



Department of Military Affairs

- Disaster and Emergency Services
- Montana Youth Challenge Academy
- Montana Veterans Affairs Division
- STARBASE
- Montana Air National Guard
- Montana Army National Guard

PRESENTED TO THE 2025 JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Disaster and Emergency Services Division

Overview

Montana Disaster and Emergency Services works to ensure our state can respond to, recover from, and mitigate the impact of future disasters. This requires strong coordination with local, state, tribal, and federal partners through community preparedness activities such as writing emergency operations plans, training stakeholders, and evaluating the likelihood of success through exercises.

The existence of the division as it is currently known dates to 1977 but has origins that date back to 1947. The declaration of policy that established the purpose of the agency is described in Title 10, Chapter 1, part 1, MCA. The duties of the division, along with the authorization for staff to perform their functions, are in Title 10, Chapter 1, part 105(1), MCA. There are currently 32 Budgeted Positions in the division. The MCA parts referenced above, and the division's organizational chart, are attachments to this handout.

To execute these functions, the division has established four main program areas in DES; disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. In addition to the annual \$2.1 million general fund allocation, the division leverages federal grants to improve and sustain state, local, and tribal emergency management programs. Subsequently, the division is currently administering over \$230 million dollars in federal grants to prepare for, respond to, recover from, and mitigate future disasters.

Summary of Major Programs

Preparedness Program

Preparedness is the continuous process of planning, training, exercising, and equipping to ensure that the state is ready to respond and recover from natural and manmade disasters. The division supports state and local jurisdictions in this endeavor. The training and exercise program provides knowledge and skills to our community partners to help people before, during, and after disasters. The division works across all levels of government to provide information on emergency, operational, and strategic planning that help guide response and recovery activities. As established in the 2023 legislative session, the division is coordinating the Continuity of Government and Continuity of Operations programs for the state and supports COOP/COG training and planning for local jurisdictions.

The division's Preparedness Program administers several grants to support state and local entities develop emergency management programs. These grants focus primarily on building, sustaining, and delivering essential emergency management capabilities. Grant programs include the following:

- Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG)



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- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant (HMEP)
- Homeland Security Grant Program (including Operation Stonegarden)
- Nonprofit Security Grant (NSGP)
- State and Local Cybersecurity Grant (SLCGP)

Response Program

The division's Response Program is charged with coordinating operational response at the state level for any incident, emergency, or disaster that exceeds the capability of a local jurisdiction. Support for incidents can include deployment of resources, incident management assistance, technical assistance, and the deployment of the division's District Field Officers to serve as Agency Representatives. Through a variety of compacts, agreements, and authorities, aid can be requested from other states, federal partners, and other nations, as well as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADS).

The State Emergency Coordination Center (SECC) is operated by the Response Program and follows the National Incident Management System and Incident Command System models. The SECC provides support for local and state-level incidents by handling requests for assistance or resources, as well as sharing situational awareness updates for our partners and stakeholders.

Other responsibilities of the SECC include:

- Maintaining day-to-day situational awareness of any incidents that may significantly affect the state such as severe weather or wildfires.
- Preparing draft executive orders for disasters and emergencies for review by the Office of the Governor.
- Coordinating National Guard assistance for emergencies and disasters.
- Coordinating Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) requests which help send and receive resources between states during times of disaster, tracking the financial costs and coordinating reimbursements for assisting entities.
- Receiving and coordinating resource requests from local jurisdictions for supplies, equipment and specialized personnel in response to incidents.
- Operating and managing the State Disaster Warehouse which houses and provides critical incident response resources.

Recovery Program

The division's Recovery Program supports individuals and communities affected by disasters which includes Individual Assistance Programs, and Public Assistance Programs.



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Individual Assistance is for individuals, households, and businesses recovering from disaster or emergency impacts. The program can include things such as housing assistance, crisis counseling, wage recovery, and low interest loans.

The Public Assistance program is used to assist eligible applicants including local governments, state government, certain non-profit organizations, schools, and tribal governments that are located within a designated damage area. This program may provide reimbursement for repairs to damaged eligible facilities, including roads, bridges, water control facilities, buildings, equipment, utilities, and parks and recreational facilities. The program can also assist with reimbursement of emergency functions such as debris removal and emergency protective measures.

The program is seeing an increase in the frequency and severity of disasters. Damage estimates recorded as part of the Public Assistance Program have increased significantly when compared to previous timeframes. The pandemic response is attributed to a significant portion of the increase, however when those costs are excluded, disaster related expenses remain significantly higher than previous years. The program evaluated data from the past five years to determine the workload trends. As expected, more costly disasters generally result in more projects to manage.

Mitigation Program

Disaster mitigation is a sustained action that reduces or eliminates long term risk to people and property from natural hazards and their effects. MT DES works with federal, state, tribal, community, private non-profits, and individuals to lessen the impact of disasters upon communities, infrastructure, and the economy through a variety of funding opportunities. Mitigation grant funding primarily comes from six federal grant programs, including:

- Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC)
- Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA)
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program/Post Fire (HMGP/PF)
- Pre-Disaster Mitigation
- National Earthquake Hazard Reduction Program (NEHRP)
- High Hazard Potential Dams (HHPD)

In 2023, the legislature approved funding for a Disaster Resiliency Account in the amount of \$4 million dollars per year through state fiscal year 2027 allowing the state to help offset the local match requirement of federal grants. The mitigation program is a valuable investment in statewide disaster resiliency. Since the inception of the resiliency account, \$5.1 million of state funds has leveraged \$19.8 million of federal funding that has helped 18 sub-applicants primarily with construction projects.



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Decision Packages

The division has four decision package requests. Three are statewide present law adjustments, and one is a present law adjustment for Search and Rescue State Special Revenue spending authority.

SWPL 1 Personal Services				
The budget includes \$319,570 in FY 2026 and \$327,074 in FY 2027 to annualize various personal services costs including FY 2025 statewide pay plan, benefit rate adjustments, longevity adjustments related to incumbents in each position at the time of the snapshot, and vacancy savings.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	137,415.00	-	182,155.00	319,570.00
FY 2027	140,642.00	-	186,432.00	327,074.00
Biennium Total	278,057.00	-	368,587.00	646,644.00
SWPL 2 Fixed Costs				
The request includes funding required in the budget to pay fixed costs assessed by other agencies within state government for the services they provide. Examples of fixed costs include liability and property insurance, legislative audit, warrant writer, payroll processing, and others. The rates charged for these services are approved in a separate portion of the budget.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	19,136.00	-	19,137.00	38,273.00
FY 2027	(2,642.00)	-	(2,642.00)	(5,284.00)
Biennium Total	16,494.00	-	16,495.00	32,989.00
SWPL 3 Inflation/Deflation				
This change package includes a reduction of \$3,150 in FY 2026 and \$2,129 in FY 2027 to reflect budgetary changes generated from the application of deflation to state motor pool accounts.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	(1,575.00)	-	(1,575.00)	(3,150.00)
FY 2027	(1,064.00)	-	(1,065.00)	(2,129.00)
Biennium Total	(2,639.00)	-	(2,640.00)	(5,279.00)
PL 2101 DES Search and Rescue State Special Revenue				
The Disaster and Emergency Services Division requests additional state special revenue authority of \$68,000 each year of the biennium for the Search and Rescue (SAR) program. SAR receives revenue from the FWP licenses and permits voluntary donation and does not have adequate authority to spend the revenue received each fiscal year. The program helps to defray costs of local search and rescue units for search and rescue missions.				
Fiscal Year	General Fund	State Special	Federal Funds	Total Request
FY 2026	-	68,000.00	-	68,000.00
FY 2027	-	68,000.00	-	68,000.00
Biennium Total	-	136,000.00	-	136,000.00



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Attachments:

Figure 1. Disaster and Emergency Services Division Organizational Chart

Examples of Impact Projects

PDF Insert. Title 10, Chapter 3, part 101, MCA

PDF Insert. Title 10, Chapter 3, part 105, MCA

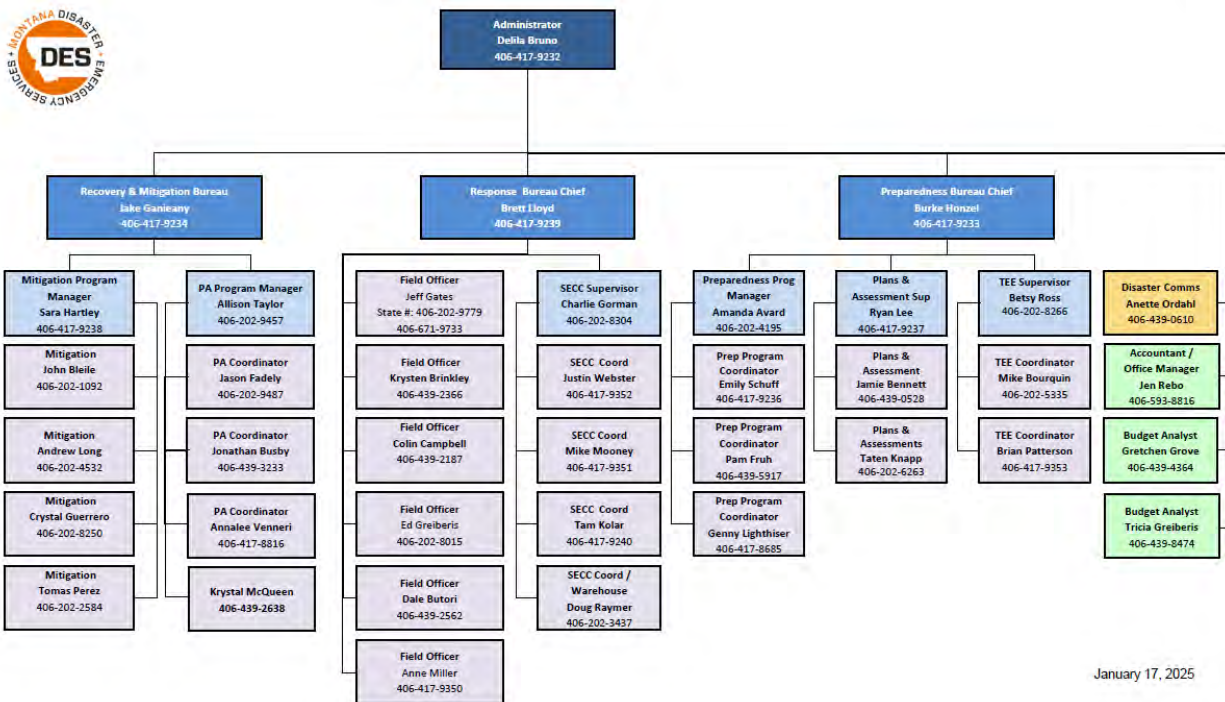


Figure 1. Disaster and Emergency Services Division Organizational Chart



Montana Disaster and
Emergency Services Division



2024

LOCAL IMPACT PROJECTS
BUILDING RESILIENCE ACROSS MONTANA

MT DES LOCAL IMPACT PROJECTS

BUILDING RESILIENCY, TOGETHER

MT DES is committed to whole-community approaches that enhance resiliency across all of Montana. Following are impact projects that depict how each of our programs work in collaboration with local and tribal governments to build, sustain, and improve Montana's ability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate hazards.



Preparedness Program: New Local Emergency Coordinator Training

Currently, sixty percent of county emergency managers have been in their positions for five years or less. Not only do emergency manager positions carry the responsibility for community safety and resilience, but the scope of required knowledge is also broad, and the learning curve is steep. This creates a need for a strong training program to equip local coordinators on a wide range of complex responsibilities.

To help new emergency managers gain knowledge and confidence in their positions, MT DES hosted an in person, three-day New Emergency Coordinator training at Fort Harrison in April. Participants included 24 emergency managers who represented jurisdictions from across the state of Montana and one emergency manager from Montana State University.

The purpose of the training was to provide information on MT DES' four program areas - preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. Coordinators and managers from each program area provided information on grants, procedures, and resources available to local coordinators.

In a post-training survey, local coordinators shared the following: "I feel like I am going away with lots of good information to use and help me build and organize my program" and "The energy of the presenters was excellent. They all love what they do. They want everyone to know everything they know."

All six of MT DES' District Field Officers were also on hand to help present the training and answer questions. Attendees shared best practices, identified areas for additional training, and built camaraderie.



MT DES LOCAL IMPACT PROJECTS

BUILDING RESILIENCY, TOGETHER



Missoula Electric Rock Creek Fire Mitigation

In the rugged terrain of Rock Creek, where steep mountains meet unpredictable wildfire risks, Missoula Electric Cooperative, aided by the Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) program, managed by MT DES, has begun a transformative \$1 million project. The initiative, which began the spring of 2024, aims to relocate and bury power lines beneath the roadways, a crucial step in mitigating the ever-present danger of wildfires sparked by downed power lines.

For years, the power lines crossing Rock Creek have been a persistent worry, not only because of their potential to ignite fires, but also due to the immense difficulty of maintaining them in such a treacherous location. "At Missoula Electric Cooperative, our priority is to provide safe, reliable, and affordable power to our members, even as we navigate the challenges of an evolving climate," said Mark Hayden, General Manager of Missoula Electric Cooperative. "Securing this BRIC funding helps us to proactively strengthen our system in the Rock Creek area by undergrounding critical infrastructure. This project not only reduces the risk of wildfires and improves resilience against extreme weather but also enhances service reliability for our members. We are proud to work alongside federal, state, and local partners in building a safer and more sustainable future."

The cooperative's commitment to wildfire prevention is underscored by this project, which will bury three miles of power lines, moving them off the hazardous mountain slopes. Hayden points out that, while the cost of such an endeavor has been substantial, the project is critical. Recent history has shown the dangers of power lines, with incidents like the devastating fires in Paradise, California, linked to faulty lines.

Securing funding for this ambitious project wasn't easy, but a federal grant from the Building Resilient Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) program will cover most of the expenses. This grant aligns with Missoula County's priorities, as noted by Adrian Beck, the county's Director of Disaster and Emergency Services. "This funding helps us strengthen our infrastructure against climate-related challenges and prepares us for future disasters," Beck explains. "It's about reducing hazards in a high-risk area while also easing maintenance in a difficult-to-reach location."

The project includes two phases. The first phase involves a collaboration with Blackfoot Communications, which has received emergency approval from USFW to bore new conduit under Rock Creek. Since Missoula Electric Cooperative needed to bore new conduit under Rock Creek in the same location as the Blackfoot Communication project, FEMA worked with USFW to obtain the necessary clearances and provided approval for the Missoula Electric Cooperatives work to happen in that location at the same time as the Blackfoot Communication work. This coordination provided an opportunity to minimize impacts to the waterway, limiting disturbance to one collaborative project. However, construction will still need to navigate areas of critical habitation for local wildlife, and Missoula Electric Cooperative will be complying with requirements outlined by state and federal agency partners as they continue their work.

The goal is to have the new lines buried and operational by early winter, ensuring a more reliable power supply and reducing the need for emergency repairs during harsh winter conditions. Through its partnership with MT DES Mitigation, Missoula Electric's cooperative efforts demonstrate hard work and dedication to enhancing safety and resilience in the face of changing climate conditions.



MT DES LOCAL IMPACT PROJECTS

BUILDING RESILIENCY, TOGETHER

Response Program: Sheriff King Funeral

When Sheriff King was tragically killed in a motor vehicle collision last fall, the scope and compressed timeline for a line of duty death posed significant challenges requiring an Incident Management Team (IMT) response. Incident Management Teams (IMT) are the forward response teams during times of disaster and large-scale emergencies, but they may also be utilized to manage nonemergency incidents in certain circumstances.



Two MT DES District Field Officers (DFOs), Jeff Gates and Dale Butori were honored to join the IMT and support the local community by filling logistics positions. Gates and Butori rounded out the IMT team of emergency managers and Montana State Police Officers Association (MSPOA) from both local and state agencies that came together to support Bighorn County following the death of Sheriff King.

The funeral and funeral procession events qualified as a major incident with two venues, two processions, three Honor Guards, 1,000 people, and a four-mile-long procession. The IMT coordinated with Big Horn County Emergency Management, Law Enforcement, MSPOA Honor Guard, Tribal liaisons, and King's family to facilitate the funeral and procession for Sheriff King.

Bighorn County DES' Emergency Manager, Brian Mischel explained: "The planning and execution of Sheriff King's memorial underscored the vital role that mutual aid played in supporting the IMT. The resources and assistance provided by our mutual aid partners were instrumental in enhancing the IMT's capabilities, allowing us to effectively manage the complexities of this emotional event. Their unwavering support helped ensure that every detail was handled with care and respect, enabling us to honor Sheriff King in a way that truly reflected his dedicated service and sacrifice."

According to Mt. Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (MSPOA) Mutual Aid Program Director Jason Jarrett, meeting the objectives of multiple involved parties within a 2-to-3-day timeline is a heavy load, and it underscores the need for mutual aid resources. Jarrett added that having an understanding with commissioners is critical: "Getting everyone to understand that lending a hand to your neighbors is the right thing to do and what goes around comes around -- everyone will need help at some point."

MT DES' Response Program, through our DFOs and SECC, is proud to support emergency response teams when incidents are beyond local capacity and resources.



MT DES LOCAL IMPACT PROJECTS

BUILDING RESILIENCY, TOGETHER



Recovery Program: Billings Intake Project

During the 2022 Flood, FEMA disaster DR-4655, the city of Billings water treatment intakes sustained significant damage. The majority of the damage occurred to Intake #2 where the catwalk and intake housing structure were severely damaged by large vegetative debris, rendering the intake unusable and access to the intake unsafe for employees.

Billings water facility personnel, along with assistance from Montana Disaster and Emergency Services, worked with FEMA over a two+ year period to successfully get this project funded at just over \$4 million. This funding not only included the repair of the facility back to its normal operating condition, but also, the work of the joint public assistance team resulted in FEMA approving a 406 Hazard Mitigation Proposal to raise the entire catwalk and intake structure five feet to prevent future damage from future flooding events.

The 406 Mitigation plan accounted for approximately \$1.93 million of the project total. The combined efforts of everyone involved with this project resulted in a successful outcome which ensures the future resiliency and safety of the city of Billings' water supply.

Sarah Lane, Controller for the City of Billings stated: “The work from the State and Consultants was invaluable for pushing through the project both with insurance and with the FEMA request in a timely manner. As this project relates to the only alternative water intake for the City, timeliness was incredibly important.” Lane added, “We could not have done the work without the guidance from the state and consultants. We have met with the State, their consultants, and/or FEMA and Insurance almost every two weeks for over a year.”

The Project was fully obligated (PA and Hazard Mitigation) by FEMA by the time the contract for construction was to be signed and approved by City Council.




Serving Our Communities Before, During, and After Disasters

We're committed to helping communities all across Montana, from training and planning, to mitigation, response coordination, and recovery. We're meeting today's challenging moments with problem solving, innovation, and dedication - every day.

MORE ABOUT US

To learn more about MT DES and the work we do, please visit our website or contact us directly with your questions via phone or email provided below.

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Montana Code Annotated 2023

TITLE 10. MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DISASTER AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

CHAPTER 3. DISASTER AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Part 1. General Provisions and Administration

Declaration Of Policy

10-3-101. Declaration of policy. Because of the existing and increasing possibility of the occurrence of disasters or emergencies of unprecedented size and destructiveness resulting from enemy attack, sabotage, or other hostile action and natural disasters and in order to provide for prompt and timely reaction to an emergency or disaster, to ensure that preparation of this state will be adequate to deal with disasters or emergencies, and generally to provide for the common defense and to protect the public peace, health, and safety and to preserve the lives and property of the people of this state to the fullest extent practicable, it is declared to be necessary to:

(1) authorize the creation of local or interjurisdictional organizations for disaster and emergency services in the political subdivisions of this state;

(2) reduce vulnerability of people and communities of this state to damage, injury, and loss of life and property resulting from natural or human-caused disasters;

(3) provide a setting conducive to the rapid and orderly start of restoration and rehabilitation of persons and property affected by disasters;

(4) clarify and strengthen the roles of the governor, the legislature, state agencies, local governments, and tribal governments in prevention of, preparation for, response to, and recovery from emergencies and disasters;

(5) authorize and provide for cooperation in disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery;

(6) authorize and provide for coordination of activities relating to disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery by agencies and officers of this state and similar state-local, interstate, federal-state, and foreign activities in which the state, its political subdivisions, and tribal governments may participate;

(7) provide an emergency and disaster management system embodying all aspects of emergency or disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery;

(8) assist in prevention of disasters caused or aggravated by inadequate planning for public and private facilities and land use;

(9) supplement, without in any way limiting, authority conferred by previous statutes of this state and increase the capability of the state, local, and interjurisdictional disaster and emergency services agencies to perform disaster and emergency services;

(10) authorize the payment of extraordinary costs and the temporary hiring, with statutorily appropriated funds under **10-3-312**, of professional and technical personnel to meet the state's responsibilities in providing assistance in the response to, recovery from, and mitigation of disasters in state, tribal government, or federal emergency or disaster declarations;

(11) ensure the protections under the first amendment of the United States constitution and under Article II, sections 6 and 7, of the Montana constitution of the rights of free speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances;

(12) ensure the protection of the rights under the second amendment of the United States constitution and under Article II, section 12, of the Montana constitution; and

(13) ensure the continuity of religious services as essential services to the welfare of the people of the state.

History: En. Sec. 2, Ch. 218, L. 1951; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 220, L. 1953; Sec. 77-1302, R.C.M. 1947; amd. and redes. 77-2301 by Sec. 8, Ch. 94, L. 1974; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 335, L. 1977; R.C.M. 1947, 77-2301; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 71, L. 1987; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 595, L. 1989; amd. Sec. 15, Ch. 56, L. 2009; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 255, L. 2009; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 228, L. 2011; amd. Sec. 1, Ch. 346, L. 2021; amd. Sec. 7, Ch. 504, L. 2021.

Montana Code Annotated 2023

TITLE 10. MILITARY AFFAIRS AND DISASTER AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

CHAPTER 3. DISASTER AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Part 1. General Provisions and Administration

Division Of Disaster And Emergency Services -- Duties

10-3-105. Division of disaster and emergency services -- duties. (1) A division of disaster and emergency services is established in the department. The division must have an administrator and other professional, technical, secretarial, and clerical employees as necessary for the performance of its functions.

(2) The department through the division of disaster and emergency services is responsible to the governor for carrying out the planning and program for disaster and emergency services of this state.

(3) The division shall prepare and maintain a comprehensive plan and program for disaster and emergency services of this state. The plan and program must be coordinated with the disaster and emergency plans and programs of the federal government, other states, political subdivisions, tribal governments, and Canada to the fullest extent possible.

(4) The division shall:

(a) coordinate the preparation of the plan and program for disaster and emergency services with the political subdivisions of this state;

(b) coordinate disaster and emergency prevention and preparation activities of all departments, agencies, and organizations within the state;

(c) advise and assist the political subdivisions of this state in executing their disaster and emergency services responsibilities;

(d) make recommendations on the formation of interjurisdictional disaster and emergency services areas when individual political subdivisions are unable to fully and adequately mount an effective local program because of limitations of funding, personnel, or other reasons;

(e) make surveys of industries, resources, and facilities within the state, both public and private, as are necessary to carry out the purposes of parts 1 through 4 of this chapter;

(f) periodically review local and interjurisdictional plans and programs for disaster and emergency services;

(g) develop or assist in the development of mutual aid plans and agreements between the federal government, other states, tribal governments, and Canada and among the political subdivisions of this state;

(h) plan and make arrangements for the availability and use of any private facilities, services, and property and, if necessary and if in fact used, provide for payment for use under terms and conditions agreed upon;

(i) institute training and public information programs and take all other preparatory steps, including the partial or full mobilization of disaster and emergency services organizations in advance of an actual incident, emergency, or disaster, to ensure the availability of adequately trained and equipped personnel in time of an incident, emergency, or disaster;

- (j) direct emergency response and disaster preparation activities as authorized by the governor;
- (k) direct disaster response and recovery activities as authorized by the governor;
- (l) prepare, for issuance by the governor, executive orders or proclamations as necessary or appropriate in coping with incidents, emergencies, and disasters;
- (m) maintain liaison with and cooperate with disaster and emergency services agencies and organizations of the federal government, other states, and Canada in achieving any purpose of parts 1 through 4 of this chapter and in implementing programs for disaster prevention, preparation, response, and recovery;
- (n) assume any additional authority, duties, and responsibilities authorized by parts 1 through 4 of this chapter as may be prescribed by the governor;
- (o) establish all-hazard incident management assistance teams; and
- (p) appoint the members of the Montana intrastate mutual aid committee provided for in **10-3-904**.

History: (1), (3), (4)En. Sec. 7, Ch. 335, L. 1977; Sec. 77-2305.1, R.C.M. 1947; (2)En. Sec. 4, Ch. 218, L. 1951; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 220, L. 1953; amd. Sec. 7, Ch. 237, L. 1967; Sec. 77-1304, R.C.M. 1947; amd. and redes. 77-2303 by Sec. 10, Ch. 94, L. 1974; amd. Sec. 5, Ch. 335, L. 1977; Sec. 77-2303, R.C.M. 1947; R.C.M. 1947, 77-2303, 77-2305.1(part); amd. Sec. 5, Ch. 430, L. 1983; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 176, L. 1995; amd. Sec. 3, Ch. 228, L. 2011; amd. Sec. 2, Ch. 243, L. 2023.