



# Secretary of State Oregon Audits Division



Office of Emergency Management, Office of the Governor  
**Recommendation Follow-up Report:**  
**The State Must Do More to Prepare Oregon for a  
Catastrophic Disaster**

May 2019  
Report 2019-20

Secretary of State Bev Clarno  
Audits Division Director Kip Memmott

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# Secretary of State Report Highlights

May 2019

Office of Emergency Management, Office of the Governor

## Recommendation Follow-up Report: The State Must Do More to Prepare Oregon for a Catastrophic Disaster

### Recommendation Follow-up Results

The Governor's Office and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) have taken many steps to better prepare Oregon for a catastrophic event, such as a Cascadia earthquake and tsunami. At the time of the original audit, OEM agreed with all recommendations we made to them. The Governor's Office agreed with all but one of our recommendations, believing they had already implemented that recommendation. Our follow-up work shows the auditees have implemented or resolved 9 of our 11 recommendations since the initial report.

### Highlights from the Original Audit

Oregon is at risk of a major Cascadia earthquake and tsunami that will threaten infrastructure, cost potentially billions of dollars, and result in numerous deaths. The state must do more to prepare for such a disaster, including completing and implementing critical plans, fulfilling minimum standards for an effective emergency management program, and adequately staffing the agency charged with coordinating emergency management efforts.

### Background

The emergency management system encompasses local governments and almost all of state government. OEM is charged with coordinating Oregon's emergency management efforts, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

### Purpose

The purpose of our original audit was to determine the status of state agency and local emergency management efforts to prepare for a catastrophic event, such as a Cascadia earthquake and tsunami. The purpose of this follow-up report is to provide a status on the auditees' efforts to implement the audit recommendations.

### Key Findings from the Original Audit

1. Oregon did not meet key emergency management program standards. These national baseline standards are a tool to strengthen preparedness and response, demonstrate accountability, and identify resource needs.
2. Planning efforts across all levels of Oregon's emergency management system were lacking. Critical continuity plans that ensure functional government services in the wake of a disaster were either missing or incomplete. Additionally, insufficient staff resources put the state at risk of losing potentially millions of dollars in federal grant funding for future disasters.
3. Current statewide staffing was inadequate to reduce Oregon's vulnerability to disasters. OEM in particular was understaffed, despite repeated budget requests to the Legislature, which inhibited the agency's capacity to coordinate emergency management efforts in the state.
4. More accountability, such as public reporting and tracking, was needed to ensure progress on long-term resilience goals and projects, and to enhance public awareness.

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to follow up on the recommendations we made to the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the Governor's Office as included in audit report 2018-03, "State of Oregon: The State Must Do More to Prepare Oregon for a Catastrophic Disaster."

The Oregon Audits Division conducts follow-up procedures for each of our performance audits. This process helps assess the impact of our audit work, promotes accountability and transparency within state government, and ensures audit recommendations are implemented and related risks mitigated to the greatest extent possible.

We use a standard set of procedures for these engagements that includes gathering evidence and assessing the efforts of the auditee to implement our recommendations; concluding and reporting on those efforts; and employing a rigorous quality assurance process to ensure our conclusions are accurate. We determine implementation status based on an assessment of evidence rather than self-reported information. This follow-up is not an audit, but a status check on the agency's actions.

To ensure the timeliness of this effort, the division asks all auditees to provide a timeframe for implementing the recommendations in our audit reports. We use this timeframe to schedule and execute our follow-up procedures.

Our follow-up procedures evaluate the status of each recommendation and assign it one of the following categories:

- **Implemented/Resolved:** The auditee has fully implemented the recommendation or otherwise taken the appropriate action to resolve the issue identified by the audit.
- **Partially implemented:** The auditee has begun taking action on the recommendation, but has not fully implemented it. In some cases, this simply means the auditee needs more time to fully implement the recommendation. However, it may also mean the auditee believes it has taken sufficient action to address the issue and does not plan to pursue further action on that recommendation.
- **Not implemented:** The auditee has taken no action on the recommendation. This could mean the auditee still plans to implement the recommendation and simply has not yet taken action; it could also mean the auditee has declined to take the action identified by the recommendation and may pursue other action, or the auditee disagreed with the initial recommendation.

The status of each recommendation and full results of our follow-up work are detailed in the following pages.

# Recommendation Implementation Status

## Recommendations made to OEM

Recommendation	Auditee Action	Status
<p>1. Continue to advocate for resources through the state budget process to be able to fulfill OEM’s role as the state’s emergency management coordinator. This advocacy is especially critical to support the State Hazard Mitigation Officer, to prevent the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan from losing its enhanced status.</p>	<p>OEM proposed eight Policy Option Packages as part of their request for the 2019-2021 budget cycle.</p> <p>The Hazard Mitigation program, including a request for six new positions, is listed as their second-highest priority of the eight.</p> <p>By including the positions in their budget request, the agency has continued to advocate for necessary resources.</p>	<b>Implemented</b>
<p>2. In conjunction with Cascadia Rising participants, finalize a plan to implement and track corrective actions for the recommendations from the Cascadia Rising After Action Report, including corrective actions relevant to catastrophic planning. Ensure this corrective action plan includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. deficiencies identified during the exercise;</li> <li>b. the actions that should be taken in response;</li> <li>c. the resources required to address these deficiencies;</li> <li>d. justification for the need to correct them;</li> <li>e. a person responsible for the corrective action; and</li> <li>f. an assigned due date for each action.</li> </ul>	<p>OEM has finalized a plan to implement corrective actions for the recommendations from the Cascadia Rising After Action Report, including corrective actions relevant to catastrophic planning. While the plan as written does not include all recommended elements, OEM has addressed the remaining elements through their tracking process.</p> <p>Additionally, OEM management reviews the corrective action plan and tracks the status of its recommendations at a quarterly meeting of the Oregon Emergency Response System.</p>	<b>Resolved</b>

3. Clearly define the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for preparedness efforts, in addition to response and recovery, for Emergency Support Functions, State Recovery Functions, agencies designated in ORS 401.054, and those with a role to play in the emergency services system. Provide written guidance and expectations for agency staff who will serve as a liaison to OEM per ORS 401.054, such as a position description or orientation materials to prepare staff on how to fulfill their roles.

New guidance OEM prepared includes clear roles and responsibilities for agencies, including expectations for preparedness efforts.

OEM has developed written guidance to prepare agency staff who are new liaisons to OEM on how to fulfill their roles as per ORS 401.054. This guidance includes written onboarding material.

**Implemented**

4. Develop internal policies, procedures and a schedule for implementing, maintaining, exercising, and revising the four volumes of the state's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Ensure plans are up-to-date and contain relevant and timely information.

OEM has developed an internal policy and schedule for implementing, maintaining, exercising, and revising the four volumes of the state's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. Volume I (Natural Hazard Mitigation) has been updated within the past five years and Volume II (Preparedness), Volume III (Emergency Operations Plan), and Volume IV (Recovery) have been updated since April 2017.

**Implemented**

5. Complete revisions to the strategic plan to ensure it includes metrics. Ensure the strategic plan clearly identifies gaps in existing programs and also identifies resources needed. OEM should also clearly communicate this plan to staff and others in the emergency management system.

The strategic plan for 2018-2022 includes metrics and measurable targets for each of five "Strategic Goal Areas." Gaps in existing programs can be identified by comparing the goal metrics to the agency's evaluation of their current status. Each of the five Strategic Goal Areas also identifies needed resources. OEM communicated the strategic plan to staff and others in the emergency management system by posting the report on their website, sharing it at a strategic planning session, and distributing it via email to staff and partners.

**Implemented**

## Recommendations made to the Governor’s Office

Recommendation	Auditee Action	Status
<p>6. Work with OEM to pursue statewide Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) accreditation and develop a timeframe for achieving accreditation.</p>	<p>The Governor's Office has developed a project proposal to pursue EMAP accreditation by 2022 in coordination with OEM, and has identified and contacted stakeholders for feedback on the proposal.</p>	<b>Implemented</b>
<p>7. Ensure Oregon’s statewide emergency management system has sufficient resources to reduce the state’s vulnerability to disasters. For example, ensure sufficient resources to prevent the loss of the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan’s enhanced status.</p>	<p>The Governor’s 2019-2021 budget request includes 20 new positions, including hazard mitigation staff, an EMAP coordinator, a Tribal Government Liaison, regional training teams, and a new Emergency Coordination section within OEM.</p> <p>Whether or not these Policy Option Packages are adopted is ultimately determined by the Legislature. However, by including them in this budget request, the Governor’s Office has made ensuring sufficient resources a priority.</p>	<b>Implemented</b>

8. In coordination with all executive agencies and offices, complete Continuity of Government and Continuity of Operations Plans for the executive branch. Additionally, complete statewide continuity plans in conjunction with the Legislative and Judicial branches of government. These plans should include a method and schedule for evaluation, maintenance, revision, and implementation.

Significant work has been done to complete Oregon's Continuity of Government planning for the executive branch. An exercise was conducted in October 2018 to test Oregon's Continuity of Government planning, and the State Resilience Officer is monitoring agencies' efforts to correct deficiencies identified during that exercise.

Unlike a Continuity of Government Plan, which is meant to be a *coordinated effort* within each branch of government to ensure that statewide essential functions continue to be performed, a Continuity of Operations Plan is meant to ensure that a single agency's mission essential functions continue to be performed during an emergency. The State Resilience Officer has ensured that most of the executive branch agencies, including all agencies with primary functions during an emergency, have completed their Continuity of Operations Plans. The remaining agencies' plans are expected to be completed by June 2019.

Because the Legislative and Judicial branches are ultimately responsible for completion of their own Continuity of Government plans, we only requested and reviewed the plans from the Executive branch, which was the focus of the original audit. However, we did find the Governor's Office has coordinated with other branches in statewide planning efforts.

**Partially  
implemented**



9. Enforce the existing policy to require executive branch agencies to complete, train, and exercise Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP). Assign responsibility and resources to track and facilitate COOP planning across state government.

We concluded that existing policy requiring executive branch agencies to complete COOP plans is being enforced. The Governor's Office has assigned responsibility to track and facilitate COOP planning across state government to the State Resilience Officer, who conducts monthly coordination calls with all agencies and works with agencies to resolve resource issues.

Resources have been committed to develop and conduct the Governor's Executive Order Disaster Exercise Series (GEODES), which is a method of training and exercising agency COOP plans. Additionally, the Statewide Resilience Officer has acquired software to facilitate creating and reviewing agency Continuity of Operations plans and has created a "Red Book" containing satellite phone numbers for emergency contacts within the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as other information that will be relevant during a major emergency.

**Implemented**

10. To provide transparency and assurance to the public, regularly and publicly report on the goals and priorities outlined in the Oregon Resilience Plan and complete efforts to track and report progress toward achieving them.

The State Resilience Officer completed a five-year progress report on the status of the recommendations from the Oregon Resilience Plan in December 2018 and posted the report on the Governor's website. The next update is expected to be posted by 2021.

The State Resilience Officer provides updates about the Governor's seismic mitigation efforts several times a year to the Oregon Seismic Safety Policy Advisory Commission, the body charged by the Legislature with leading and coordinating the Oregon Resilience Plan. The State Resilience Officer has also given public presentations and testimony about the goals and priorities of the plan as recently as December 2018.

**Implemented**

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11. To ensure the success of both current and future State Resilience Officers, and to retain and transfer the knowledge of the position, develop and document a position description with goals, objectives, and performance measures, including a description of how the officer will coordinate and work with OEM and others in the statewide emergency services system.

Although the Governor’s Office disagreed with the recommendation, they developed a position description for the State Resilience Officer. It does not include specific goals, objectives, and performance measures, or a description of how the officer will coordinate and work with OEM and others in the statewide emergency services system.

**Partially  
Implemented**

## Conclusion

The Governor's Office and OEM have taken many steps to better prepare Oregon for a catastrophic event, such as a Cascadia earthquake and tsunami. They have continued to advocate for necessary resources through the biennial budget request. OEM has worked with the Governor's Office to take initial steps toward EMAP accreditation, and they have completed revisions to the agency's strategic plan, including metrics and measurable targets for each of five "Strategic Goal Areas." OEM communicated the strategic plan to staff and others in the emergency management system by posting the report on their website, sharing it at a strategic planning session, and distributing it via email to staff and partners.

OEM completed the four volumes of the state's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, which includes natural hazard mitigation, preparedness, emergency operations, and recovery.

The Governor's Office has dedicated resources to completing agency Continuity of Operations Plans within the executive branch, and the State Resilience Officer has been reporting progress toward achieving the goals and priorities outlined in the Oregon Resilience Plan.

Consistent with our recommendation, the Governor's Office, in conjunction with OEM, should continue to pursue statewide EMAP accreditation. In the event the Legislature does not approve the request for additional staff in the Hazard Mitigation program, the Governor should identify alternative ways to ensure the state has sufficient resources to reduce Oregon's vulnerability to disasters.

We sincerely appreciate the courtesies and cooperation extended by officials and employees of the Governor's Office, the Oregon Military Department, and Office of Emergency Management during the course of this follow-up work.



## **Follow-up Report Team**

Will Garber, CGFM, MPA, Deputy Director

Andrew Love, CFE, Audit Manager

Krystine McCants, M. Econ, Senior Auditor

Rod Campbell, Staff Auditor

## **About the Secretary of State Audits Division**

The Oregon Constitution provides that the Secretary of State shall be, by virtue of the office, Auditor of Public Accounts. The Audits Division performs this duty. The division reports to the elected Secretary of State and is independent of other agencies within the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of Oregon government. The division has constitutional authority to audit all state officers, agencies, boards and commissions as well as administer municipal audit law.

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### **Oregon Audits Division**

255 Capitol St NE, Suite 500 | Salem | OR | 97310

(503) 986-2255

[sos.oregon.gov/audits](https://sos.oregon.gov/audits)