:

- Did you know: **Sirens** are Outdoor Warning Devices. They are to alert the public that something is happening. If you are outside and hear a siren, you should go indoors and turn on an EAS station to get more information.
- Speaking of sirens, Vistra is planning on **decommissioning the 66 sirens** in the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ) of the Beaver Valley Power Station. They are in the process of submitting a plan to PEMA and FEMA for approval.
- We continue to work with Motorola on a **radio system upgrade**. We are currently in the testing phase with portables and consoles. If you are purchasing new radios other than Motorola, you should be inquiring if they will be compatible with our system.
- As Kevin Whipple details later in this issue, Emergency Services has enhanced its **drone program**. We have Part-107 drone pilots as well as support staff who are able to assist you with drone operations. If you have questions about our drone program, please contact Deputy Director of EMA, Kevin Whipple.
- The following **new staff members** have been hired at Emergency Services since the beginning of the year: Planner/Trainer Joshua Loyer, M2 Denise D'Eramo and Dispatcher Jeffery Sutton. Please join us in welcoming them to the team.



**Have a safe and enjoyable Summer!**



# STRENGTHENING REGIONAL PREPAREDNESS THROUGH COLLABORATION AND TECHNOLOGY

*Jason Chappell, Radiological Emergency Preparedness Planner / Trainer*

In an ongoing effort to strengthen emergency preparedness and interagency coordination, representatives from surrounding Municipal Emergency Management Agencies recently participated in a guided tour of the Beaver Valley Power Station. The visit provided first responders with a firsthand look at the plant's safety protocols, operational functions, and layered emergency systems. This collaborative initiative fosters a shared understanding of nuclear facility procedures and enhances regional readiness in the event of an incident requiring coordinated response.

Simultaneously, we are excited to share that upgrades to the County's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) are nearing completion, with the installation of new computer systems designed to support faster, more reliable communications and operational continuity. These improvements ensure that our EOC remains fully equipped to manage evolving challenges with greater efficiency and resiliency. We thank all partners for their continued support and engagement in advancing community safety and preparedness.



## HAZMAT PROGRAM UPDATE

*Jason Gallagher, Hazmat Planner / Equipment Coordinator*

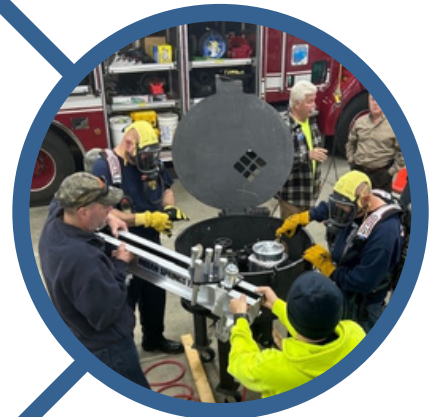
Beaver County's Hazmat Team 700 has been busy since the first of the year with various trainings and callouts as well as the recruitment of new volunteers.

Our members were able to attend the FDIC Conference & IAFC Hazmat Conferences in 2025 along with numerous in-house and regional trainings, including: DOT Alert, T-MERRTT, Hazmat Technician Refresher & Hazmat Ops Refresher, Communications with MSA G1 SCBAs, Safety Aspects, ERK Kit Overview, and a couple hands-on exercises, just to name a few. Please see the training and response pictures on the next page.

Our team trains monthly, and the members are always looking to attend as many trainings possible even outside of our monthly trainings to be better prepared for the next emergency response. Next, our team is looking forward to the Hazmat Technicians Conference coming up in August that will have 30+ classes available for our members to attend. We will have an update in the next newsletter. The team also responded to 4 incidents in recent months. These included 2 fuel leaks, 1 unknown chemical smell in a residence and a foam unit request for a recycling facility fire.

Additionally, in the first half of this year, we were able to put the following equipment into service:

- The ERK Kit is designed to quickly and securely cap and control leaks from railcars and other tank housings that transport hazardous chemicals, such as chlorine, sulfur dioxide, ammonia, etc. The kit was purchased through a grant by Norfolk Southern. Pictured at right, top and center, is our team utilizing the kit in training.
- The OHD Quantifit2 Respirator Fit Tester, pictured bottom right, is an upgrade from our previous fit tester. It will be utilized to complete our annual fit test for members of the hazmat team. New this year, we will be able to fit test our County ESU Team members & local fire firefighters within the county. Stay tuned for details.





## Hazmat Tech Refresher, February, 2025



## DOT Alert Class, May, 2025



## Scenes from other hazmat trainings & call outs





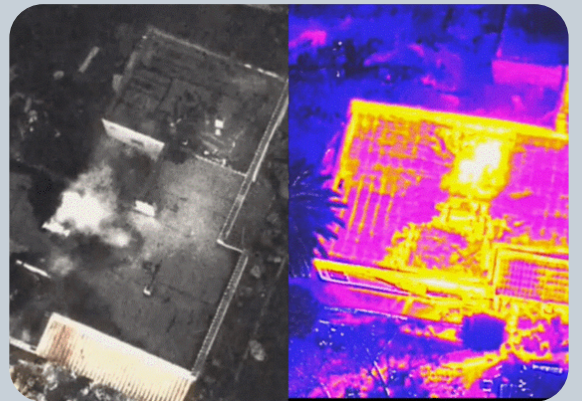
## DRONE PROGRAM UPDATE

*Kevin Whipple, Deputy Director*

As mentioned in our last newsletter, Beaver County Emergency Services purchased two drones to assist Public Safety in Beaver County. These drones entered service in early 2025. Currently, our agency and the County Detective Bureau have several certified drone pilots, as designated by the Federal Aviation Administration, who are available to assist public safety entities in Beaver County.

Examples of incidents we can assist with:

- Surveillance and Reconnaissance by providing real-time aerial views of large areas, helping officers monitor public events, track suspects and gather intelligence.
- Search and Rescue by utilizing thermal technology and high-resolution cameras, drones can help locate missing persons, including children and vulnerable adults, in changing terrains and adverse weather conditions.
- Crime Scene Investigation by using aerial imagery, which helps document crime scenes comprehensively, preserving evidence and providing detailed perspectives that ground-based photos could miss.
- Tactical Operations, by helping in SWAT operations and sending real-time intelligence information on the suspect's location and movements, enabling safer and more strategic decision-making.
- Fire incidents by using thermal technology and high-resolution cameras, we can help identify hotspots in large wildfires or buildings, enabling firefighters to gain a better understanding of the situation and plan a more informed and safer response.





# BEAVER COUNTY 911 STORM MODE OPERATIONS

*Justin Magnifico, 9-1-1 Operations Manager*

Storm season is upon us. During periods of severe weather, Beaver County's 9-1-1 Center experiences a significant increase in call volume—often exceeding several hundred calls per hour for the duration of the storm. Despite this, everyday emergencies continue, and our goal is to answer as many incoming calls as possible.

To help manage this surge and prioritize dispatch of critical incidents, Beaver County 9-1-1 will implement Storm Mode Operations during significant weather events.

## **When Storm Mode is activated, Beaver County 9-1-1 will:**

- Announce Storm Mode on all radio channels
- (The county-wide fire tone may be used for large-scale events)
- Call back additional dispatch and management staff
- Prioritize incoming 9-1-1 calls and dispatch of critical incidents
- Hold, stack, or adjust response plans for non-emergency calls in the same area
- Utilize administrative and EMA personnel to support dispatch
- Establish direct contact with utility companies and the National Weather Service

## **How you can help as a responder:**

- Designate a single point of contact for dispatch to relay calls
- Move all non-emergency radio traffic to a simplex or private operations channel
- Use the phrase "Emergency Traffic" when attempting to reach dispatch with urgent matters
- Establish direct communication among Fire, Police, EMA, and DPW within your municipality
- Make direct notifications whenever possible, rather than routing through dispatch
- Do not contact dispatch for incidents you come across during the storm unless they are emergencies (Incident numbers for reporting can be requested after the storm)
- Compile a list of non-emergency utility issues to report once the storm has passed
- Do not expect ETA updates from utility companies during the event

You can also monitor the CAD for pending calls in your area that may not have been dispatched yet. These calls can be filtered by typing your departments "DGROUP" in the search bar on the event tab. Contact Ben Oaks for CAD questions or log-in information.

We will make every attempt to return to normal operations as soon as possible once the call volume returns to normal. Another announcement will be made on all channels when that occurs. Thank you for your continued cooperation and support during these weather-related incidents.



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The Beaver County Emergency Services Newsletter  
is created and published by the Beaver County  
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Beaver County Emergency Services is a division of Beaver County government, under the authority of the Beaver County Board of Commissioners. Emergency Services manages the county's 9-1-1 dispatch operations center and also serves as the county's Emergency Management office, working under the direction of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) on emergency preparedness, planning, mitigation, response, and recovery.

The Emergency Services center is also the home of the county's Hazardous Materials Response Team, the Local Emergency Planning Commission (LEPC) and is the contact point for many other public safety organizations, including EMS, Fire, Police, and Municipal EMA services. Emergency Services works in conjunction with a number of county and offsite agencies to provide comprehensive public safety guidance and emergency support to Beaver County.

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