



Homeland Security and  
Emergency Management



# Strategy for the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

2024-2028

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# Letter from the Director

Fellow Iowans:

The strategic vision contained within this document represents the aspirational goals and objectives that the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) will strive to accomplish over the next five years. This 2024-2028 HSEMD strategic plan represents a transition, as well as growth, and expands the traditional operational focus to incorporate the organizational structure and internal strategic goals of the agency. This shift toward a broader departmental ethos seeks to improve not only the services provided to Iowans, but also the manner in which those services are provided, to enhance the overall quality of life by building a more resilient and better prepared state.



John R. Benson  
Director

Using operational experience, team member input, the guiding strategic principles outlined in this plan, elements within Code of Iowa Chapter 29C, as well as all applicable federal and State regulations, HSEMD will stride confidently forward into the dynamic and ever-changing, ever-evolving emergency management landscape with which we are now confronted.

As we advance into the future, we will create new relationships with key partners and build upon existing ones in a whole-community, collaborative effort to identify needs and make prudent investments that achieve meaningful outcomes to better prepare Iowa for any hazard and promote secure and resilient communities for its citizens. I thank those partners who contributed their time and effort in creating this enhanced vision for our department, our state, and our communities.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John R. Benson".

John R. Benson  
Director/Homeland Security Advisor  
Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management



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## **I. CORE PURPOSE**

Enhancing the quality of life for Iowans.

## **II. CORE FOCUS**

Preparing our state and building resilient communities.

## **III. CORE VALUES**

Mission Oriented – We are resolute in our service to Iowans.

Integrity – We conduct ourselves with honesty and are transparent in our actions.

Distinguished – We are leaders in our field.

One Team – We collaborate, connect, and share.

## **IV. 10-YEAR TARGET**

Iowa is the choice for family happiness and global enterprise.

## **V. AUTHORITY AND REQUIREMENTS**

Authorities and requirements for this plan can be found in:

- Code of Iowa, Chapter 29.C, Emergency Management and Security
- Code of Iowa, Chapter 30, Chemical Emergencies
- Code of Iowa, Chapter 34A, 911 Emergency Telephone Systems
- Code of Iowa, Chapter 418, Flood Mitigation Program
- Code of Iowa, Chapter 418A, Levee Improvement Program
- Code of Iowa, Chapter 8E, State Government Accountability

This strategy fulfills statutory responsibilities for State agencies as defined in the Code of Iowa. The final responsibility for the implementation of this plan rests with the governor, the department director, and the heads of the agencies and entities with a vested responsibility herein.

## **VI. STRUCTURE AND EXECUTION**

The Strategy for the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) 2024-2028 guides strategic and policy decisions that protect citizens and property within the state. This strategy is part of a holistic planning cycle that begins with assessing needs and identifying capability gaps, continues through prioritizing areas of need, and setting short-term and long-term strategic goals.

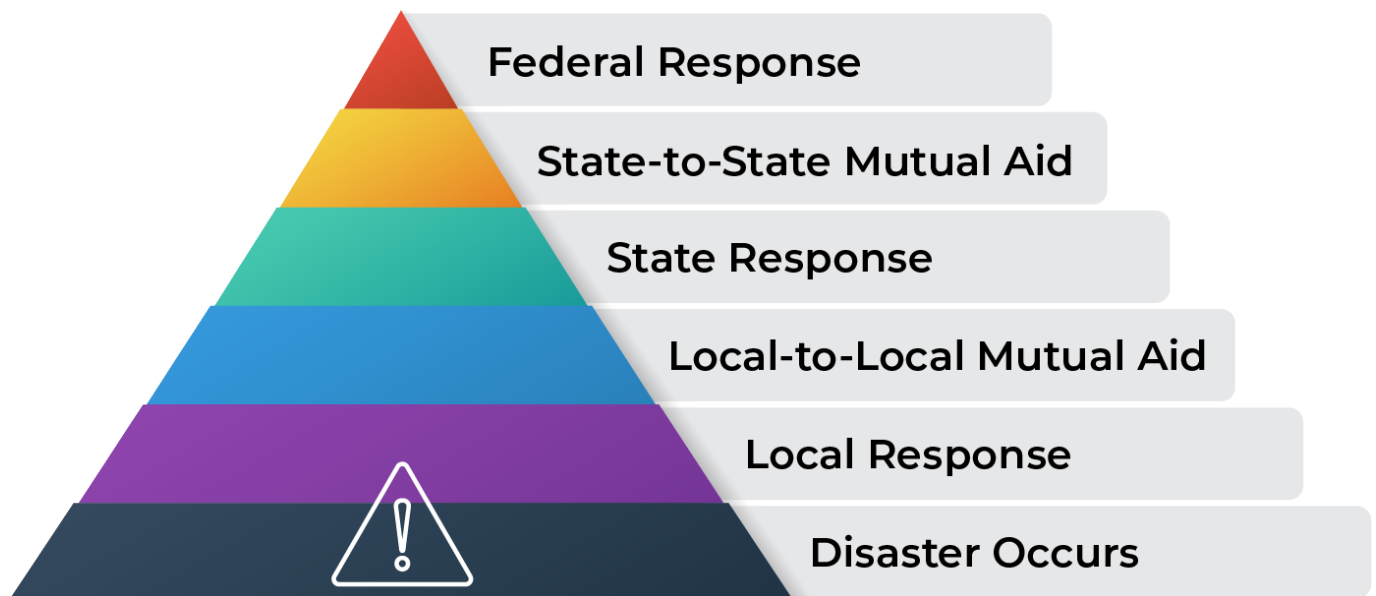
Through the implementation of this strategy, HSEMD will work to allocate limited resources to best achieve the goals and objectives listed herein, with these efforts ultimately building a more resilient state.

Additionally, the 2024-2028 strategy incorporates elements of the Entrepreneurial Operating System (EOS) such as the five-year Vision/Traction Organizer (VTO). The HSEMD five-year VTO is an EOS-based planning tool which establishes organizational priorities and objectives, and provides a progress-tracking mechanism to help the department navigate the enhanced and expanded path forward, and promote measurable outcomes along the way.

## VII. HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN IOWA

Emergency management, at its essence, is a system best grown locally. Prevention, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation activities all begin and end at the local level. Local responders will be the first to arrive and the last to leave the scene of an incident. Local emergency managers best know their threats and resources and are invested in the resilience of their communities.

As a community’s resources begin to be exhausted, additional local resources are brought in to augment the response to an incident, whether from within the county in which the community resides, or deployed through local mutual aid agreements across county boundaries. As these resources become taxed, a local jurisdiction can then turn to the State for needed resources. The State may also reach out to other states through state-to-state mutual aid to fulfill identified needs. Finally, federal assets may be brought in to supplement a response. As the situation de-escalates, assets will be released in a relatively inverse order, based on continuing incident requirements. Figure 1 illustrates this flow of response effort as an event escalates and ultimately de-escalates to pre-event conditions.



*Effort Hierarchy (Figure 1)*

## Local Emergency Management

Code of Iowa § 29C.9 requires each county in Iowa to have a local emergency management commission to oversee local emergency management functions. Figure 2 illustrates how a local emergency management commission is organized, consisting of a member of the county board of supervisors, the county sheriff, and the mayor from each city within the county.

*Local Emergency Management Commission Organization Chart (Figure 2):*



Iowa Code § 29C.10 directs the local emergency management commission to appoint a local emergency management coordinator to fulfill the commission’s duties and responsibilities. Specific duties and responsibilities of the commission are listed in Iowa Code § 29C.9.

## Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management

The structure of homeland security and emergency management in Iowa begins with the governor, who holds the ultimate responsibility for protecting Iowa’s citizens. Code of Iowa § 29C.8 gives the governor the power to appoint the director of the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. The HSEMD director also currently serves as the homeland security advisor to the governor.

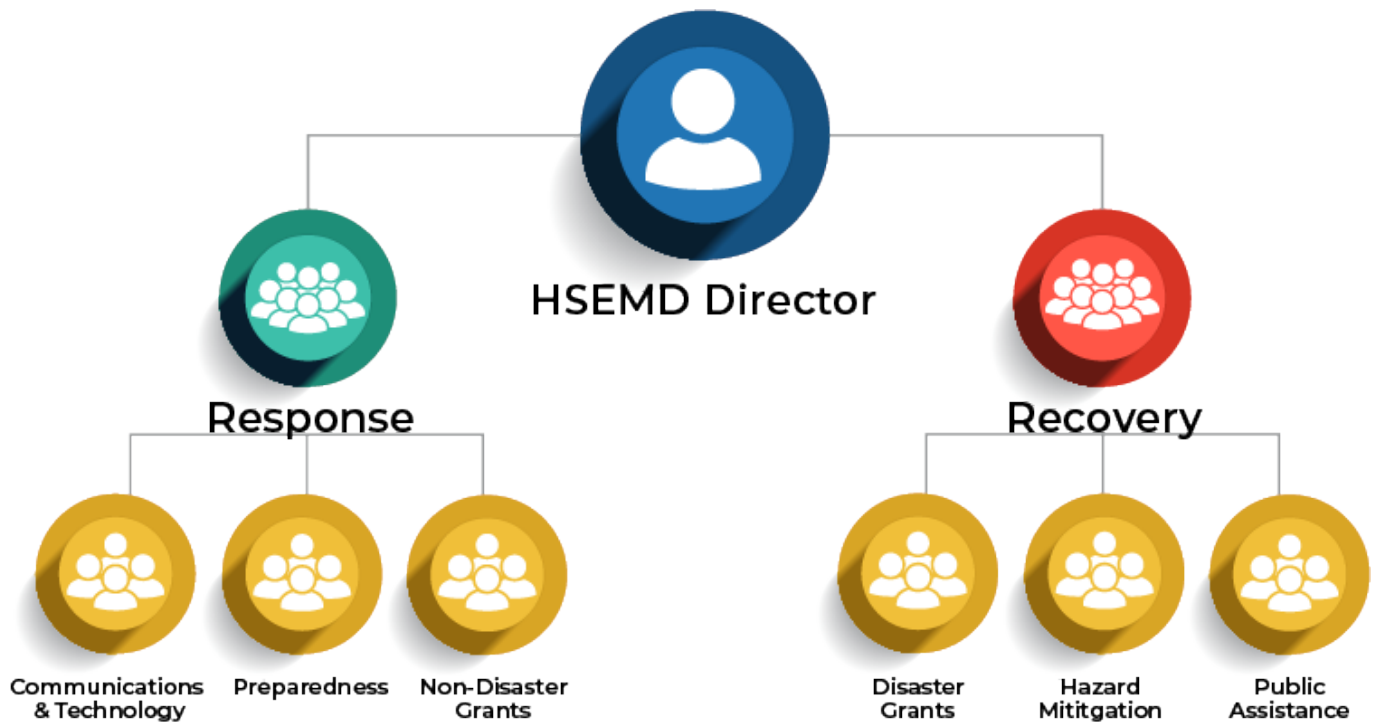
The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management is the coordinating body for homeland security and emergency management activities across the state. The department is comprised of two divisions and six bureaus, which is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Response Division:** The Response Division focuses on first-line agency response to disasters and emergencies. The Division consists of the Preparedness Bureau, the Communications & Technology Bureau, and the Non-Disaster Grants Bureau. The Preparedness Bureau houses the department’s duty officer program, resource and volunteer management activities, radiological planning, capabilities

assessment and strategic planning, individual and community disaster engagement programs, critical infrastructure protection and information sharing, and special teams. The Communications & Technology Bureau focuses on exercise coordination and support, communications, 911, mass notification and emergency messaging, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), strategic communication, and legislative and congressional relations. The Non-Disaster Grants Bureau focuses on the management and accounting services of HSEMD's non-disaster grants. General planning efforts, such as local and State plan development, training support, administration of the State Emergency Response Commission, Capitol Complex planning, continuity planning and agricultural emergency planning, are also carried out within the Response Division.

**Recovery Division:** The Recovery Division focuses on short- and long-term recovery, the implementation of recovery and mitigation-related programs and the coordination of Recovery Support Functions. The Division consists of the Public Assistance Bureau, the Hazard Mitigation Bureau, and the Disaster Grants and Administration Bureau. The Public Assistance Bureau manages the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance (PA) Grant Program. The Hazard Mitigation Bureau manages pre- and post-disaster hazard mitigation programs and ensures the maintenance of the State Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Disaster Grants and Administration Bureau provides for the coordination of Recovery Support Functions (RSF), manages the implementation of other disaster-related programs, coordinates State funding requirements with the State Executive Council, and provides disaster program-related grant monitoring, compliance, and accounting services.

*HSEMD Organization Chart (Figure 3):*





## VIII. REGIONALIZATION AND MUTUAL AID

### Regionalization

Iowa's 99 counties are divided into six districts by the Iowa Emergency Management Association (IEMA). These districts provide local emergency managers with a regional structure to share information, work collaboratively, and share best practices. The IEMA district boundaries also serve as the boundaries of six homeland security regions.

Additionally, Iowa has invested resources over the past 20 years to build capability in homeland security and emergency response teams. Per Iowa Code § 29C.8, these teams can be deployed anywhere in the state at the discretion of the Governor or the director. Teams include hazardous materials response, urban search and rescue, special weapons and tactics, explosive ordnance disposal, incident management, and building safety assessment and failure evaluation.

### Mutual Aid

Code of Iowa § 29C.11 allows local emergency management commissions to enter into mutual aid agreements for reciprocal disaster services and recovery aid and assistance. Code of Iowa § 29C.22 further expands upon this system, as all cities, counties, and other political subdivisions in Iowa are automatic signatories to the Iowa Mutual Aid Compact: in essence, every political subdivision in Iowa is automatically entered into a mutual aid agreement with every other political subdivision for the purpose of sharing resources during an emergency or disaster upon local or State declaration of an emergency.

Code of Iowa § 29C.21 makes Iowa a member of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), a national disaster relief compact. EMAC allows member states to share emergency resources across state lines once the governor of the impacted state has issued a proclamation of disaster emergency.

## IX. STRATEGIC GOALS

### Goal 1: Establish and maintain dynamic emergency response operations.

**Objective 1.1:** Continue to explore the ongoing development of a resilient and adaptable State Emergency Operations Center. This effort will focus on the seamless integration of both physical and virtual capabilities that will enhance our ability to quickly and efficiently respond, collaborate and execute our mission to serve Iowans.

**Objective 1.2:** Ensure the State Emergency Operations Center is regularly exercised and operationally ready.

**Goal 2: Foster a holistic planning program that covers all aspects of emergency management.**

**Objective 2.1:** Ensure all planning initiatives are comprehensive, cross-communicated and are complementary to one another, acknowledging the interconnectedness of Planning, Training and Exercise across response, recovery and mitigation.

**Objective 2.2:** Ensure there is meaningful integration of hazard analysis and risk assessment process into the planning program.

**Objective 2.3:** Foster a culture where Continuity Planning is regularly considered, validated and exercised.

**Objective 2.4:** Align all emergency response planning, training and exercise efforts to complement local timelines.

**Goal 3: Sustain disaster recovery and hazard mitigation capabilities that are adaptable, integrated and effective.**

**Objective 3.1:** Ensure effective recovery program(s) management and administration.

**Objective 3.2:** Ensure implementation of effective hazard mitigation program(s) and foster competitive solutions.

**Objective 3.3:** Manage Recovery Operations and coordinated support functions and special projects.

**Goal 4: Develop a critical infrastructure information analysis program.**

**Objective 4.1:** Determine which stakeholders to engage and work towards establishing close communication with federal, state, local and private sector partners. As these relationships are built, develop policies and procedures to guide these connections moving forward.

**Objective 4.2:** Identify informational gaps and needs of participating stakeholders by evaluating relevant and timely informational needs for each group.

**Goal 5: Develop and implement technological solutions throughout the department to improve processes and service delivery.**

**Objective 5.1:** Assess key processes for potential efficiency improvements with the use of artificial intelligence solutions.

**Objective 5.2:** Continue development and implementation of a budget dashboard across all programs.

**Objective 5.3:** Continue to invest into staff through professional development opportunities to ensure our department is positioned for success now and into the future.

**Goal 6: Implement Whole Community principles across all aspects of the Department.**

**Objective 6.1:** Ensure whole community principles are integrated into the department’s plans, programs and procedures.

**Objective 6.2:** Ensure training and guidance are provided to all department staff, emergency managers, planners, disability advocates and other service providers responsible for planning for, responding to and helping communities recover from disasters.

**Objective 6.3:** Ensure the department’s communications with the public incorporates applicable whole community strategies.

**X. EVALUATION**

Progress on the implementation of the 2024-2028 Strategy for the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management will be evaluated annually by the HSEMD executive team and the department’s strategic planner. A full review and revision of this strategy will be completed in the fall of 2028.