EMD Reflects on Recovery after Historic EF-5 Joplin Tornado

If anyone had asked Joplin-Jasper County EMD Keith Stammer on May 21, 2011 if he was ready for any emergency, he probably would have said “yes.” Four years later, Stammer says no amount of training or experience could have adequately prepared him for the response and recovery challenges an EF-5 tornado would create on the evening of Sunday, May 22, 2011.

Stammer is a seasoned emergency response veteran, with a total of 27 years of training and experience in firefighting, medical response and 911 dispatching. For the past 22 years, he has worked as an emergency manager, serving with agencies in Kansas and Missouri.

Stammer has become a sought-after speaker and consultant on disaster response and recovery. He has also traveled to Washington, D.C. twice to testify before congressional sub-committees about disaster response and recovery.

Now, looking back over the past four years, Stammer reflects on Joplin’s transition from disaster response to long-term recovery and shares some of the key lessons he has learned.

(Continued on page 6)

Gov. Nixon Announces Grant for Duquesne

Gov. Jay Nixon was back in the Joplin area with good news on two fronts on the fourth anniversary of the May 22, 2011 EF-5 tornado. The Governor was in Duquesne to announce $2 million to repair roads and storm water piping that had been damaged by heavy trucks and equipment during the expedited debris removal program that cleared millions of cubic yards of debris the tornado left behind.

The federal funding is through the Community Development Block Grant program, which is administered by the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

The Governor also announced new estimates released by the U.S. Census Bureau on May 21 show the city of Joplin now has its highest population on record and that by July 2014, Joplin had a population of 51,316, up from 51,142, the year the devastating tornado hit Joplin and Duquesne.

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Because May 22 marked the fourth anniversary of the EF-5 tornado that killed 161 people and destroyed much of Joplin and Duquesne, we’re devoting a large share of this issue of SEMA News to the ongoing recovery taking place in the Joplin area. It’s a tremendous and inspiring story of response, resilience, coordination, collaboration and engaging the public.

As Gov. Jay Nixon pointed out in Duquesne on the anniversary of the tornado, Joplin’s population is now the highest it’s ever been, surpassing the number of residents the day the devastating tornado hit on May 22, 2011. The Governor was in Duquesne to announce additional funding to keep the recovery moving forward, but the region’s recovery is much more than a story of assistance and investment.

The Joplin tornado response and recovery effort can serve as a national model for first responders, emergency managers, public officials, business leaders, faith-based and volunteer organizations and others interested in preparing their communities for when the unthinkable happens. That’s why in this issue of SEMA News we’re examining in greater detail some of the lessons of Joplin.

JOPLIN CART

Similarly, Jane Cage, of the Joplin Citizens Advisory Recovery Team, is a true asset for Missouri. Jane offers a highly useful review of how CART engaged the citizenry to get their ideas about the community they wanted Joplin to be as it moved forward.

Discussions of long-term recovery efforts are often abstract and intangible, but Jane has provided a practical framework to help guide us through the planning and engagement process that made the most of the Joplin community’s vision.

LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSPECTIVE

Finally, we’re fortunate to get the perspective of Missouri’s new Department of Public Safety director, Lane Roberts, who was Joplin’s police chief when the tornado struck.

Lane and the Joplin Police Department worked around the clock and Lane was instrumental in coordinating the massive local, state and federal emergency response in Joplin.

Lane has spoken extensively to law enforcement and other groups about managing a massive emergency response when hundreds of outside agencies rush to assist. He’s got a unique view on the key issues that will be faced, maintaining perspective and remaining in charge.

Today, the Joplin area is a vibrant and growing community that continues to get better and stronger. The people of that community can serve as a source of inspiration in our daily lives and if a catastrophic disaster ever hits one of our communities.

EMD PERSPECTIVE

Joplin-Jasper County Emergency Management Director Keith Stammer has spoken to many groups in Missouri and around the country about the unforeseen issues he and local officials had to deal with beginning in the moments after the tornado hit and continuing up to today. He’s a tremendous resource for EMDs in our state.

I think you’ll find his insights on everything from multi-agency warehouses and points of distribution to dealing with the emotional toll of the tremendous loss of life in one’s own community very useful.

Ron Walker, Director
Missouri State Emergency Management Agency
12 Recommendations for Managing a Disaster

Lane Roberts, director of the Missouri Department of Public Safety, is a 42-year veteran of law enforcement. He served as a police chief with departments in Washington and Oregon before becoming chief of the Joplin Police Department from 2007 to 2014. Here are 12 recommendations from Roberts for leaders dealing with a large-scale disaster, based on his experience in Joplin.

- Have a disaster response plan in advance, but understand that it will likely have to be amended based on experience.
- Identify more than one designated staging area as part of your disaster plan. Anticipate that one or more could be lost in a disaster. The longer it takes to develop effective staging, the more likely you are to waste resources.
- Expect a massive, even overwhelming, response from outside agencies to a large-scale disaster. More than 400 public safety entities responded to Joplin, some of which self-deployed.
- Security should be part of the plan. Understand that officers will have to distinguish disaster victims from potential thieves who may come to the area. Victims absolutely cannot be re-victimized in the effort to maintain security. They must have time to sort through the debris and recover what little may be left of their lives. Dignity and respect should be the mantra.
- Understand life will go on for the rest of the community, which will still have daily demands that must be met.
- Retain control of your jurisdiction. When responders from outside the area go home, you will still have to answer to your community – for your actions and the actions of others.
- Maintain the cooperative spirit between disciplines and levels of government and stay in your own “swim lane.” Joint command works, but the primary mission for each element will differ. Understanding this will help avoid potential conflict.
- To deliver on the mission and values that you committed to providing your citizens, you must gain buy-in from participating outside agencies. Meet often – even daily – and reiterate the mission, values and operating philosophies of your community.
- Be prepared to do things you’ve never before considered. Innovation with multi-million dollar consequences can be intimidating, but innovation will be indispensable. Allowing staff to be innovative with consequences – for which you will be responsible – requires providing the necessary latitude, but that you monitor what is going on. Everything you try may not work. If it doesn’t, admit it and change tactics.
- Recovery in a planned manner is much harder than it sounds when the recovery could take years. Continuity of the vision is always at risk as both time and changes in leadership occur.
- The community does not belong to its government. Involve the community early and at every opportunity. Build their support. Creating a sense of community will help sustain you going forward into recovery.
- If possible, designate a single information source. Multiple agencies and levels of government can complicate this element, but failure to do so will almost certainly result in conflicting messages that can distract from the important issues and undermine public confidence.
Citizen Input Helps Joplin’s Long-term Recovery Succeed

The destruction left by the deadly EF-5 tornado that struck Joplin on May 22, 2011 left many wondering about the community’s future. The tornado killed 161 people, injured more than a thousand others and destroyed or damaged 8,000 homes and other structures. Four years later, Joplin’s population is higher than it has ever been, according to new U.S. Census Bureau population estimates released on May 21, 2015.

And there are signs the community is only becoming stronger. Five hundred of the 553 businesses that were damaged or destroyed in the tornado have reopened or are in the process of reopening. In addition, nearly 250 new businesses have opened, creating 1,600 new full-time and part-time jobs. Overall, the Joplin metro area has added a total of 3,400 new jobs.

Some of the most notable evidence of the city’s comeback includes the opening of the Joplin High School/Franklin Technology Center on Sept. 2, 2014 and two new elementary schools and a new middle school completed in early January 2014. Mercy Hospital Joplin, the new state-of-the-art medical center, opened at its new location on March 23, 2015.

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FEMA Adds New Weather Alert Feature to Mobile App

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has added a new weather alert feature to its free mobile app. With the new feature, FEMA mobile app subscribers will be able to receive severe weather alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations that users can select anywhere in the country, even if the phone is not located in any of those areas. Because specific locations can be selected, emergency managers and the public can use the new feature to track severe weather developments within a county or region, or they can choose a mix of locations locally, statewide or across the nation.

“Missouri’s emergency management community continues to take advantage of technology to do our jobs more effectively,” said SEMA Director Ron Walker. “FEMA’s new mobile weather alert feature is another tool we can use to maintain clear situational awareness of what the weather is doing so we can take appropriate action to help protect Missourian’s lives and property.”

FEMA’s MOBILE APP

The new weather alert feature is an addition to the mobile app FEMA rolled out in 2011 to help people be better prepared for emergencies. Now available for Apple, Android and BlackBerry mobile devices, the application is designed to work even when there is no mobile service, so people can access the information they need anytime on their mobile device.

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Annual Public Health Preparedness Conference Supports Coordinated Planning

Outbreaks of diseases such as whooping cough, measles and chicken pox – all once thought to be eradicated – are occurring more often in the U.S. In Missouri, during the most recent flu season, more than 54,000 cases of influenza and over 2,800 related deaths were reported. These facts underscore the importance of coordinated emergency preparedness planning, not just in the public health and healthcare fields, but including other aspects of Missouri’s emergency management community.

Each year the state Public Health Preparedness Conference encourages this type of coordinated emergency response planning. It is an opportunity for attendees to gain a greater understanding of how local, state and federal public health and healthcare systems plan to respond to different kinds of public health emergencies.

The 2015 State Public Health Preparedness Conference will be held June 17-18, 2015 at the Holiday Inn Executive Center in Columbia. Cosponsored by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and SEMA, the conference is open to representatives from public health and healthcare entities, especially those who have an emergency response role. Local, state and federal emergency management agency personnel are also encouraged to attend, as well as anyone from non-government entities that are involved in disaster preparedness and response activities.

“This conference is not just for folks from the public health, mental health and medical fields,” said Melissa Friel, SEMA Preparedness Division manager. “Anyone who works in emergency management would benefit from attending.”

(Vibrant Response Exercise Tests Nuclear Terror Response Plans)

Missouri’s state, local and federal emergency management partners exercised their nuclear-radiological emergency response plans against a simulated nuclear terror attack in May.

The “Vibrant Response” exercise was held in Missouri for the first time from May 4-7. Coordinated by the U.S. Army, FEMA and other federal agencies, “Vibrant Response” exercises are conducted each year in a different state.

Participating in the functional exercise were the Missouri National Guard, SEMA, the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the state departments of Public Safety, Transportation, Health and Senior Services, Mental Health, Agriculture and Natural Resources and Kansas City-area agencies.

The exercise scenario was a terror attack in downtown Kansas City using a 10-megaton IND. An explosion of this magnitude would cause massive destruction, loss of life, widespread power outages, displace thousands people and overwhelm emergency medical services. The exercise was designed to help participants better understand the complex nature of this type of emergency and the critical importance of a closely coordinated response by multiple entities.
Joplin EMD Reflects on Recovery
(Continued from page 1)

Q. After the initial response, what short-term recovery issues did you face?
A. Getting food, water, clothing and other basic needs to residents in the devastation area was an immediate concern. The American Red Cross and Seventh Day Adventist Church disaster relief folks helped in this greatly. In a very short time, they set up a multi-agency warehouse that would serve as a central collection and staging point for emergency supplies. From there, items that people needed immediately could be moved to other points of distribution (POD) that had been set up where people could get to them. For this we primarily used local churches with whom we had already worked and planned for this type of need through our ongoing faith-based initiative.

Q. What long-term recovery issues have you had to address?
A. One of the biggest challenges we have faced over time has been finding or developing housing for displaced residents. The tornado damaged or destroyed 7,500 residential structures. This forced more than 9,000 people from their homes.

Joplin has a large rental population, so finding suitable places for people to live temporarily and then building permanent multi-unit housing became a top priority and a huge challenge. To begin feeling whole again, people need a safe, comfortable place to live, but developing any amount of housing is a very slow, tedious process. To adequately house a population larger than many of Missouri’s small towns just seemed impossible. Looking back, I’m still not sure how we accomplished what we did.

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Citizen Input Helps Joplin Recover
(Continued from page 4)

Joplin’s recovery has been so successful it has drawn international attention and become a model for other communities.

DECIDING HOW TO MOVE FORWARD

Joplin officials convened the Citizen’s Advisory Recovery Team (CART) to help lead the recovery effort. Composed of volunteers from the community, CART engaged citizens in the recovery and redevelopment process from the beginning. CART sought out community priorities and a vision for the future and communicated that information to city leaders. The idea was that citizens would become invested in the recovery if they had a strong voice in the process. By design, CART worked closely with government officials, but remained independent.

CART TO GUIDE JOPLIN LONG-TERM RECOVERY

To lead Joplin’s CART, city officials recruited Jane Cage, a long-time resident and respected leader in the business community. Cage has 30 years of experience in the information technology industry and currently is a partner and the chief operating officer of Heartland Technology Solutions, a regional business networking firm with offices in five states.

FEMA Adds New Weather Alert Feature
(Continued from page 4)

The app also includes a text-message service allowing people to receive FEMA updates about disaster preparedness. Users can text “PREPARE” to 43362 (4FEMA) to sign up for monthly disaster safety tips. To find the nearest shelter in their areas, users can text “SHELTER” and their ZIP code (SHELTER65102) to 43362. For details about nearby disaster recovery centers, users can text “DRC” and their ZIP code (DRC65102) to 43362.

The latest version of the FEMA app is available for free in the App Store for Apple devices and Google Play for Android devices. Users who already have the app downloaded on their device will need to download the latest update to get the weather alert feature. The new weather alert feature does not replace the Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) function available on many new smart devices. WEAs have a special tone and vibration and are sent for extreme weather, AMBER alerts or Presidential Alerts.

To download the FEMA app or to learn more, visit: www.fema.gov/mobile-app.

MORE FEATURES OF FEMA’s MOBILE APP

Safety Tips: Tips on how to stay safe before, during and after over 20 types of hazards, including floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes.

Disaster Reporter: Users can upload and share photos of damage and recovery efforts.

Maps of Disaster Resources: Users can locate and receive driving directions to open shelters and disaster recovery centers.

Apply for Assistance: The app provides easy access to apply for federal disaster assistance.

Information in Spanish: The app defaults to Spanish-language content for smartphones that have Spanish set as their default language.

Jane Cage, chairman of the Joplin Citizens Advisory Recovery Team.
2015 Public Health Preparedness Conference
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This year’s conference will feature general session presentations on the 2014 Ebola response in Texas and active shooter planning and response in a healthcare setting. Breakout sessions will include a presentation on the U.S. government’s Ebola response in Liberia and a panel discussion on the 2014 measles outbreak in the Kansas City area.

The conference agenda and registration details are available on the SEMA website under “Upcoming Events.”

www.sema.dps.mo.gov.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE AND REGISTRATION

On-site registration opens on June 17, at 8:15 a.m. in the Executive Center’s Atrium. The first session begins at 9:15 a.m. with an introduction and welcome, followed by a full agenda of general sessions, a networking lunch and informative breakout sessions.

There is no registration fee, but space is limited to the first 350 people to register. The registration deadline is June 5.

Contact the Holiday Inn Executive Center for room reservations at 1-888-465-4329 or (573) 445-8531. Let them know that you are attending the 2015 State Public Health Emergency Preparedness Conference to receive the discounted room rate of $108.27 (including tax). The rate is $100.70 per night if you are using a government-issued form of payment and provide a tax exemption letter. The group booking code is PHJ and the block of rooms will be held until June 5, 2015.

For more information, contact Debbie Nolan at Debbie.Nolan@sema.dps.mo.gov or Shannon Carey at Shannon.Carey@sema.dps.mo.gov, or call (573) 526-5661.

Joplin EMD Reflects on Recovery
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Available rental properties were rented almost immediately. The neighboring communities of Carl Junction, Webb City, Carthage, Sarcoxie, Neosho and others were almost immediately filled to rental and motel capacity. Several stayed with family and friends and many churches stepped up and provided housing in their facilities to displaced residents and to responders as well. FEMA supplied trailers for temporary housing to 586 families. The trailers were spread over 15 sites, with the majority located on city-owned land. By early June 2013, all of those families had moved out of the FEMA temporary housing and into longer-term or permanent housing.

Q. Were there recovery issues you didn’t anticipate?
A. The harsh reality left by disasters of this magnitude is that nothing goes back to the way it was. Because the destruction was so complete, it was obvious from the very beginning that things would never be the same. This meant that people and businesses alike did not necessarily want to return to their former areas of residence or business. Home owners took time to consider if they wanted to move back into a neighborhood that was now much different from what it had been. Businesses paused to reassess their business models, decide if they would rebuild in their former location or move to another site and change their operations in the process. This has not been a bad thing, just something we hadn’t really expected.

Q. What advice would you share about long-term disaster recovery?
A. I would strongly recommend obtaining a copy of a long-term plan from a similar jurisdiction that has already been through a major disaster. Then, arrange an interview with the lead facilitators for that recovery. Joplin has come a long way in the four years since the tornado. We now have the unfortunate distinction of being experts in the disaster recovery field.

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Joplin EMD Reflects on Recovery
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Through our experience, we’ve had standard-setting successes and learned tough lessons from a few mistakes along the way. We would be happy to share our plans, long-term recovery reports and other insights we’ve gained through our experience. It would be especially gratifying if we could help other communities be better prepared to respond to and recover from a disaster. I can be contacted at KStammer@Joplinmo.org.

Q. How important are relationships?
A. Building strong relationships is crucial. It is so true when they say, “A disaster scene is not the place to exchange business cards.” In the first 72 hours after the Joplin tornado, there was no local department or agency head with whom I had not already worked, either during training or actual disasters. Strong emergency management relationships are cultivated before a disaster and strengthened through time and hard work. This builds mutual understanding and trust.

Q. How do you handle workload challenges?
A. As emergency management leaders, our job is not to do all the work, but to ensure it gets done. When things are chaotic, it is easy to charge in and get lost in details. One of the abilities we must develop through all of our emergency management education, training and experience is to recognize a need and find the right resource to meet it. A key part of our duty is to work smart, not just hard. It is best to stay focused on our own area and engage subject matter experts in situations that are beyond our ability to address.

Q. How do you stay organized over a long disaster response and longer recovery?
A. Continue following the Incident Command System (ICS) and use the unified command structure as you transition from the response into the immediate and long-term recovery phases. The beauty of ICS is that it’s not designed just for organizing a response, but for recovery efforts and even organizing planned events.

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Citizen Input Helps Joplin Recover
(Continued from page 7)

CART had more than two dozen members, representing a diverse cross section of the community, including business and industry, public service, education, finance, public utilities and healthcare. Just 12 days after it was created on June 30, 2011, CART took the first crucial steps in the recovery journey by holding the first of three public input meetings.

“From the beginning, we wanted people to share with us their vision of what Joplin could be said Cage, CART chairman. “We didn’t want them to get bogged down in what would be practical, functional or what anything would cost. We just wanted people to be free to dream of the possibilities.”

THE RECOVERY PLAN COMES TOGETHER

In November, CART submitted its Listening to Joplin report to the Joplin City Council for consideration. The 18-page report was organized in four sections, one for each of the key recovery categories: economic development, schools and community facilities, housing and neighborhoods, infrastructure and environment. Each section laid out lists of recovery-related issues, needs, assets, opportunities and goals that residents had identified for that sector during the public input process. There was also a list of proposed projects the community believed would meet the goals for each category.

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Using the unified command approach is as effective during the long-term recovery process as it is during the initial response. Maintaining clear lines of authority, setting definitive goals, keeping open communication and staying current on recovery participants’ roles and responsibilities – all attributes of the unified command structure – can help ensure a successful recovery.

Q. How do you keep a sense of perspective as weeks turn into months?
A. It has always helped me to learn from others. Listen to the stories of others who worked the disaster. You can gain a clearer sense of where you and others fit into the overall effort by understanding their contributions, successes and failures, and by hearing their vision for the future.

Q. What about the emotional toll a disaster can take on responders?
A. You’ve got to take care of yourself. After a disaster, post-traumatic stress is an unfortunate reality. It can be easy to ignore, at first, but the effects will catch up with you eventually. It is something with which you must deal at some point in the event’s aftermath. It helps to listen to what others are telling you about yourself. Value their input and don’t hesitate to seek professional help to deal with any lingering effects of the stress and strain you carried through the disaster.

In January 2012, during a combined meeting of the Joplin City Council, the Joplin School Board, the Joplin Chamber of Commerce Board, the Board of Aldermen of the adjacent city of Duquesne and CART’s board, the Listening to Joplin report was adopted and approved as the city’s long-term recovery and redevelopment plan. Over the next six months, the city began to execute the plan, setting development standards for major focus areas in March, approving a master redevelopment plan and hiring a master developer in July 2012. Joplin’s recovery and redevelopment effort gained momentum as project after project was completed.

“The Listening to Joplin plan is still guiding the recovery process today,” said Cage. “Just a few months ago, we took a look back over the past months and years to see if we are now where people wanted to be and to determine if we were still headed in the right direction. I admit that we’ve made mistakes and took a couple wrong turns along the way, but overall we’ve stayed true to the vision and our successes far outweigh the failures.”
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<td><strong>WebEOC Regional Trainer Program</strong> &lt;br&gt;Time: 6/9: 12 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.; 6/10: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. &lt;br&gt;Sponsor: SEMA</td>
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<td>July 21-22</td>
<td>Critical Asset Risk Management POST approved; Sponsor: SEMA                        Warren Co. EMA, Warrenton</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 23</td>
<td>Management of Spontaneous Volunteers in Disasters Sponsor: SEMA                   Macon</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 28-30</td>
<td>Mitigation for Emergency Managers (APS Required Course) POST approved; Sponsor: SEMA Springfield/Greene Co. Public Safety Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 4-6</td>
<td>All-Hazards Division/Group Supervisor (DIVS) Course Sponsor: SEMA                 Springfield/Greene Co. Public Safety Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 4</td>
<td>Mass Fatalities Planning and Response for Rural Communities POST approved; Sponsor: SEMA Chillicothe Fire Dept. Training Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 5-6</td>
<td>Disaster Management for Public Services POST approved; Sponsor: SEMA              Freeman Health Center Conference Center, Joplin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 10-11</td>
<td>ICS400 Advanced Incident Command System POST approved; Sponsor: SEMA             Springfield/Greene Co. Public Safety Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 11-12</td>
<td>Community Mass Care and Emergency Assistance (APS Elective Course) Sponsor: SEMA Hannibal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 11-12</td>
<td>Mass Prophylaxis Preparedness and Planning POST approved; Sponsor: SEMA           Warren Co. EMA, Warrenton</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 18-20</td>
<td>EOC Emergency Operations for All-Hazards Events POST approved; Sponsor: SEMA      Springfield/Greene Co. Public Safety Center</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Sponsor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 25-26</td>
<td>Hazardous Materials Technician Refresher Training</td>
<td>POST approved</td>
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<td>Time: 8/25: 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.; 8/26: 6 p.m. - 10 p.m.</td>
<td>MERC</td>
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<td>Aug. 26-27</td>
<td>Local Volunteer and Donations Management (APS Elective Course)</td>
<td>Sponsor: SEMA</td>
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<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Ignitable Liquids and Class B Foams</td>
<td>POST approved</td>
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<td>Time: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.</td>
<td>MERC</td>
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