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Local/State Emergency Management Relationships

Joshua L. Van Dyke
Concordia University - Portland

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Concordia University - Portland Oregon campus
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Executive Summary

Oregon is challenged with a regional liaison program that is understaffed, underfunded, and not a primary role within the Oregon Office of Emergency Management (OEM). This paper is going to examine what Oregon’s program could look like if the “regional liaison” was stand-alone position for several staff or at least a primary role within Oregon OEM. Programs from other states will be used for comparison in order to help build the picture. There are many challenges to the current program as well as creating a permanent liaison position - those will be briefly looked at. Lastly, some recommendations will be provided regarding how to overcome the challenges and what are some actions that can be taken to create an effective liaison program within Oregon OEM. Oregon currently has an ad hoc group of emergency managers stepping in to the role of a regional liaison as a side job to their already full workload.

Not only are the counties in Oregon lacking the needed assets to respond adequately and in a timely manner, but they are quickly overwhelmed (Marheine, 2017). Proactive engagement from dedicated state level liaison personnel mitigates risk and endangerment to local populations. Since 1955 there have been 32 Disaster Declarations for Oregon spanning 62 years (FEMA, 2017). The last 11 years alone has witnessed more than 1/3 of those declarations. These figures do not account for 2 declarations that remained at the state level and the more than 60 requests to federal level agencies for Fire Management Assistance Declarations. Since 1973 when FEMA began tracking the data, the last 11 years have seen more than 1/3 of the fire declarations being made as well - in step with the other federal disaster declarations. State and local resources are quickly exhausted and stretched beyond capacity at this much greater frequency of occurrences. Population centers are only increasing in geographical size, densities
are becoming the norm through high urbanization, and rural areas are increasingly being populated to levels requiring mitigation efforts to be considered.

“All disasters are local” was the theme of FEMA Deputy Administrator Richard Serino’s keynote speech at the International Association of Emergency Managers Annual Conference on 14 November 2011 in Las Vegas Nevada (Pittman, 2011). Oregon State Representative Sal Esquivel, Vice-Chair on the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness, commented as recently as February 2017 “…we have to get down to the citizen level…” (Oregon Legislature, 2017, 55:10mm:ss mark). Citizens and residents interact with their local governments foremost. Accessing the needed state and federal resources during a time of duress for residents requires a capable and functioning state regional liaison program to be in place on their behalf beforehand.

Other States - a Comparison

Washington State does not have a liaison program between state and local levels of Emergency Management (EM). However, Scott Johnson of Washington EM for Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency (CRESA) wishes such a program existed (Scott Johnson, personal communication, 30 March 2017). Instead of interacting between local governments, the Washington State Agency Liaisons (SALs) act as an intermediary for their agency and the Washington State Military Department, Emergency Management Division (Hutchinson, 2017).

Oregon and Washington have very different approaches to requesting and receiving equipment during a declaration. Washington has an incredible ability to provide a cost effective and properly identified resource for response, but it is an arduous process requiring many phone calls from the Washington equivalent of Oregon’s liaison. The type of resource may not arrive for many hours (Scott Johnson, personal communication, 30 March 2017). Oregon liaisons on
the other hand are able to provide a resource much quicker, but it may not be the most cost effective or appropriate type of resource e.g. a truck is requested from the National Guard and a 5-ton cargo truck with senior level enlisted drivers instead of a HMMWV with two lower enlisted drivers is sent, as a hypothetical example of what the current system would likely produce in an actual event. The processes each state uses in the typing and procurement of requested material needs to be evaluated and a hybrid solution found so the end state becomes one of speed and efficiency for the state of Oregon.

While Oregon and Washington are both Home Rule States, Washington places the burden of EM upon the counties. As such, counties fund nearly 50% of a Washington EM Agency region budget. EM functions in Washington do not receive monies from state sources. The other 50% of a Washington EM budget comes from federal grants being awarded to the regions and thus the counties. In total, the annual budget for Region 4 is only $750,000 (Scott Johnson, personal communication, 30 March 2017). The EM program in Washington is thus highly driven at the county level with little state level involvement. Under this plan, Washington fields an EM force nearly double that of Oregon OEM (Appendixes D and E).

Other states model much more efficient systems while enduring similar economic misfortunes due to degraded budgets, strains on finances caused by disasters, and an overall economy that is not yet thriving. Meanwhile, state legislators and city mayors feel more pressed to fix potholes than proactively have plans and training in place to respond to landslides, severe weather, and other situations which cost millions of dollars and affect multiple communities simultaneously. It is at this juncture where the State of Oregon has a genuine opportunity to step in and empower the OEM with a regional liaison who is able to reach out to local leaders and
non-governmental organizations (such as the Red Cross) with the expertise to address very likely scenarios before they catch entire counties, tribal areas, and regions by surprise.

As mentioned earlier, several states have an adequately funded and responsive state liaison program in place to coordinate with and assist local governments in achieving compliance with the five programs of Emergency Management: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery. Compliance to these core values is requisite prior to receiving any grant or public funding money. No one state has the perfect example of a state liaison program - although some states like Colorado and Texas are much closer than Oregon to being an agency worthy of outside envy.

Texas practices one of the most collaborative and successful liaison programs by making the liaison a team affair; each regional liaison team is composed of an emergency manager, law enforcement, and a department of Human Services representative. These positions are all full time and a dedicated stand-alone post within the Texas emergency management agency (Scott Johnson, personal communication, 30 March 2017). Texas is no less threatened by manmade and natural disasters than Oregon is, yet Texas has been able to field at least 32 highly capable liaison groups (Appendix C) who work under their respective District Coordinator. Organizationally and operationally, this is a regional liaison model Oregon would do well to study if not outright adopt for maximum effectiveness in planning and collaboration with local agencies.

Value and Success Examples

The people currently filling the role of regional liaison in Oregon believe relationship development is a key part of state, local, and tribal government EM success. As a result of their dedication to their respective county, local, and tribal government emergency managers; the local
emergency managers often invite their Oregon OEM regional liaison to regular meetings. The regional liaison is really the champion for the needs of the (county) emergency managers (Zach Swick, personal email communication, 29 March 2017). Furthermore, years of building familiarity and relationships between the tribes and the OEM liaison has resulted in the active participation by tribal leaders and commissioners who are now “…attending annual workshops and monthly coordination calls, serving on statewide workgroups, and participating in other program initiatives. Participation by tribes has increased in programs such as the Emergency Management Grant Program (EMGP), statewide training, exercises, and hazard mitigation planning” (Erik Rau, personal email communication, 31 March 2017).

The first value of staffing dedicated OEM regional liaisons with independent funding is the energy that will be carried to the local and tribal governments of Oregon. This will be reciprocated in kind as local leaders realize they have a viable and capable liaison to interact with. Bridges will be built while mutual understanding and cooperation is achieved. The liaison will be known for being there for their county and tribal needs regardless if the currently available grant monies dwindle to insufficiency or go away all together. This is assurance and relationship building among all levels of government and the average taxpaying citizen and other residents benefit as a result.

Secondly, the OEM continues to be an adaptive entity which learns through experience as well taking the proactive steps of training; such as in the case of the Mosier oil train derailment of 2016 (OEM, 2016). Lessons learned included; Mutual Aid agreements between local and regional fire departments were hugely beneficial. Extensive planning, previous training, and exercise for an Inland Spill of National Significance (SONS) type event made the incident response smooth and understood by peripheral trustees (Franklin, 2017). With the Oregon
enactment of a legal structure establishing a government-to-government relationship with tribes, the home agency (OEM) was already pre-positioned to coordinate with Oregon tribes impacted by this event. This disaster could have been handled very poorly were it not for the proactive mitigation and response steps taken ahead of time. This recent example underscores the importance of having a well funded regional liaison program within OEM.

In his testimony to the Oregon legislature in February 2017, Steve Shaffer acknowledged the state office of emergency management (OEM) is a “strong partnership” and the support provided “…is also invaluable, especially for small counties and with limited resources” (Shaffer, 2017). He provided the following example; “Increased coordination at the county level through the Sister County Program resulted in Umatilla County sending resources to Tillamook County during recent floods in 2015 and 2017. When the Grant County wildfires were ravaging that portion of the state, several counties stepped in to provide sorely needed resources” (ibid.).

The need for OEM and its regional liaison program to be given full time, dedicated, and secured positions cannot be made any clearer. Building aid agreements such as the Sister County Program mentioned previously are far beyond the ability of a part-time OEM emergency manager who is fulfilling the liaison role as an additional duty and in a very funding prohibitive position.

Challenges / Mitigation to the Oregon Liaison Program

Every EM / liaison interviewed for this paper, whether in Washington or Oregon, agreed that geographic separation is the number one problem they deal with. In the state of Oregon, all OEM regional liaisons and state level emergency managers are co-located in Salem - regardless if the liaison is responsible for Region 5S in Southeast Oregon. Erik Rau noted that Oregon tribal leaders have also acknowledged this as well; “…members of the (tribes) themselves identified
this as a problem”. The tribes are spread all over the state, thus the tribal liaison has an even greater need for accommodation in reaching constituents. Zachary Swick, also of OEM, said; “Geography – this has not been overcome…” Furthermore, for a liaison to be as effective as possible a large time commitment to personal interaction with the county and tribal emergency managers he/she represents is required in order to develop those important relationships of trust as well as to establish mutual aid agreements - and currently this requires travel. A number of suggestions have arisen to rectify the ‘geographic’ bottleneck; have liaisons located in their respective regions, utilizing video conferencing, mandatory in-person meetings a few times a year, etc. The ultimate consensus is to have liaisons dedicated solely to that role and be located in their respective regions. Geographic separation and travel concerns are negated with this approach and greatly enhance the sorely needed interface between local stakeholders, county and tribal emergency managers, and the state regional liaison.

Oregon does not have the needed and dedicated funding for the liaison program to work as capably as it could and is further handicapped by limited scope based on what the few sources of funding will allow. Ed Flick has noted how the source of a staff members funding limits what they can do as far as general functions go; “…the fact that so many staff members are funded in this manner significantly limits how the agency (OEM) can deploy their staff” (Flick, 2017).

40 people staff OEM and they are hugely dependent on dwindling grant monies. The state of Washington is facing same problem; “…we have seen reductions in EMD staffing over the past few years as grants have decreased…” (Scott Johnson, personal email communication, 06 April 2017). Such reductions erode ability for any EM program or agency to effectively engage the five mission areas of EM while also simultaneously seriously degrading the established relationships that have only been forged through years of hard work. Reductions are
huge steps backwards for this relatively small pool of public servants who strive behind the scenes to keep all Oregonians as protected as possible given the disproportionately small budget.

The bottom line for Oregon is that despite the resilient team of emergency managers at OEM and their willingness to take on the additional burden of the regional liaison role, the positions are not being given the attention they need (through no fault whatsoever of the liaisons). To do the job well and best spend taxpayer money; dedicated positions for liaisons need to be made.

Current practice of the “…very informal state liaison program…” (Andrew Phelps, personal email communication, 12 March 2017) is not a best practices approach; much room for improvement exists here for OEM to develop the remarkable staff of regional liaisons through training, education, and opportunity. The Oregon liaison description contains only a few bullet points to guide the state liaisons (Appendix B), whilst the state of Colorado devotes nearly two pages (Colorado Department of Public Safety, 2017) and multiple links to supporting information such as an entire Emergency Management Program Guide (Colorado Office of Emergency Management, 2016).

Despite the challenges of wearing a multitude of professional hats, every OEM person the author has interacted with has independently given the same feedback; OEM is staffed by a dedicated group of men and women who are passionate about what they do for their fellow Oregonians, they have an infectious desire to provide the best information and ‘customer service’ possible to the county and tribal emergency managers of their regions. This amazing attitude is in the face geographic alienation from their constituent regions, compromised budgets / insecure funding sources, and a desire to be better trained and educated in their liaison roles.
Funding / Grants

Adequate funding is the keystone of any activity and the realization of a stable OEM program of regional liaisons interfacing with county and tribal EM programs, local governments, and emergency managers is dependent on reliable sources of funding. Oregon’s regional liaison program currently in place is woefully underfunded and far from being sustainable, this needs to be corrected at the state level so Oregon counties and tribes do not continually find themselves in the position of not having an immediately available regional liaison representative. Despite the examples and rationale already provided in support of a stand alone or dedicated regional liaison role, this section is included because funding is a central component to illustrating what Oregon’s regional liaison program could look like - but it requires financial commitment.

Zachary Swick of the OEM noted in an email request for information (personal email communication, 29 March 2017); “…staff who fill that (state regional liaison) role are funded largely through the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP, 2016), and the Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG, 2017)”.

As of this writing, the budget proposed by the current president “Cuts FEMA state and local grant funding by $667 million, including the Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program (PDM) and HSGP” (Kopan, 2017). In his testimony to the Oregon House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness in early February 2017, Ed Flick also referenced the instability of reliance on grants to support OEM liaisons; “…Federal support (is) declining by nearly 18% this year” after the federal budget proposal was released. It is apparent; federal grant money is far from being a secure source for the OEM to rely on in supporting the position of a state regional liaison to local, county, and tribal emergency managers or governments. OEM is attempting fulfill their overarching mission of an All-Hazards approach.
when protecting Oregonians with a funding environment which is certainly inadequate and unreliable at best.

It should be noted that funding for any EM activities were originally intended to be equally sourced from local and state governments when federal monies were applied. Lucien Canton remarked in an article; “FEMA consolidated this staff funding with other funding streams to create the Emergency Management Preparedness Grant (EMPG) that allowed jurisdictions to use grants more flexibly. However, the grants were never intended to be the sole source of emergency management program funding” (Canton, 2013, italics added). Yet Oregon OEM is highly dependent on this outside and unstable source of funding and the liaison program is jeopardized as a result.

Dr. Yilin Hou, an associate professor at the University of Georgia’s School of Public and International Affairs, has suggested multi-year budgets better equip a state or local unit of government to maintain fiscal stability. Fiscal stability is needed in homeland security if programs are going to continue without federal funding (Emler, 2008, pg.53). Other augmentations to how Oregon can generate funds to support the state regional liaison program include options such as; asset forfeiture for terror related crimes and willful acts of destruction (e.g. arson or setting wild land fires), the addition of a “rainy day” fund, public/private partnerships, development of lottery funds, and investment strategies. If the state regional liaison program is determined to be an Oregon OEM priority, then the directors must also ensure the Governor’s Office has the same vision. With state Executive offices on board with the prioritization, the initiative can be taken to the appropriate Oregon state office (such as Revenue) and advocate budgeting priority for the regional liaison program. Advocacy is critical and
coalitions will be needed between OEM executive management and state governmental and law making bodies.

Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) is another funding option based on the “…premise that large property holding, property tax exempt organizations are disproportionately advantaged under current law and that they consume municipal services for which they do not pay…” (Suarez, 2014) and is a means to provide sustainable funding for EM activities such as regional liaisons of the Oregon OEM. Several states have used this approach in funding both their EM offices as well as other Homeland Security operations. It would behoove Oregon to begin deliberate consideration of using a similar source for OEM operations, including funding of the regional liaison program. As Kyle Jen points out “…emergency management is a continuous cycle…” (2002), as such, reliable and dependable funding will be needed in order to have a stand-alone or dedicated regional liaison staff for Oregon OEM. The regional liaison will also need some authority to appropriate and expend those funds, make contracts / Mutual Aid Agreements with stakeholders, and other state level decisions.

Despite the lack of dedicated financial support for OEM and its regional liaisons, Mike Harryman, the State Resilience Officer in the Office of Governor Kate Brown, fiercely advocates for proper funding to support resilience in Oregon as a multi-hazard and all-threat endeavor (2017). Regardless if the vehicle is lottery funds, mandated expense of the state general fund, or Oregon counties and tribes contributing in a similar fashion of how the counties in Washington fund their regional EM activities; permanent funding for OEM regional liaisons to the tribal and county governments simply needs to happen.
Oregon’s Liaison Program - What Oregon’s Program Could Look Like

What Oregon's program could look like if the "regional liaison" was a stand-alone position for several staff or at least primary role within Oregon OEM would be composed of budgetary reformation, OEM staff reorganization, and lastly a hybrid of various other state programs; Washington (getting exactly right type of resource and funding), Colorado well developed and defined system/dedicated roles, and Texas highly collaborative approach. The dedicated positions of a stand-alone liaison would allow OEM to be more closely aligned with the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) while providing the expertise needed to maximize “…county resilience (which) requires engaging and collaborating with all partners as individuals and communities” (Sieng, 2017). Currently, as Ed Flick pointed out in his testimony; OEM does “…not have the time…enough staff…and has little bandwidth to provide subject matter assistance to local emergency management programs” (2017). These three areas can be alleviated with the state regional liaison program being properly stood up and funded. Several examples of funding options have been provided in the ‘Funding / Grants’ section.

This regional liaison position would be the primary interface between local/county/tribal governments and the state. The role of the liaison is to provide the vehicle of communication and provision between local and tribal governments and state levels of government. The ideal situation is a dedicated and funded regional liaison program which allows the OEM representative in that role to have the time, resources, and relationship building ability to assist local partners in creating their own resiliency before the state is asked to intervene.

In the ideal world of an efficient Oregon liaison program the representative would be located in their assigned region amongst the very stakeholders they need to be actively and frequently collaborating with. While modern technology allows for a plethora of ways to
communicate; nothing is better than the ability to have face to face interactions with local government, tribal, private sector, and other leaders. To facilitate this very important necessity, staff needs to be able to live where they work (or within a certain radius of their assigned regional headquarters) and be able to relocate within an allotted budget if required to move. As mentioned before, every emergency manager and liaison with whom interview was conducted almost immediately brought up the topic of geographic distance from where their constituents are and the needless challenges created by the situation. Second only to the budgetary concerns, this is a priority concern for emergency managers and their regional liaison counterparts. Colorado has figured this out; “…the move to out-station regional field managers has strengthened local-state partnerships and yielded a number of other benefits…” (Colorado Department of Public Safety, 2017). It is time Oregon got on board with a similar model.

In closing, Oregon has a foundation in place and tremendous potential exists to put the state on the national map as a role model for a robust and viable regional liaison program. This interface with county governments, Oregon’s nine tribal entities, emergency managers, and the multitude of stakeholders in each of the 7 regions (Appendix A) provides the training, education, and knowledge that are often beyond the ability of local government to achieve on their own. The Mosier train derailment has shown how effective a funded and capable Oregon OEM regional liaison program can be; expedited recovery operations are the result of foresight from regional liaisons and other leaders. Now is the time to think big picture for the entire state of Oregon by providing permanent and dedicated positions of regional liaisons within the Oregon OEM staffing structure.
References


Emergency Management: Managing Crisis


Naval Postgraduate School


Marion County


State Resilience Officer in the Office of Governor Kate Brown


State Agency Liaison Coordinator WA State Military Dept., Emergency Management Division


Fiscal Focus


Oregon Exercise Director


Association of Oregon Counties Public Safety Subcommittee on Resilience


Association of Oregon Counties

Naval Postgraduate School
Appendix A

Region 1: Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Yamhill counties
Region 2: Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Tillamook, Washington counties
Region 3: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane counties
Region 4N: Gilliam, Hood River, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler counties
Region 4S: Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake counties
Region 5N: Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa counties
Region 5S: Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur counties
Appendix B

Day-to-Day Government Liaison
(formerly County Liaison)

Purpose:
The Day-to-Day Governmental Liaison serves as the primary OEM point of contact for designated local and tribal emergency managers, as well as being an advocate for OEM and its programs.

OEM staff is assigned to one of five Homeland Security Regions. Due to their size, Regions 4 and 5 have been split into North and South assignments. OEM staff also serves as a designated Tribal Liaison.

General Duties:
1. Serve as a single point of contact for questions/requests and/or assistance when a jurisdiction is not sure which OEM staff could help them:
   a. Refer to appropriate staff.
   b. Provide technical assistance
2. Be an advocate for OEM and other state partners within the Region.
3. Participate in local training and exercises when time permits.
4. Make annual Regional area visit.
5. Attend Regional emergency management meetings when time permits.
6. Attend County or Tribal emergency management meetings.
7. Serve as an internal OEM “expert” on the Regional emergency management programs and staff.

OEM’s Liaisons:
Region 1: Benton, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk, Yamhill
   Zach Swick (zach.swick@state.or.us, 503-378-23233)
Region 2: Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Tillamook, Washington
   Kelly Jo Craigmiles (kelly.jo.craigmiles@state.or.us, 503-378-2865)
Region 3: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane
   Althea Rizzo (althea.rizzo@state.or.us, 503-378-3936)
Region 4N: Gilliam, Hood River, Sherman, Wasco, Wheeler
   Doug Jimenez (doug.jimenez@state.or.us, 503-378-3255)
Region 4S: Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake
   Bill Martin (bill.martin@state.or.us, 503-378-3514)
Region 5N: Morrow, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa
   Jim Adams (james.adams@state.or.us, 503-378-3232)
Region 5S: Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur
   Joseph Murray (joseph.murray@state.or.us, 503-378-3929)
Tribal: Erik Rau (erik.rau@state.or.us, 503-378-3252)
Appendix C

Appendix D

Washington EM Staffing Structure

Appendix E

Washington Homeland Security Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region 1</td>
<td>Jessica Borowski</td>
<td>425-362-6956</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jessica.borowski@wahomelandsecurity.gov">jessica.borowski@wahomelandsecurity.gov</a></td>
<td>wshomelandsecurity.wa.gov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>Bill Eisele</td>
<td>425-362-5816</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bill.eisele@wahomelandsecurity.gov">bill.eisele@wahomelandsecurity.gov</a></td>
<td>wshomelandsecurity.wa.gov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 3</td>
<td>Tammy Jones</td>
<td>425-362-5812</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tammy.jones@wahomelandsecurity.gov">tammy.jones@wahomelandsecurity.gov</a></td>
<td>wshomelandsecurity.wa.gov</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information as of January 3, 2017
Appendix F

Other informational sources evaluated for inclusion in this report:

http://www.onlyinyourstate.com/oregon/horrifying-disasters-or/
http://mil.wa.gov/emergency-management-division/grants/emergency-preparedness-grants
http://mil.wa.gov/emergency-management-division
https://www.oregon.gov/OMD/OEM/Pages/plans_train/grant_info.aspx
http://www.oregon.gov/oem/emops/Pages/OERS.aspx