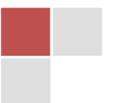


2017

# Initial Lessons Learned from the 2017 Disasters in Nevada

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## **I) Executive Summary**

The following report is provided to the Nevada Commission on Homeland Security as an overview of the significant and even unprecedented disasters in Nevada throughout calendar year 2017. Authored by the Co-Chairs of the Homeland Security Working Group, this report provides analysis of the recent past in the state as well as lessons learned for the future. It is intended to be merely an initial overview, and will hopefully be the foundation for future discussions and activities on Nevada's preparedness efforts.

The report begins with a general introduction and overview, which is intended to frame the sections that follow in terms of historical context and recommendations for improving capacity and capabilities in the future. This framing shows a Nevada that was prepared and capable during an extraordinary year of emergencies and disasters, as well as one that has ably and quickly transitioned into recovery no matter if the incidents were man-made or natural. No matter how prepared and capable communities throughout the state were, however, 2017 diminished statewide resources and provided lessons learned, all of which are reflected in the recommendations for the future at the end of this report.

Following the introduction, this report provides a general overview of Nevada's historical emergencies and disasters. First, it provides a very broad overview of the type, frequency, and timeframe of emergencies in Nevada from 1953 to 2016, as provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Then the report provides a specific overview of the emergencies and disasters in Nevada during State Fiscal Years 2016 and 2017. These three sections provide historical context and definitive proof that calendar year 2017 was in fact an unprecedented year for the state.

Against this backdrop, this report transitions to the significant events of calendar year 2017. Although 2017 brought other emergencies and disasters, the focus of this report is on the floods of January and February in northern Nevada and the mass shooting in southern Nevada. Not only do these events represent statewide preparedness, response, and recovery efforts, but they also show the magnitude against which statewide first response and emergency management organizations have been tested.

Finally, this report concludes with recommendations and proposed next steps for the Commission's consideration. These recommendations are intended to be relatively general in nature, and to reflect the lessons learned from the events of 2017. However, given that they are provided in three categories—budgetary, policy, and operational—and that each category is organized in short term, intermediate term, and long term sub-categories, they are also intended to be comprehensive to date.

Comprehensive or not, efforts to provide safe and livable communities within Nevada will evolve over time. The Commission provides a crucial leadership role for this mission in Nevada. And the Co-Chairs are eager to move forward under the Commission's guidance.

## **II) Introduction and Overview**

The tragic events of October 1, 2017 in Las Vegas, Nevada remain one of the defining emergency response and emergency management incidents for the state and for the nation. Within hours of the attack, national news began referring to the incident as the “largest mass shooting in U.S. history,” while others argued that the attack on the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival amounted to “America’s Mumbai.” This report, co-authored by the Co-Chairs of the Homeland Security Working Group, aims to place this tragedy within a context by showing how the 1 October incident was both a continuation of an unprecedented year of emergencies and disasters in Nevada, as well as a powerful opportunity to learn and apply lessons for the future.

This effort to provide context and direction comes with two significant caveats. First, while the report concludes with recommendations for the future, it is not intended to second guess tactical or operational decisions. It is the opinion of the authors of this report that local responders and the local community provided an incredible and ongoing response to this tragedy. And second, this report should also be viewed as an early look at initial lessons learned and not a full after action review (AAR). The full and final AAR for this event will be a longer term endeavor and under the coordination and supervision of local authorities.

The backdrop of historic levels of emergencies and disasters prior to this event is important for a number of reasons. First, the 1 October tragedy took place at a time of perhaps peak collaboration and coordination for Nevada’s emergency responders and emergency managers. This is due to exceptional foresight and preparedness by local first responders leading up to this event, and also due to the statewide mobilizations for flood response activities throughout northern Nevada in January and February of 2017. And second, this extraordinary event during this extraordinary year should encourage leaders and policy makers to ask if 2017 is truly an anomaly or if it represents a new normal for Nevada.

While the answer to this question is currently unknown, all will agree that vigilance is the only option for the future. At the statewide level, considering budgetary, policy, and operational lessons learned from this event for future implementation is the first and best way to remain vigilant. The recommendations included at the end of this report are intended to provide an initial baseline for the conversations going forward.

While these recommendations are broad and far-reaching, they aim to provide immediate, intermediate, and long-term recommendations for ensuring safe and livable communities in Nevada. In order to achieve this goal, the most important of these recommendations are aimed at ensuring that scant and diminishing resources from federal grants are used as efficiently as possible. It is the opinion of the co-authors that this should be done by prioritizing sustaining projects and building long-term capabilities.

### III) Nevada Emergencies and Disasters in Context

This section is intended to provide a broad overview of the emergencies and disasters in Nevada's history. Section A details the types of declared events that have occurred in Nevada since 1953. Sections B and C provide an overview of the events that have occurred in the last two fiscal years, respectively.

#### A. Historic Overview of Nevada Disasters from 1953

As seen in Figure 1, Nevada has experienced 67 federally-declared disasters since 1953. The vast majority of these incidents have been fire emergencies, which are often eligible for Fire Management Assistance Grants (FMAG), which are declarations approved by the Regional Administrator for the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Nevada will often experience multiple FMAG declarations a year, and Presidential Major Disaster Declarations have been much less common. As seen in Figure 2, disasters most commonly occur in Nevada in the month of July, which also likely corresponds to the FMAG declarations.

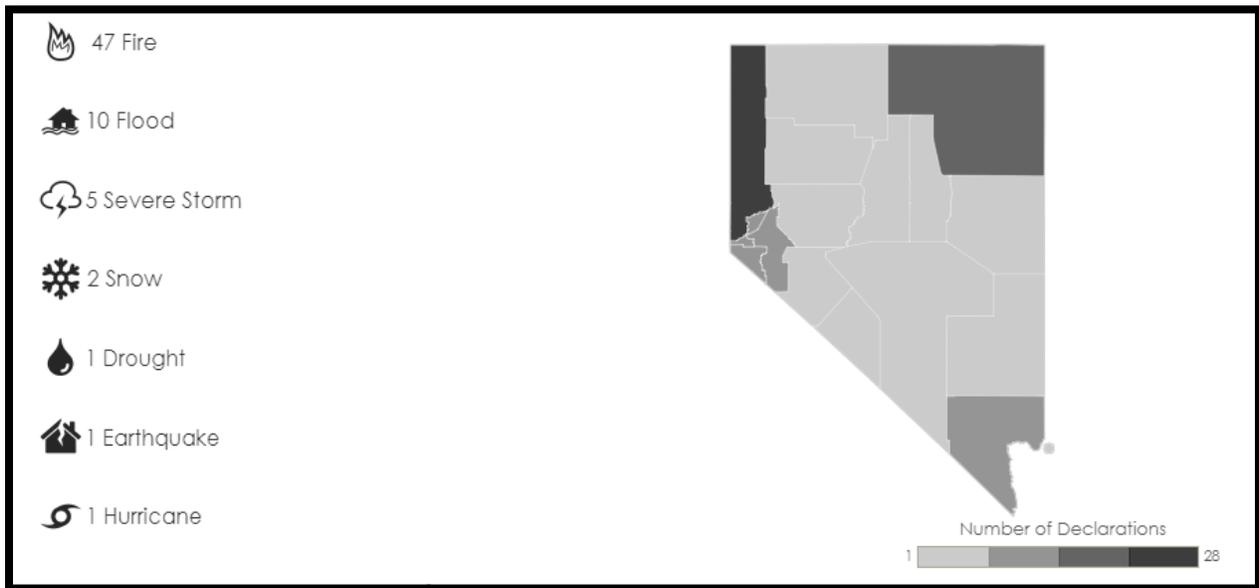


Figure 1: Overview of Disasters in Nevada by type since 1953.

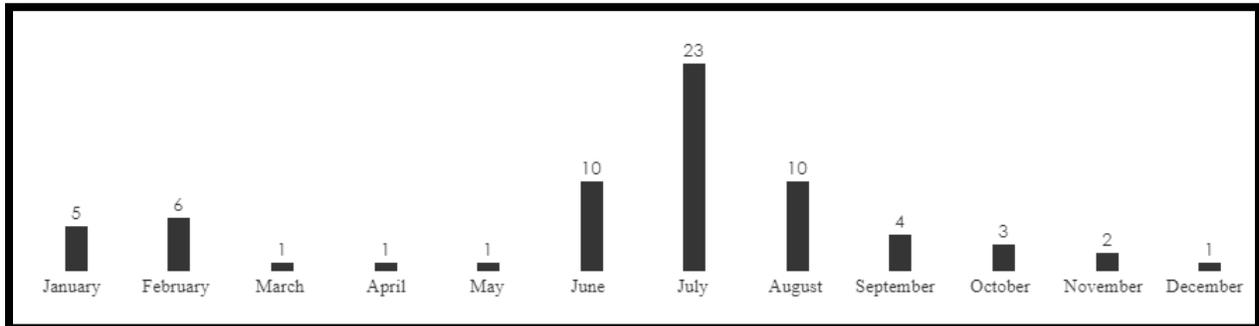


Figure 2: Overview of Disasters in Nevada by month since 1953.

B. Overview of Nevada Disasters from SFY 2016

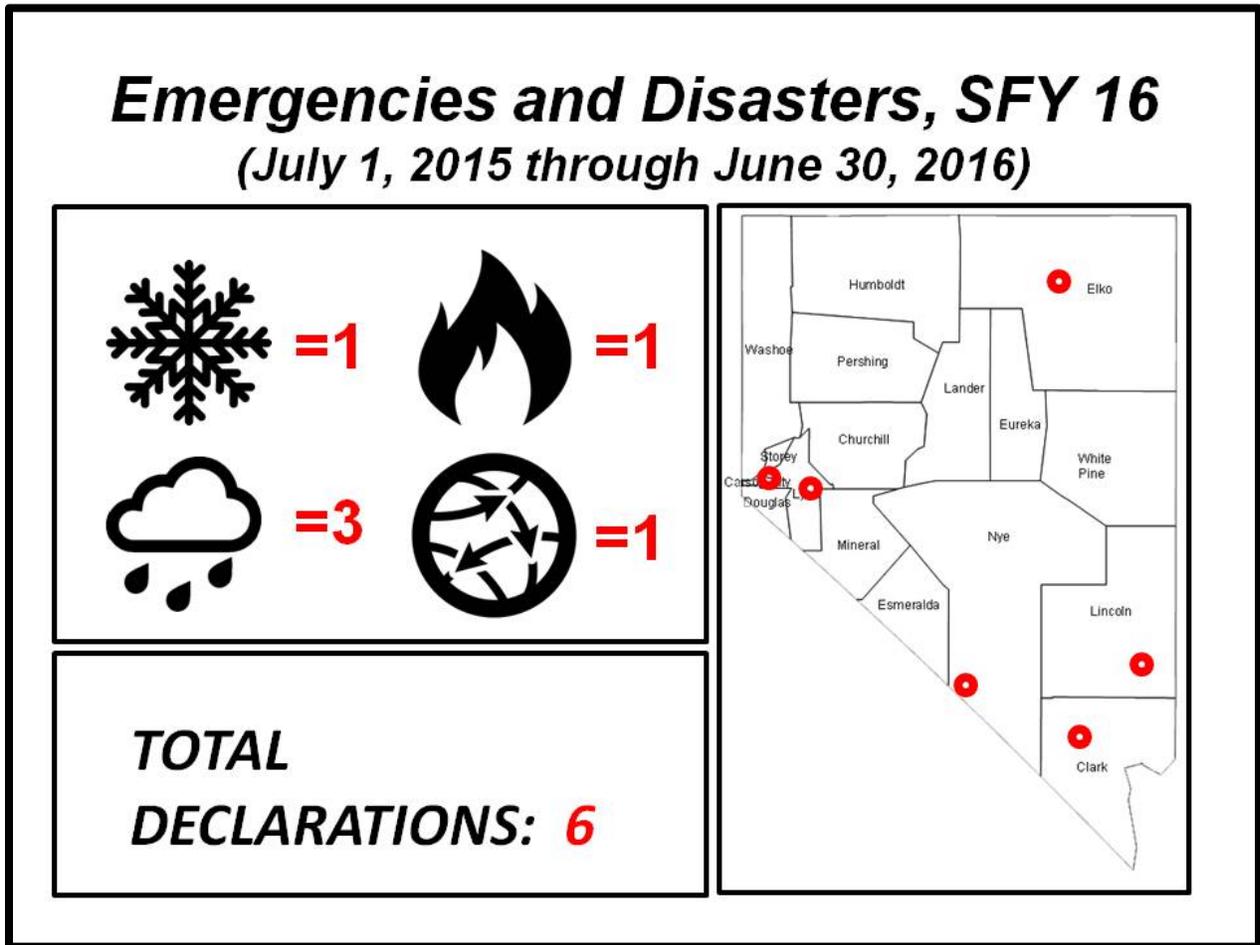


Figure 3: Disasters in Nevada in State Fiscal Year 2016.

- 1) Multiple County Flash Flooding Event, July 3 – July 11, 2015:** Thunderstorms and flash flooding events occurred in Douglas County, Washoe County, Storey County, Lyon County, and Pershing County, all of which declared local emergencies.
- 2) City of Caliente Flash Flooding Event, July 15, 2015:** The City of Caliente declared a local emergency due to a major flash flooding event.
- 3) Lyon County and City of Yerington Joint Declaration in Anticipation of Flooding, September 25, 2015:** The City of Yerington and Lyon County issued a joint emergency declaration in anticipation localized flooding.
- 4) Nye County Flash Flooding and Industrial Fire, October 18, 2015:** Flooding and an industrial fire resulted in two local declarations and two state declarations.
- 5) Carlin Winter Storm, November 3-4, 2015:** The City of Carlin approved a local declaration due to heavy snow that damaged local infrastructure.
- 6) Las Vegas New Year’s Eve Declaration, December 31, 2015:** An emergency was declared by Governor Sandoval in order to ensure local governments had state support and all required resources to this significant tourism event.

C. Overview of Nevada Disasters from SFY 2017

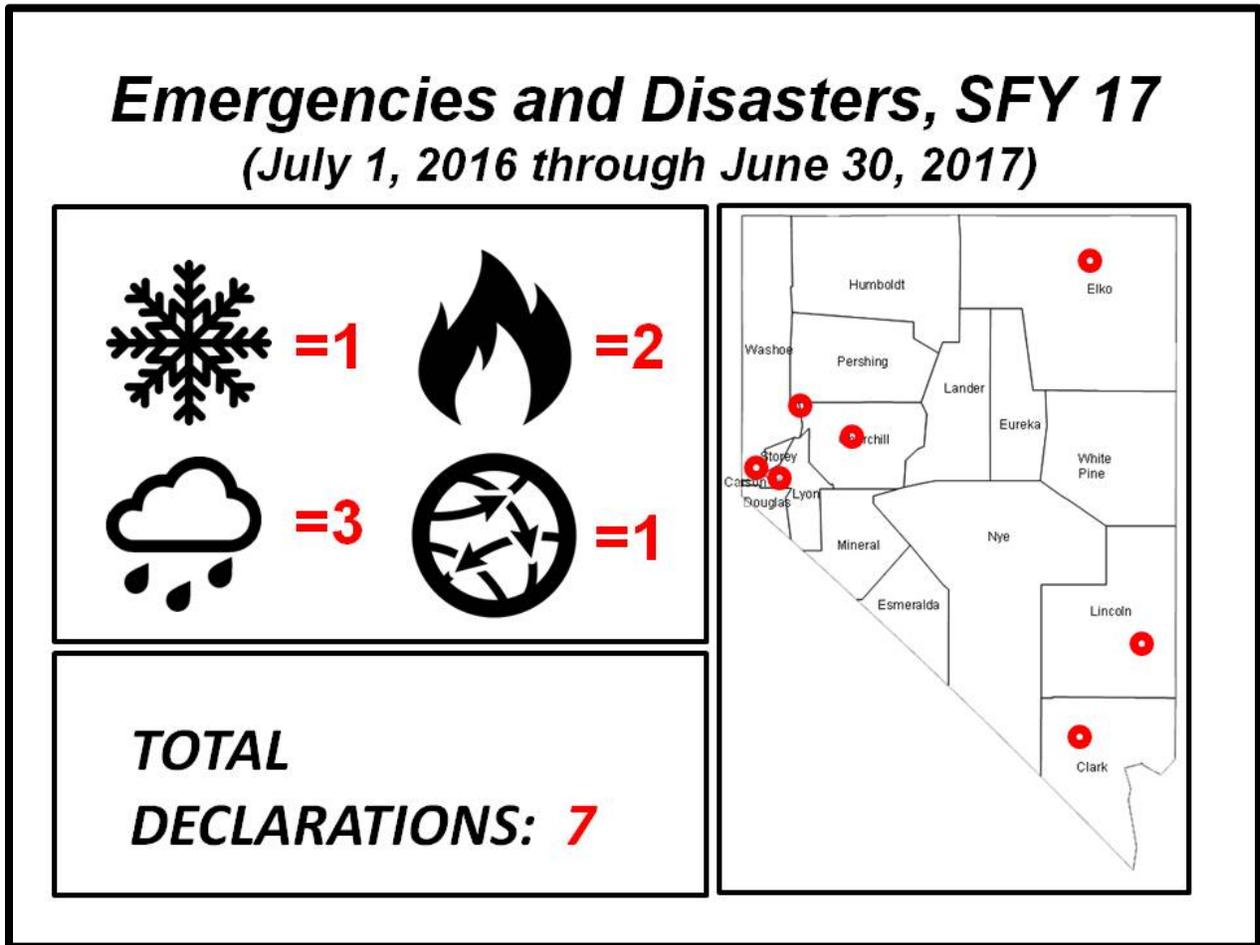


Figure 4: Disasters in Nevada in State Fiscal Year 2016.

- 1) **Panaca Explosion, July 13 through July 15, 2016:** Lincoln County and Governor Sandoval declared emergencies in response to this bombing.
- 2) **Virginia Mountain Complex Fire, July 29 through August 6, 2016:** Five separate fires near Pyramid Lake resulted in a tribal, state, and FMAG declarations.
- 3) **Little Valley Fire, October 14 through October 18, 2016:** This northern Nevada fire resulted in a county emergency declaration, a state declaration, and an FMAG.
- 4) **Winter Flood, January 5 through January 14, 2017:** This weather event resulted in declarations from five counties, three tribes, the Governor, and a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration and a Small Business Administration declaration.
- 5) **Clark County Avalanche Threat, January 24 through January 14, 2017:** Clark County filed a declaration for this event near Mt. Charleston.
- 6) **February Flooding Event, February 5 through February 21, 2017:** This weather event resulted in declarations from five counties, the Governor, and a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration and a Small Business Administration declaration.
- 7) **Spring Thaw, February 21 through June 30, 2017:** Preparing for major flooding in northern Nevada, multiple counties and tribes declared emergencies.

## **IV) An Unprecedented Year: Nevada Disasters in CY 2017**

As described above through the description of emergencies and disasters in Nevada by fiscal year, calendar year 2017 appears to have been an extraordinary year in many respects. If considering only the pure numbers of disaster events in the state, 2017 would look like the two previous fiscal years examined here. However, it is the magnitude of the disasters and the consequences of the threats and hazards that truly make 2017 an extraordinary and even unprecedented year for the state.

There are a number of reasons that make 2017 an unprecedented year. First, never before has Nevada experienced two Presidential Major Disaster Declarations due to natural disasters in the same year, let alone for events in back to back months. Second, Nevada has never experienced as significant of a man-made disaster as the attack on the Route 91 Harvest Music Festival on October 1, 2017.

A full overview of the three most significant events of calendar year 2017 are provided below. Each overview begins with a general overview of the incident followed by specific details on major response and recovery activities. Again, these overviews are intended to be general in nature, with more specific AAR efforts to be developed in the future.

### **A. Overview of the January 2017 Flooding in Northern Nevada**

Between January 5, 2017, and January 14, 2017, Nevada was impacted by a severe weather event caused by series of atmospheric rivers, resulting in record rainfall and record snowfall in northern Nevada. During this event, northern Nevada received half of its annual average rainfall, totaling 4.6 inches of 7.5 inches annually, and according to records, the eastern front of the Sierra Nevada Mountains near Lake Tahoe received 358 inches of snow when the average January snowfall is 74 inches. The combination of melting snow and unusually heavy rains resulted in widespread flooding along the rivers and urban flood prone areas in northern Nevada.

The flooding affected residents in the counties of Washoe, Douglas, Lyon, Storey, the City of Carson City, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, and the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California. It caused damage to homes, property, and businesses, including areas within tribal jurisdictions. Water and debris damaged dozens of homes and businesses, flooded or washed out 88 county transportation routes and 20 state transportation routes, and required response all levels of government.

Many residents were instructed to shelter in place for multiple days due to closed transportation routes from the effects of flooding as well as the effects of unmanageable quantities of snow, including avalanche danger. Use of heavy equipment was necessary for debris removal, snow management, and the delivery of water, food, and various survival supplies to families who lost access to roads.

The counties of Washoe, Douglas, Lyon, Storey, the City of Carson City, the Reno-Sparks Indian Colony, the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe, and the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California declared local emergencies, and in turn, requested assistance from the State of Nevada. A State Declaration of Emergency was issued on January 7, 2017, and amended on February 2, 2017, pursuant to state law, for the above listed city, counties, and tribes. This declaration activated state resources to assist local and tribal governments through the State Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), in accordance with Section 501(a) of the Stafford Act.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (FEMA Region IX) provided a team to assist Nevada in conducting local, state, tribal, and federal technical assistance and preliminary damage assessments (PDA). A joint team was assembled to conduct damage assessment on the affected areas. The joint damage assessment team met from January 30, 2017, through February 3, 2017, to survey the damaged areas and to estimate the costs to return the communities back to pre-disaster conditions.

The initial PDA analysis revealed that severe damage occurred to public infrastructure, including roads, bridges, culverts, buildings, equipment, utilities, and parks. At least 36 homes were seriously damaged throughout all of the counties and tribal jurisdictions assessed, and portions of 108 roads were damaged and needed to be repaired or cleared to allow for emergency responder access. There were permanent repairs, debris removal efforts and emergency protective measures on county roads as well as state and federal highways. Damages created by the severe winter storm, and resulting flooding, were of such severity and magnitude that effective response and recovery was beyond the capabilities of the State of Nevada and the affected communities. Federal assistance was necessary.

## **Response and Recovery**

The response by public and private partners to the January 2017 winter storm event, and resulting flooding, reflected a well-coordinated, Whole Community approach to assisting disaster-impacted areas in Nevada. Local, state, and tribal officials issued emergency declarations and activated emergency operations plans. Public information announcements were coordinated utilizing television, radio, newspaper, and social media. Public safety organizations transmitted emergency and other data to ambulance crews, fire departments, law enforcement, public works, and other response units. State and local health departments provided technical assistance to ensure safe drinking water. Law enforcement, in conjunction with transportation officials, determined traffic movement restriction and coordinated safety support. Public works crews closed and flagged roads, and also determined the extent of damages. Fire crews and engineers assisted with impact assessments. Emergency managers coordinated resource requests and damage assessments in their respective communities, while the Division of Emergency Management coordinated support from State, Federal, and Volunteer agencies.

Following the announcement of the Presidential Major Disaster Declaration, Nevada

was eligible for grants under the Public Assistance Program and the Hazard Mitigation Program. These grant programs, administered by FEMA, provide reimbursement to local, state, and tribal governments to reimburse first response agencies for overtime, to rebuild public infrastructure, and to reinforce infrastructure to ensure that it is not damaged by future events of a similar nature. FEMA and DEM opened a joint field office to administer the millions of dollars in reimbursement grants for the affected area in March of 2017.

Additionally, on February 23, 2017, low-interest federal disaster loans were made available to Nevada businesses and residents affected by the severe winter storms, flooding, and mudslides that occurred January 5-14, 2017. SBA acted under its own authority to declare a disaster in response to a request in response to a request SBA received from Governor Brian Sandoval on February 22, 2017. This disaster declaration made SBA assistance available in Churchill, Humboldt, Lyon, Pershing, Storey and Washoe counties and Carson City in Nevada; Lassen, Modoc, Nevada, Placer and Sierra counties in California; and Harney and Lake counties in Oregon.

## **B. Overview of the February 2017 Flooding in Northern Nevada**

February 2017 continued the trend of sustained above normal precipitation, especially for western and northern Nevada. Beginning on February 5, 2017, above normal precipitation continued across western Nevada including the Carson City, Reno, and Tahoe areas, and stretching across the northern quarter of the state. The northwestern portion of the state had precipitation totals of 150 percent of normal, with many areas exceeding 200-300 percent of normal precipitation, or more. Across the northern quarter of the state, most areas received up to 150 percent of normal precipitation, with a few areas exceeding 200 percent. Across much of western and northern Nevada, February was one of the top 10 percent wettest periods for the same month on record since 1895. Since the beginning of January, much of the state saw above normal precipitation. Except for the southeastern portion of the state, much of Nevada experienced precipitation amounts in excess of 150 percent of normal for the two month period. Areas near and around the Carson City, Reno, and the Tahoe region saw precipitation totals of 200-400 percent of normal for the two month period. Across much of western and northern Nevada, this two-month period is the wettest January/February on record (since 1895). The continued very heavy rain and rapid succession of atmospheric river events came quickly after significant precipitation occurred throughout much of January. As a result, rivers, creeks, and streams swelled, and saturated soils that did not have time to recover.

Heavy snowfall also impacted higher elevations near Lake Tahoe, causing multiple avalanches that blocked roads and buried homes. Flooding affected residents in the counties of Washoe, Elko (including the South Fork Band of Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone), Humboldt, Douglas (including the Washoe Tribe of Nevada and California), and the independent city of Carson City. It caused damage to homes, property, and businesses, including areas within tribal jurisdictions. Water and debris damaged dozens of homes and businesses. At least 98 county transportation routes and 18 state

transportation routes were flooded or washed out, engaging first response emergency agencies at all levels of government.

Many residents were impacted for multiple days due to closed transportation routes from the effects of flooding as well as the effects of unmanageable quantities of snow, including avalanche danger. Across northern Nevada, over 22 thousand homes were affected by 411 power outages of varying durations. Use of heavy equipment was necessary for debris removal, snow management, rock slides, and the delivery of water, food, and various survival supplies to families who lost access to roads.

The counties of Washoe, Douglas, Elko, and Humboldt, and the independent city of Carson City declared local emergencies, and in turn, requested assistance from the State of Nevada. A State Declaration of Emergency was issued on February 10, 2017, pursuant to state law, and was amended on March 2, 2017, for the above listed city and counties. This Declaration activated state resources to assist local and tribal governments through the State Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), in accordance with Section 501(a) of the Stafford Act.

A request for Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) was also included in the request for a Presidential Major Disaster Declaration from FEMA. This request included technical assistance, de-watering/unwatering of inundated areas, protective action measures to address identified areas of concern throughout the affected area, mass care support for the survivors and impacted communities that may need to be evacuated and/or sheltered as direct result of the continued and forecasted impacts, the environmental impacts of the contaminated waters, vector and health issues of the actively rising flood waters in Lemmon Valley, and support for the various animals, including livestock and pets. Also requested were the Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, and Hazard Mitigation programs. A request for a Small Business Administration (SBA) Disaster Declaration was submitted to make low interest disaster loans available. The request for Individual Assistance was denied, as was an appeal of the initial denial.

## **Response and Recovery**

The response by public and private partners to the February 2017 winter storm event, and resulting flooding, emphasized the protection of lives, property, critical infrastructure, and the welfare of responders and reflected a well-coordinated, Whole Community approach to assisting disaster-impacted areas in Nevada. Local, state, and tribal officials issued emergency declarations and activated emergency operations plans. Public information announcements were coordinated utilizing television, radio, newspaper, and social media. Public safety organizations transmitted emergency and other data to ambulance crews, fire departments, law enforcement, public works, and other response units. State and local health departments provided technical assistance to ensure safe drinking water. Law enforcement, in conjunction with transportation officials, determined traffic movement restriction and coordinated safety support. Public works crews closed and flagged roads, and also determined the extent of damages. Fire crews and engineers assisted with impact assessments. Emergency managers

coordinated resource requests and damage assessments in their respective communities, while the Division of Emergency Management coordinated support from State, Federal, and Volunteer agencies.

Following the announcement of the Presidential Major Disaster Declaration, Nevada was once again eligible for grants under the Public Assistance Program and the Hazard Mitigation Program. Because FEMA and DEM had already established a joint field office, recovery efforts for this second disaster declaration were also coordinated out of the existing office. On March 21, 2017, low-interest federal disaster loans were made available to Washoe County businesses and residents affected by severe storms and flooding that occurred February 1-25, 2017. On May 25, 2017, low-interest loans were made available businesses and residents in Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander and White Pine counties in Nevada; Cassia, Owyhee and Twin Falls counties in Idaho; and Box Elder and Toole counties in Utah.

### **C. Overview of the October 2017 Mass Shooting in Las Vegas**

The incident of October 1, 2017 began as a reported active shooter directed toward the Route 91 Harvest country music festival from the 32nd floor of the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino. The shooting resulted in 58 deceased victims and more than 500 injured. All local police, fire, and medical entities within the Las Vegas Valley responded. Hospitals are still treating patients for their injuries. In addition, two aviation fuel tanks located at McCarran International Airport were targeted by the gunman. Two bullet holes were found in one of the tanks, and the holes were quickly repaired.

Both incident command and Clark County Multi-Agency Coordination Center (MACC) operations were quickly established, following existing plans, policies, and procedures for establishing situational awareness, agency notification, and resource management through mutual aid and interlocal agreements. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD) and Clark County Fire Department (CCFD) established Unified Command, and their activities were supported by the LVMPD Department Operations Center and the MACC. In accordance with the Clark County Hostile Mass Casualty Incident Policy, law enforcement and fire personnel formed rescue task forces that were directed by unified command to rescue the injured. Incident Action Plans and Incident Support Plans were developed and followed. Initial priorities in the MACC focused on life safety, scene stabilization, and identification of the deceased and injured. Previous investments in and benefits derived from planning, training, exercises and equipment, mostly supported by homeland security grant funds, were clearly evident throughout the response phase of this incident.

Under the provisions of the Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) Chapter 414 and Clark County Code Chapter 3.04 the Clark County, NV County Manager, Yolanda T. King, declared a State of Emergency on October 2, 2017. Per NRS 414.070 the Governor of the State of Nevada, Brian Sandoval, declared a State of Emergency and a Public Health and Medical Disaster on October 2, 2017. The State Emergency Operations Center was also activated in support of this event.

Medical Surge was coordinated in the Medical Surge Area Command (MSAC). Implementation of the MSAC followed the Clark County Medical Surge Plan, which is included in Annex H (Health and Medical) of the Clark County Emergency Operations Plan. Due to the high volume of injured citizens, local available EMS resources were quickly depleted. Many injured individuals were transported by private citizens who stepped up to help those in need. Patient tracking was very challenging during the response and recovery portions of this incident, as patients were transported to hospitals throughout the valley and some went to their personal doctors or clinics.

Additionally, HIPAA regulations along with the high volume of patients complicated the efforts to provide accurate patient information. This did not result in any lower standards of care, but did complicate other areas of the recovery effort. The LVMPD and Medical Surge Area Command (MSAC) were both utilized to assist with patient tracking efforts. Clark County Mass Casualty Incident Plans and Mass Fatality Plans were implemented for this incident. The Coroner's office coordinated resources, assisted in establishing the Family Assistance Center (FAC) for family reunification and notification, and identification, autopsies, and death certificate issuance on behalf of the deceased. The Coroner's Office requested resources from within the state and outside the state due to the volume of the deceased and complexity of this incident. Nevada 211 was also quickly mobilized to assist with information gathering and dissemination.

Animal control and environmental clean-up were also necessary. There were several reports of lost animals, and Clark County Animal Control and local shelters assisted with reuniting pets with their owners. As part of the on-site clean-up efforts, Clark County's Hazardous Materials Response Plan was used to support biological and hazardous materials clean up. Approved hazmat vendor H2O Environmental was used for this purpose. Nevada Highway Patrol and Clark County Public Works coordinated to close roads in the area of the event until the LVMPD and FBI investigation was concluded at the scene. Trash cleanup was conducted by Republic Service and items of value left at the scene were collected and delivered to the FAC by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI is overseeing the process of returning personal effects to concert goers and their families.

Public messaging throughout response and recovery was led by LVMPD and Clark County, with support from FBI and other agencies. Public messaging throughout response and recovery has been led by LVMPD and Clark County, with support from FBI and other agencies. During the Response phase, coordination of Public Messaging and Media Contact was accomplished through the JIC. During the Recovery phase, multi-agency coordination of Public Messaging will be essential to increase public confidence in the recovery process both economically and emotionally.

## **Response and Recovery**

In the initial hours following the incident, several locations had become points of reunification for those affected, including the headquarters for the Las Vegas

Metropolitan Police Department, the Thomas and Mack Center, and local hospitals. In the earliest discussions, and formally by 2:00 a.m. on October 2, 2017, a decision was made at the Clark County MACC to stand up a Family Assistance Center (FAC) at the Las Vegas Convention Center (3150 Paradise Road). The Clark County Office of Emergency Management (CCOEM) played a primary role in establishing the FAC, in conjunction with the Clark County Office of the Coroner/Medical Examiner (CCOCME). Other agencies and organizations supported this effort, including an incident management team assembled by the CCMACC, the American Red Cross (ARC), the FBI, the Southern Nevada Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), representatives from the City of Orlando and San Bernardino, and representatives of the Sheriff's, and Coroner's office of Washoe County.

Under the Unified Command of Chief John Steinbeck and Coroner John Fudenberg, the FAC officially began providing services at 1:00 PM on October 2, 2017. However, a soft opening occurred earlier, the first families of victims arriving at approximately 9:15 AM. Public notification of the FAC was supported through the 211 system, the establishment of a Clark County call center, a Clark County web page for information on the family assistance center and donations at [www.clarkcountynv.gov](http://www.clarkcountynv.gov). A series of press releases were distributed and daily news conferences were organized to keep the media and the public informed of new developments and progress on the response and recovery efforts. The messaging encouraged those affected to seek available assistance. For the first three days, the FAC functioned in 24-hour operational periods, primarily to provide the services of a Victim's Assistance Center (VAC). These purposes include the conducting of investigations to positively identify victims, provide notifications to next of kin, and to support the families of victims with crisis counseling services. Although other social services were being provided, it was on October 5, 2017, that the CCOCME had completed the work supported by the FAC and the center transitioned hours of operation open to the public from 10 am to 7 pm, providing a wider and robust range of social services in accordance with the Clark County Emergency Operations Plan (CCEOP).

These services included, but were not limited to:

- Ground and air transportation
- Onsite childcare
- Lodging
- Crime victim benefits and compensation
- Legal aide
- Identification services
- Counseling and spiritual care
- Personal effects return
- Donation management (i.e. supplies and services)

These services were provided by agencies and organizations from the local, state and federal governments, as well as from the private and non-profit sectors. It was this level of support that quickly combined to form the short-term recovery response to the 1 October incident. The FAC maintained operations through Friday, October 20, and

assisted over 4,200 individuals. The transition from the short-term recovery center (FAC) to a long-term “Vegas Strong Resiliency Center” was accomplished between October 20 and October 23, at which time the Vegas Strong Resiliency Center was open to the public. The Office of Emergency Management, with support from Purchasing and Social Services, played a lead role in establishing the Resiliency Center prior to transfer of responsibility to Social Services.

## **V) Findings and Recommendations**

The unprecedented nature of the emergencies and disasters in 2017 has had a tremendous impact on emergency management, preparedness, and capacity building throughout the state. The ability for communities, tribes, and state agencies to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters of all types was tested and largely proved to be effective. However, such events have also greatly depleted reserve capacities and capabilities, exposed operational challenges, and consumed valuable time and resources for long-term and strategic planning.

Because of all of these factors—the unprecedented series of events, the extraordinary success with which they were handled, and the challenges that have been realized—it is essential to take time to learn and better prepare communities across the state for the future. This learning takes lessons not only from the events highlighted here, but also from analysis that has been previously conducted by the Division of Emergency Management and its partners throughout the state. It is important to note that while the scope of this is substantial—providing findings from the emergencies and disasters from 2017 and recommendations for the future—this report is only intended to serve as initial findings and recommendations.

In order for this report to be relevant, then, work must continue throughout 2018 and beyond in order to build upon the findings and recommendations presented here. It is the hope of the authors of this report that that work will be overseen by the members of the Nevada Commission on Homeland Security, and that these findings and recommendations will be used as the starting point from which appropriate action plans can and should be developed. These efforts will vary, as all of the recommendations below must be carried out through agency-level policy and budgetary decisions all the way up to recommendations that must be carried out through legislation at the state level.

Although this has been an unprecedented year, and one that has presented numerous challenges, Nevada can and will use this as an opportunity to build and to grow stronger. The local and tribal communities throughout the state have shown resilience, as has the state. Efforts like this will help ensure that promised progress is captured and delivered.

## A. Budget Recommendations

### 1) Short Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Direct de-obligated and other available grant funding to support recovery and reimbursement efforts associated with the 1 October incident in Las Vegas, to include purchasing replacement equipment and supporting countywide AAR activities.*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Temporarily reduce the membership of the Homeland Security Working Group to approximately 1/3 of its Current Size for the 2018 grant cycle in order to ensure focus is on sustainment efforts and addressing immediate needs.*

### 2) Intermediate Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Prioritize specific needs for 2018 grant cycle based on recommendations developed during the ongoing AAR process (Patient Tracking Capabilities, Replacement body armor, etc.)*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Empower the Homeland Security Working Group Co-Chairs to identify and prioritize programs that are essential for sustainment through the THIRA/SPR process for funding for the 2018 grant cycle.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Identify grant and local funds to establish a Southern Nevada Regional Emergency Operations Center for Clark County OEM.*

### 3) Long Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Create funding override capabilities for the state's Emergency Assistance Account (EAA) and Disaster Relief Account (DRA).*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Reestablish Individual Assistance Program at the state level.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Increase the state general fund allocation to DEM in order to allow more grant dollars to be available for local and tribal partners.*

## B. Policy Recommendations

### 1) Short Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Require DEM and the Las Vegas Urban Area Working Group to develop an annual preparedness report and recommendations for improvement.*

- **Recommendation 2:** *Require state agencies to receive training on state emergency response procedures for activation in the State Emergency Operations Center as Emergency Support Functions, as well as activation as Recovery Support Functions under the State Recovery Framework.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Work with the federal delegation to amend the Stafford Act to ensure that man-made disasters can be declared as emergencies and disasters.*

## 2) Intermediate Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Require DEM to propose a plan to reduce the number of committees overseeing various grant processes and better align with Governor's vision for statewide resilience.*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Create a state-specific certification standard for emergency managers.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Under the authority of the State Disaster Identification Team (NRS 414.300), require DEM to develop information sharing protocols in regulation for HIPAA protected information and Personally Identifiable Information between local, state, federal, tribal, private sector, and non-profit entities to assist in the recovery process for a declared state of emergency.*

## 3) Long Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Allow the Nevada Homeland Security Commission to have one bill draft request for each legislative session.*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Establish statutory provisions for emergency licensure for medical practitioners.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Allow DEM to create regulations for all DEM grants.*

## C. Operational Recommendations

### 1) Short Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Require NIMS training for state-level agency directors and key personnel.*

### 2) Intermediate Term

- **Recommendation 1:** *Require the Co-Chairs of the Homeland Security Working Group to develop a statewide Homeland Security strategy.*

- **Recommendation 2:** *Require the two Fusion Centers to develop a joint threat assessment annually.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Create an Emergency Operations Plan for assisting people with functional needs during a CCTA/MCI event.*

### 3) Long Term:

- **Recommendation 1:** *Establish a deployable statewide Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMAT).*
- **Recommendation 2:** *Establish a deployable Disaster Assistance Response Team through Nevada Volunteers/AmeriCorps.*
- **Recommendation 3:** *Require state and local agencies to participate in training and exercises for HIPAA and PII information sharing protocols developed by the State Disaster Identification team.*

## VI) Proposed Next Steps

Following this report and recommendations to the Commission, implementation of various recommendations included here can take a number of forms. Some of these recommendations, particularly a number of the short term and intermediate term recommendations, can be carried out by the Co-Chairs and their respective agencies. Many of the long term recommendations will need support from the Commission, various agencies, and those involved in the legislative process. The following steps are provided below for the Commission's consideration:

- The Commission may consider directing the Co-Chairs of the Homeland Security Working Group to develop a memorandum of the short term and intermediate term recommendations that can be carried out immediately for the Governor's consideration and implementation through simple direction, an executive order, or otherwise.
- The Commission may consider re-establishing the Commission on Homeland Security's Legislative and Policy Committee to develop legislative recommendations for the Commission to consider ahead of the 2019 legislative session.
- The Commission may consider requiring the Co-Chairs to provide an update on the implementation of approved recommendations as a standing agenda item on all future Commission meetings.

## VII) Conclusion

This report is intended to provide an initial overview of the year of emergencies and disasters in Nevada in 2017, a truly unprecedented year. Through the preparedness, response, and recovery efforts throughout these extraordinary events, public agencies

throughout the state have exhausted resources, rebuilt infrastructure of entire communities, built relationships, and perhaps most important, they have learned what methods are effective and what needs to be improved. Although there will be significant and ongoing AAR efforts in the future, this report aims to capture the significant lessons learned early on.

The remarkable work by various agencies throughout 2017 contributed to safe and livable communities in the face of these events. Whether it was flood, fire, or violent mass shootings, local first response agencies coordinated resources locally and through mutual aid agreements, and requested additional resources from the state and federal governments as necessary. This resulted in largely successful response efforts, which also continued into ongoing recovery efforts.

Looking at the events of 2017 within the larger context of Nevada's history of declared events helps to better understand the magnitude of this year, and its impact on statewide capabilities and capacities. As noted, Nevada has never before experienced two Presidential Major Disaster Declarations in consecutive years, let alone in consecutive months, nor has the state experienced an act of mass violence like the 1 October event in recent memory either. These factors alone require an examination of statewide resources and consideration of how to maintain partnerships and capabilities that were developed during this time.

Further, these factors also provide a timely opportunity to learn important lessons and apply them to future preparedness efforts. These lessons are identified here throughout the narrative of events of the 2017 year, and they are reflected in the budgetary, policy, and operational recommendations within this report as well. As this is intended to be an initial report, additional recommendations will be developed by various sources going forward, including the Commission on Homeland Security.

Through efforts like these, a conversation about safe and livable communities within Nevada continues. Nevada has proven to be resilient in the face of these significant and at times tragic events, and communities throughout the state have proven to be remarkably capable in the areas of preparedness, response, and recovery. Under the Commission's leadership and strategic guidance, Nevada can continue to build on its successes, to rebuild as necessary, and to remain vigilant and better prepared for what 2018 might bring.