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News Release

Long-Term Disaster Recovery Groups Forming in Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. – During the first week of June, a series of summits were held to help donors and leaders from nonprofits, communities, and faith-based organizations learn about long-term recovery for survivors following the devastating floods in March.

The Voluntary Agency Liaisons (VALs) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinated presentations for attendees as they focus on the unmet needs of survivors. These summits were organized with the help of the Nebraska Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Long-term recovery groups have already formed in six counties (Cass, Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders and Washington) and two regions (Platte Regional Long-Term Recovery and Heartland Disaster Recovery Group). The Heartland group includes representatives from the counties of Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick. The Platte group includes those from Boone, Butler, Colfax, Nance and Platte counties. More groups are forming.

To date, volunteers have provided spiritual care to more than 4,500 survivors. They have helped muck out over 700 flooded homes. VOAD teams have clocked more than 20,000 volunteer hours to help Nebraskans.

“Flood recovery across Nebraska could last two to three years – maybe longer,” said Mike Pickerel, VAL team lead from FEMA. “After the initial response, communities need to come together to ensure that where there is on-going need, help is available”, he added.

One valuable resource is the Disaster Leadership Team, a group of community leaders who have been through the recovery process. The team offers personal support and guidance to communities in establishing long term disaster recovery groups.

The whole-community approach to recovery simply involves people helping people. When needs go beyond the scope of city, state and federal partners capabilities, oftentimes it’s neighbors, business owners, as well as nonprofits that step in to fill the gap.

The summit featured experts speaking on a wide range of topics, including:

- Roles and responsibilities for participants in a disaster recovery group
- Utilizing national disaster expertise
- How to provide emotional and spiritual care to recovery group leaders
- Whether to hire a grants writer and a volunteer coordinator
- How to match the repair and/or rebuilding of homes to workers and supplies
- How to save money by asking for in-kind donations of materials
- How to talk to children about disasters
- How to find funding for recovery efforts
- FEMA's Individual Assistance program.

Residents can contact their local emergency manager to form a long-term recovery group in their community or volunteer for an existing group.

For more information about volunteer efforts in Nebraska, go online to <https://nevoad.community.org>.

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FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.

For disaster updates from the State of Nebraska, visit Nebraska's website at NEMA.Nebraska.gov. You can also follow [@NEMAtweets](https://twitter.com/NEMAtweets) on Twitter, and www.facebook.com/nema.page on Facebook. Follow FEMA online at www.fema.gov/disaster/4420.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has faced discrimination, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362, voice/VP/711. Multilingual operators are available. TTY users may call 800-462-7585.

The U.S. Small Business Administration is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private nonprofit organizations, homeowners and renters fund repairs or rebuilding efforts and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. For more information, applicants may contact SBA's Disaster Assistance Customer Service Center at 800-659-2955. TTY users may also call 800-877-8339. Applicants may also email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov or visit SBA at www.SBA.gov/disaster.